

P.L.A.C.E

The Question of Psychoanalysis

When people seek to inform themselves on psychoanalysis, they are not so much asking about what psychoanalysis is, or for general theoretical knowledge on the subject, but more urgent questions primarily guided by a need to address their suffering. The typical inquirer, therefore, just supposes that the doctor is the one who knows, while they only bear the burden of their unhappiness. This common comprehension is so often infiltrated with preconceived ideas about psychotherapeutic 'talking-cures', psychological counseling, and psychiatric prescription drugs, that it becomes clear that not only does the question of psychoanalysis lack an answer, but the question itself has been so obscured and misdirected that it has left many indifferent to the practice. If the question of what psychoanalysis is, is to be revived — not merely as a scholarly transmission or an advertisement, but as a preliminary to its cure — one must first work out an adequate way of formulating it.

1 — What is Psychoanalysis?

Can Anything Be Said About Psychoanalysis?

If there is one thing all the literature has in common, it is that there seems to be no real reason to say that psychoanalysis can be defined as one thing rather than another. Yet, to verify this all one has to do is to read the latest academic commentaries or the Los Angeles Times, or further still, put a diverse group of psychoanalysts to the test by asking them what psychoanalysis is. The beauty of a psychoanalytic discourse consists in the fact that — up to a cliché - the responses will be found to be a highly conflicting and heterogeneous mass. To be serious one must respond to this arbitrariness in a manner that would go beyond trying to standardize it in schools of psychoanalytic thought or reject it as the vagaries of an immature science.

Establishing a Place for the 'Free-Associations'

Divided between codes of professional standing and academic fantasy, a response to the question of psychoanalysis poses enough difficulty to be discouraging to anyone seeking information. Our aim here is to introduce the question otherwise, in the tradition of Freud, by showing how there is a *fundamental rule* of its discourse that situates its instability, not as a mere error or nonsense, but as 'free associations' necessary to its field. For those who are not aware of just why contemporary psychoanalysis has, since Lacan, achieved a progress in psychoanalysis through a construction of the *topos* - place - of its discourse, this essay aims to inform simply, without vulgarization. For contemporary Lacanian psychoanalysis stabilizes the heterogeneous nature of analytic discourse not by homogenizing it through conventional rules - the establishment of schools, approaches, codebooks, etc. - but through laws that are not only necessary, but supportable in the construction of a topology (*topos* - greek = place, and *logos* = logic/word/reason).

To those who have heard of this achievement of psychoanalysis in extension through topology, but who have had little experience in its actual practice, this essay will have served its purpose if it succeeds in introducing the problem and showing how topology can be presented not as an abstract branch of mathematics, but as what the psychoanalyst and analysand are doing concretely — perhaps without recognizing it — in their practice and clinic (follow up articles on this site are: *La Topologie Perdu The Dénouement of the Cure*), Finally, it should be recognized that

Lacan was neither the first analyst to have alerted us to the difficulties of an analytic transmission nor the only one to have proposed a structural 'resemblance' between mathematical and psychoanalytic problems of transmission. To this end we find W. Bion stating:

The mathematical problem resembles the psychoanalytic problem in that it is necessary that the solution should have a wide degree of applicability and acceptance and so avoid the need to apply different arguments to different cases when the different cases appear to have essentially the same configuration. Any analyst will recognize the confusion that is caused, or at best the sense of dissatisfaction that prevails, when a discussion by members makes it quite clear that the configuration of the case is apprehended by all, but the arguments formulated in its elucidation vary from member to member and from case to case. It is essential that such a state of affairs should be made unnecessary if progress is to take place. The search must be for formulations that represent the essential similarity of the configurations, recognized by all who deal with them, and thus to make unnecessary the ad hoc nature of so many psychoanalytic theories. (W. Bion, Transformations, 1965, p.85)

If this is so, then it would not be untrue to say that Lacan is the first to realize Bion's search by achieving psychoanalysis in a topology whose

If this is so, then it would not be untrue to say that Lacan is the first to realize Dion's search by achieving psychoanalysis in a topology whose relation to mathematics is no longer a question of resemblance, but a structural problem inherent to a theory of the signifier and letter.

Not Defining, but Determining the Conditions for Psychoanalysis to Take Place: the Clinic

We will begin here then, not by trying to *define* psychoanalysis — surely a thankless endeavor that inevitably falls back on merely descriptive and normative features — but by *determining* its conditions. What has been historically called the *Freudian Cause* is nothing other than a methodological concern that such conditions be articulated from the outset. To found psychoanalysis in this way means that beyond the evidence provided by institutions and usage, and despite the tremendous contemporary acceptance of its jargon, there is no need to take for granted that psychoanalysis exists rather than nothing at all. Of course, one can always lie on a couch and remain under transference for years, but this does not constitute an analysis. On the contrary, it is on the basis of putting the knowledge of the psychoanalyst into question, that is to say, by requiring psychoanalysts to assume the consequences of their own theory by applying it to themselves (the rule of free-association, for example), that one begins to establish not a mere critique, but a clinic and a practice of one's own proper theory. Further still, it is precisely this didactic dimension of assuming responsibility for the theory itself, that begins to distinguish a psychoanalytic entry from the revolving door of psychotherapy and a 'consumer of the cure'. Lacan formulates the problem as follows:

