

PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

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I am here among you (as someone who, like the Eleatic Stranger of *The Sophist*, is neither analyst nor analysand, expatriated from a memorable and precarious place) to respond to your invitation to endure the suspicious detour from your experience.

Shall I accomplish here (like the Stranger in the gaze of Parmenides) a sort of speculative parricide? What brings me here is that, as the author of a *Manifesto for Philosophy*, I doubtless occupy the place of a son of philosophy itself; in short, of a son of Plato, of a son of parricide. This criminal heredity may govern a repetition. No doubt, what protects me from this is that I am skeptical about the contemporary proclamation of the end of philosophy, that I demand the modesty of one additional step, and thus, with parricide being the contemporary currency of thought, filial respect appears singular.

But where your company takes hold of me and leads me, you must be your own judge.

The law of compossibility is that according to which philosophy and psychoanalysis are arranged, a non-dialectical law between a feeling whose essence is seduction, and a consent whose essence is reserve. I won't repeat its textual and empirical data.

The question which organizes this domain can be stated as follows: what can one say of the angle at which a truth touches being? What I propose is to transform this question into another which, although ultimately identical, is more precise, namely: *what is the localization of the void?* We will agree, I believe, in saying that it is through its suturing to the void that every text upholds its claim to express something other than a relation of realities, other than what Mallarmé called "universal reportage."

We are *a priori* in agreement in repudiating every doctrine of truth in terms of the adequation of spirit, or statement, or thing. Whether philosopher or analyst, we certainly cannot take anything away from, or contradict, the great axiom of the poet: *all thought is a throw of the dice*; by which thought exhibits (between itself and the continuity of place) the void of a suspended gesture. This void, Mallarmé calls it, as you know, Chance. Chance supports what Lacan, in 1960, called - the expression is a true maxim - "the only absolute statement," pronounced, he said, "by he who has the right" [*qui de droit*]. This statement, of course, is that "no roll of the dice in the signifier will ever abolish chance."

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Because this statement is absolute (and the only one which is such), because it is pronounced by Mallarmé, of all of what I have to say throughout, let this be the statement that will support our pact. You will accept that I translate it in this way: *thought is only authorized by the void that separates it from realities.*

The whole question is thus: where is the void located? What is the precise point of the void? If Mallarmé brings together and makes the question absolute for us, it is because he is content to name localization "place." The void is the essence of the place, of every place, such that a truth (even if, in its language a Constellation, cold with forgetfulness and disuse) comes forth only in the spacing of an arbitrary place. A truth is inscribed in the blackness of the sky if the non-place of the dice throw, separatingly and undecidably, blocks the repetition which makes it such that, in general, beyond thought and gesture, "nothing took place but the place" [*rien n'a eu lieu que le lieu*].

And we would also agree that philosophy and psychoanalysis have no meaning beyond the desire that something takes place other than the place.

But psychoanalysis and philosophy localize the place. They are specific regimes of experience and thought, both subsumed by Mallarmé's absolute statement, both thinkable not on the basis of place in general, but from *their* place, fixed through destiny by their foundation (Freudian with respect to psychoanalysis, Parmenidean with respect to philosophy).

Now, these places are initially disjointed. The place where philosophy localizes the void as a condition of thought is being qua being. The place where psychoanalysis localizes the void is the Subject, *its* subject, in such a way as if vanished in the gap of signifiers where the metonymy of its being proceeds.

Must we conclude, then, upon this discordance and this impasse?

In the seminar of May 8, 1973, Lacan states explicitly that the place that founds truth is in the guise of the void. This void is the Big Other insofar as the Other is a gap: "There is there a hole [*Il y a là un trou*], and this hole is the Other, the Other insofar as the place where speech, deposited there, founds truth."

But what matters here is that the localization is shown to be contrary to that which Lacan attributes to philosophy. "There is there a hole" - what is the "there" [*quel est ce là*]? What exactly is that other place where the hole which founds truth arrives? The "there" or other place is a thought supposable to thinking. The idea that there is a thought supposable to thinking brings us right back to the supposition that the being thinks. For if thinking demands the place filled with thought, it is because being as such thinks. It is in the very place of this supposition of a fully thinking being that Lacan localizes the foundation of truth as a hole.

Now, this supposition, this other place into which the Big Other comes to make "holes" is exactly a supposition of philosophy. Here I cite: "That being is able to think: this is what founds the philosophical tradition after Parmenides."

Thus philosophy establishes the place of its own void, namely, being, as the auto-foundation of thought, there where psychoanalysis establishes its own void, but as a radical decentring

from the breach from which originates the possibility that a truth can be the cause of a subject. The apparent identity of place undoes itself from the fact that it is as the point of the Same that philosophy localizes its void, when Parmenides states that "the same, it is at once thinking and being"; on the contrary it is at the point of the Other that psychoanalysis breaches the void because psychoanalysis de-supposes the thought that philosophy supposes in thinking. The hole of the Other or the empty gap of the Same: these instances of the void which intersect in relation to the space are incommensurable.

We cannot console ourselves by pointing out that Lacan attributes more insight to Heraclitus than to Parmenides, for Heraclitus said that being neither gives itself nor hides itself - it signifies. For, from the inside of philosophy, the signifier produces the tradition which is the most distant from psychoanalysis, the hermeneutic tradition. It is better to maintain discord than to confound philosophy with the interpretive care-taking of sacred texts.

If, putting thinking aside, we turn to action, the situation does not improve. Under the name of Kant, philosophy this time determines the void - that of practical reason - in the supposition of the purely formal character of the Imperative. The Law is without content, and is constituted as commandment by being emptied out of all assignable reference. From this results the capital point that philosophy supposes the void *in* signification. The moral meaning of the act is that its signification is universally presentable and it is only the formal void of the Law from which that universality of signification originates.

Against that localization, Lacan establishes, in the seminar of July 6 1960, the three great propositions of the Ethics of psychoanalysis.:

First, "the only thing one can be guilty of is giving ground relative to one's desire."¹

Second, the ethical hero is the one who, being betrayed, manifests no tolerance for betrayal, for any tolerance of betrayal necessarily sends him back to the service of goods.

Third, the true Good, the one that no service renders, is the one that can serve to pay the price for access to desire, that is, access to the metonymy of our being.

Where do these three propositions localize the void?

One cannot understate the significance of betrayal because betrayal, from the perspective of the act, empties the point where the risk of the service of goods is revealed. The void is exactly this gap, the discovery of the service of goods, such that betrayal opens the wound where, for not ceding on our

desire, should pass, at a high price, the metonymy of our being. If metonymy doesn't pass in this actual void (which at once reveals and cuts the dormant massivity of the service of goods), the metonymy of our being will always be articulated through this service. For, as Lacan says, "beyond this limit, there is no return."

An important consequence of this situation is, in this instance, the fact that the void is not presupposed in signification from the perspective of its universality. It is presupposed *under* signification, at the back of signification, as the slipping, the sliding, the streaming and the channel of our being, in the unrepresented that doubles the signifying chain. I cite:

The channel in which desire is located is not simply that of the modulation of the signifying chain, but that which flows beneath it as well; that is, properly speaking, what we are as well as what we are not, our being and our non-being - that which is signified in an act passes from one signifier of the chain to another beneath all the significations.²

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One could claim in this particular instance that, from the perspective of the act, philosophy localizes the void in the formal universality of signification, while psychoanalysis situates the void on the underside, in the doubling of the lining, of all significations. And we find again in this instance our initial problem. For the universality of the moral act according to Kant opens, under the species of the void, to being itself as being, which Kant names the supersensible. Whereas ethics according to Lacan opens in the singularity of a response to the discovery of betrayal, to *our* being, to what, in Lacanian terms, "we are and also are not, our being and our non-being."

Localization of the void in signification and in universality, or localization of the void in the underside of all signification and in the singularity of the occurrence. Localization of the void as the opening to the supersensible, or localization of the void as the channel of our being: the discord displaces and aggravates itself when one passes from pure to practical reason.

If we now examine the general form of the question of truth, we will find that the opposition concerns (after Parmenides, Plato and Kant) Hegel and the dialectic.

The common point to philosophy and psychoanalysis is that truth and error are absolutely interrelated. Lacan states their mutual relationship with the most extreme rigor in the seminar of June 30, 1954: "As long as the truth isn't entirely revealed, that is to say in all probability until the end of time, its nature will be to propagate itself in the form of error."³

One can only consent to such a proposition.

But Lacan, in the same text, will pronounce from this viewpoint, on one hand, what he calls discourse [*le discours*] (which concerns philosophy, and singularly Hegelian philosophy) and, on the other hand, speech [*la parole*], which psychoanalysis authorizes as excessive to discourse.