"I propose that the section entitled at Vincennes 'the psychoanalytic clinic' be a way of interrogating the psychoanalyst and to make him or her declare their reasons. [...] The psychoanalytic clinic must consist not only in interrogating analysis, but in interrogating the analysts, so that they render account themselves of the hazards of their practice, which justifies Freud having existed". [Jacques Lacan, *Ouverture de la Section Clinique* (in *Ornicar*, text established by Jacques-Alain Miller, Paris, 1977) translated by R. Groome]

As such, the conditions for the modern rationality peculiar to the invention of psychoanalysis and the discovery of the unconscious can only be established in regards to the formation of its clinic. We aim to proceed here, therefore, in two steps, by establishing the necessary and sufficient conditions for psychoanalysis to take place, that it would have a practice and a theory of its own distinguishable from that of psychology, psychotherapy, or psychiatry.

Necessary Conditions

In order to recognize what psychoanalysis is, it comes perhaps as no surprise to state that it is necessary to do it, as many other theories insist on the fact that learning is doing, and that to some extent one cannot merely understand what psychoanalysis is before doing it. This is the necessary condition for the formation of the clinic, whose basis has been described by Lacan:

"What is the psychoanalytic clinic? It is not complicated. It has a base — it is what one says in psychoanalysis. In principle one proposes to say no matter what, but not no matter where [pas de n'importe où — Lacan has also stated elsewhere 'not no matter how'] — in order for what I call for this evening the saying [dire: infinite verb] to get into the 'analytic wind'." [Jacques Lacan, *Ouverture de la Section Clinique* (in *Ornicar*, text established by Jacques-Alain Miller, Paris, 1977) translated by R. Groome]

Sufficient Conditions

Yet, this 'doing', once confined to 'talk-therapy', has never been *sufficient* to found the psychoanalytic act or a training analysis. Without going into the historical obstacles posed to psychoanalysis by the treatment of psychosis and perversion, it is enough today to observe that the usual client-based cure is divided between a talk-therapy reducing the power of language to suggestive speech, and a dominant psychiatry aiming to medicalize a real of the body that does not respond to such speech. Without denying the ability of such techniques to calm, monitor, and eventually police the symptom, the place of the psychoanalytic clinic lies elsewhere.

Here, then, in order to bridge this divide between talk therapy and psychiatry, between a culturalist or naturalist approach to the cure, it suffices to construct clinically what such normative procedures keep apart: the voice and the gaze. The medical doctor, for instance, only considers your language as a symptom: that is to say, as an index of the silent cause, and not as intrinsic to the actual illness, which she eventually hopes to observe in a brain-scan or microscope. Of course, if this medical doctor is a psychiatrist, then it is not *sufficient* to consider just the biological causes of an illness, for she or someone else - a therapist - must also consider the symbolic causes of the patient's suffering by listening to a voice, which the doctor only gives a place to in cultural and environmental explanations.

Lacanian psychoanalysis, on the contrary, begins by giving language a primary place in its clinical observations, thereby not reducing the symbolic to therapeutic speech or a mere linguistic analysis. In so doing, psychoanalysis clinically isolates the symptom, that is, isolates what is silent or 'unsayable' in speech as such, not by trying to go beyond speech and discovering the causality of the symptom in a silent natural disease or cultural environment, but in isolating its trait and writing. A clinic, in the psychoanalytic sense, as a consequence begins by giving a place to what is 'unspeakable' as such — that which is not merely repressed, but what is repressing: the subjection to writing and the signifier. One can

what is unspeakable as such - that which is not merely repressed, but what is repressing: the subjection to writing and the signifier. One can very well begin in the analysis of today to go beyond the "talking cure" where the symptom is left at the level of a series of missed events, lapsus, word plays, etc., and begin to address those acts which are not merely missed, but missed absolutely : a certain rejection, hole, 'out of placeness', or ignorance, intrinsic to the modern analytic *Sinthome* (see Common Questions for an introduction to this term). For a contemporary orientation of psychoanalytic practice proceeds not merely - or at all - by helping a patient/client to try to voice what is repressed (the stereotypical psychotherapeutic move) but to construct repression itself as a certain *flatis vocis*. Indeed, if the unconscious is by definition what remains unsayable and symptomatic in the expression of individual suffering, if one can never say it all, then this does not mean one must suffer in silence at this place or resort to passing secrets just in the imperative 'to do something'. On the contrary, it *suffices* to construct psychoanalysis as a "discourse without speech" , where neither the *voice* nor the *gaze* is to be confused with mere speech or vision. As such, once isolated as fundamental objects of the psychoanalytic clinic, the construction of the *voice* and the *gaze* does not take place through the use of technological hardware – a tape-recorder, microscope, encephalogram, etc. – but through the aid of a logical instrument or topology. The conjunction of the *gaze* and topology, not with vision, but with the *voice*, should really come as no surprise once it is recognized that there have been many celebrated blind geometers and topologists – though none without a *voice*.