What is then the maxim of discourse (and thus, of philosophy)? It is, "in discourse, contradiction begins between truth and error." Let us state that the void of the difference between truth and error (admitted that the latter present the former) is located in the negative, in explicit contradiction. Or, as Lacan claims, "error demonstrates itself such that, at a given moment, it ends in

contradiction." Which means also that a philosophical dialectic locates the void separating error from truth at the point where being as being should coincide exactly with non-being as being. The nothingness of being holds itself there as the ultimate proof of the truth as error exposes it.

This is not the same for psychoanalysis. In an elementary fashion, psychoanalysis asserts: the unconscious ignores the principle of contradiction. More subtly, psychoanalysis claims:

The genuine speech that we are supposed to uncover, not through observation, but through interpretation . . . obeys laws other than those of discourse, which is subject to the condition of having to move within error up to the moment when it encounters contradiction. Authentic speech has other modes, other means, than everyday speech.⁴

It follows that, "the Freudian innovation . . . is the revelation, within the phenomenon, of these subjective, experienced moments, in which speech which goes beyond the discoursing subject emerges."⁵

If dialectical philosophy localizes the void in contradiction, pushed to the purest point, such that being as being cannot support itself in the place of being, psychoanalysis localizes the void in the excessive flowing of a speech, such that the subject of discourse breaks off and is interrupted.

Localization of the void in what derails being from its self-identity, or localization in the excess of the subject, at the breaking point of discourse and speech: you can conceive the insistence of the discord.

But, after all, after all All truth must pass from an impasse, and, without doubt, this applies as well to the truth we seek to state and that is in play empirically in the statement that neither has psychoanalysis interrupted philosophy, nor could philosophy have deconstructed psychoanalysis.

I will commence by indicating a difficult twist in Lacan's text, by keeping myself (for not being immediately subsumed in the categories of discourse) from speaking of contradiction.

In the March 20, 1973 seminar, Lacan declares that if analysis is supported by a presumption or by an ideal, it is from the fact "that it can constitute from its experience a knowledge of the truth."

But in the May 15 seminar of the same year, in express opposition to Plato, he declares that the essence of his teachings is to discern the conditions of the following statement: "There is a relation of being that is not able to be known." He will also state, "on what cannot be demonstrated, something may,

however, be said to be true."

These theses, one must agree, cannot be connected without some exercise. And perhaps it is this painful connection which makes Lacan, immediately after, say that he doesn't know how to deal with truth.

For how can a truth come to knowledge, whose own being, or relationship to being, is not able to be known? This determination of a knowledge of a truth of the unknown, does it not suppose, under the formula "it thinks," that it is said that being thinks, what Lacan discharged as the defect of the inaugural hypotheses of philosophy? Against Plato, Lacan underscores that the aspect or relationship of being is not reducible to the Idea as a knowledge that fills being, or a knowledge of being immanent to being. But the exception of a relationship un-known (if, from the perspective of psychoanalysis it gives itself *in truth*), does it not return to the limit of knowledge, and therefore to the Idea?

Are there (this will be the most pointed form of the question) Ideas of psychoanalysis?

It is my opinion (in light of, or in the shadow of, this question) that Lacan, just like Plato, summons mathematics. Mathematics has always been the substitute of the Idea as Idea, the Idea as Idea which Lacan names the *matheme*.

In 1954, it is speech that was invoked as excessive with regard to the Hegelian discourse of contradiction. In 1973, the excess is expressly mathematical: "With regard to a philosophy whose peak is the Hegelian discourse, the formalization of mathematical logic, can it not be used in the analytic process?"

It is remarkable that immediately after having stated that "mathematical formalization is our goal, our ideal," Lacan resumes the theme that the skeleton of his teaching is that "I speak without knowing it."

We can therefore foresee an intimate link between three terms, or functions:

- *first*: the relationship of being is not reducible to knowledge,
- *second*: there is a possible knowledge of the truth of this relationship,
- *third*: mathematics is the place of the Idea.

One presupposes this time that the localization of the void is nothing other than the "without remains" of the *matheme*: the *matheme* empties any waste in the transmission of what, in experience, touches the un-known of a truth. The void, presented in mathematizing literalization, is what separates truth from knowledge, each time that psychoanalysis opens us to some knowledge of a truth.

Plato was wrong, Lacan tells us, to fill being with knowledge. But the *matheme* authorizes a completely different unachievable filling: to fill what disjoins the unknown and knowledge with the void.

In this sense, there would be knowledge of a truth un-known, at the point of the void. And,

consequently, the meeting of being, just as in philosophy, will be in the supposition of a void that doesn't stick without remainder (thus without fullness) except for the small letters of formalization.

This presupposes that being is distinct from the real, insofar as the real remains a function of the subject. This distinction occurs from the beginning in Lacan. In the seminar of June 30, 1954, when speaking of the three fundamental passions - love, hatred, and ignorance - Lacan declares that these three passions are able to be inscribed "only in the dimension of being, and not in the dimension of the real." He will not differ on this point, in spite of the incessant re-elaborations of the category of the real. In the June 26, 1973 seminar, he still states that "being as such, it is love that comes to meet it."

Philosophy and psychoanalysis can be compossible, as soon as the doubly paradoxical condition of mathematics and love cross their localizations of the void at the point of disjunction of a truth un-known and a knowledge of this truth. This point, I maintain, is that of the Idea. Both psychoanalysis and philosophy ultimately demand that the unfounded and unfindable maxim of Spinoza is maintained: "*habemus enim ideam veram,*" we have in effect (but as an effect of nothing, as the localization of the void) a true idea. At least one.

I will explain myself in order to conclude. This conclusion contains five theses which are philosophical, yet one can hope that they order a durable regime of peaceful coexistence between us.

- Thesis One:* only mathematics is able to suppose that the localization of the void is made in being. There is no other ontology than effective mathematics.
- Thesis Two:* a truth is a meeting of the being that doesn't demonstrate itself, that doesn't know itself, but infinitely proceeds in the Chance of a trajectory. A truth is an indiscernible from the place where it proceeds.
- Thesis Three:* the inauguration of the process of a truth is exactly what Lacan calls a "meeting" (*rencontre*), when he claims that "being as such, it is love that comes to meet it in the encounter" It is, by the way, in Plato's *Symposium*, *exaiphnès*, the "sudden." It is what I call the "event." The event is undecidable.
- Thesis Four:* the subject is nothing else, in its being, than a truth seized in its pure point. It is a vanishing quantity of truth; a differential eclipse in its unachievable infinity. This vanishing is the gap between (*entre-deux*) the undecidability in the event and the indiscernibility of the truth.

Thesis Five:

philosophy and psychoanalysis have as a common aspect two procedures that are exterior to one another: mathematics, on the one hand, and love, on the other. The knot of these components, of their external side, is the localization of the void in the link, or rapport, that one would suppose held together (*tenir ensemble*) the Idea and the thing, or being and the knowledge of being. Love effectuates the void of the link, because there is no sexual relation. Mathematics effectuates the void because it extenuates the void in pure literalization.

If, finally the common site of psychoanalysis and philosophy is the untying, the localization of the void in the non-relatedness of every relation, the subjective category of this link, you will permit me to say its name, is unexpectedly: "courage."

On June 26, 1973, Lacan says that "love can only be realized by what I have called (by a type of poetry, in order to make myself understood) courage, with regard to this fatal destiny." But twenty years earlier, on May 19, 1954, he asked himself this question: "Do we have to extend analytic intervention to the point of becoming one of those fundamental dialogues on justice and courage, in the great dialectical tradition?"⁶ This was almost to prepare psychoanalysis for a modern Platonism. And Lacan found this difficult, because "contemporary humanity has become singularly unskilled for approaching these great themes."

This lack of skill persists, but it is also against the lack that I call for an additional step that philosophy should accomplish, to re-knot being, truth, and the subject, and to repudiate the lamentable apology of its end. If the common ground of our efforts, practice and thought is what I have said, then we will be able to say to one another, with absolute clarity, this solitary word whose pacifying rudeness is only anachronistic in its appearance: courage!

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-translated by raphael comprone and marcus coelen

- 1 Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Bk VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans and notes Denis Porter (New York: Norton, 1992) 321.
- 2 *Seminar VII*, 321-2.
- 3 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Bk I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-1954*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. and notes John Forrester (New York: Norton, 1988) 263.
- 4 *Seminar I*, 267.
- 5 *Seminar I*, 266.
- 6 *Seminar I*, 199.