Lacan draws out the implications of this conjunction for a progress in psychoanalytic theory and practice as follows:

"A psychoanalyst cannot not render account of linguistics and the ex-istence of the signifier. But linguistics misses how the truth is maintained in what it is very well necessary for its saying to be in place, its topological place — this is the reason I once permitted myself to speak of tori (topological figures resembling donuts). Suppose that the psychoanalytic clinic is this, let us indicate a direction to those who are engaged in this work." [Jacques Lacan, *Ornicar*, text established by Jacques-Alain Miller, Paris, 1977]

or again:

"It is not for nothing that the psychoanalysts would have more of an aversion for the unconscious [than Freud and his contemporaries] for they do not know where to put it. This is understandable, it does not belong to 'euclidean space'. It is necessary to construct its proper space, and that is what I am doing today. The psychoanalysts who have not touched my teaching do not know about this. They prefer to have recourse to notions like the ego, superego, etc. ...which are found in Freud, but which are equally homonyms with notions which have been used for a very long time, such that to use them permits an implicit return to their ancient acceptations." [Interview with Jacques Lacan, by Pierre Daix, Paris 26, Nov. 1966]

Consequently, one is never further from assuming a psychoanalysis, than when one attempts to act out the significations and stereotypes of spoken language. Far from denying anyone a use of a 'free-association' or fantasy as an initial means to get into the 'analytic wind', one must eventually ask if any progress can be made in remaining there. To begin to respond to this question, Lacan called for a '*traversing of the fantasy*' of analysis in the construction of 'adequate topology': a manner of constructing the situation of psychoanalysis that does not continually fall back into a fantasist reading of an analytic practice and the theory of Freud and Lacan,

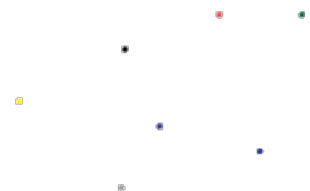
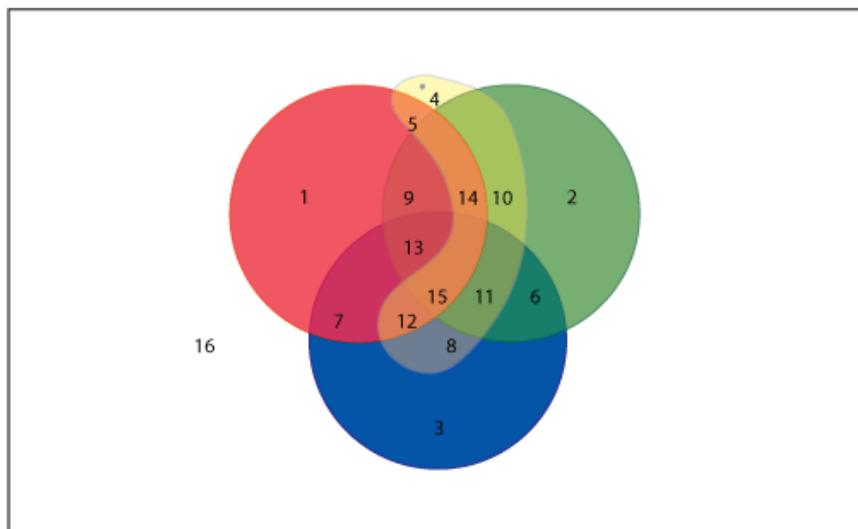
(Santa Monica, CA/2004)

The Topological Turn: Constructing the Intension of Psychoanalysis in Extension (new text/2007)

The question of determining the *intension* of psychoanalytic theory in *extension* – or in a topology – is not so surprising as one of Lacan's first models of the signifier/signified relation was found in the example of the mustard pot: the opposition of *form/content* explained in *extension* becomes a way to account for a void. What is important with Lacan's topological introduction, is not the rejection of *sense/intension*, but to not confuse an investigation into *sense*, with an 'appeal' or 'understanding' of *sense*. No doubt, these 'appeals' or 'understanding' of the *sense* of a psychoanalytic theory have served historically not only to avoid any serious investigation, but to systematically bypass psychoanalysis altogether in the name of psychotherapy. In beginning to layout the theory and practice of psychoanalysis in a manner closer to the theory of Freud and Lacan, we will begin here to outline the *topological turn*.

Remaining at the level of what is too often left as a question of technique, the problem of modeling the intension or semantics of a theory in algebra or mathematical logic often results in what is called a *representation theorem*. For example, in the celebrated theorem of Stone, two different theories and languages, Boolean Algebra and Sets, can be shown to be nonisomorphic, but even so, the theory of sets can be used to represent the semantics of Boolean algebra in a purely extensional way where the truth values and relations of the former can be represented

spatially as the inclusion or exclusion in a set in the manner of Venn diagrams or an ordering on a trellis (under construction).



16 BOOLEAN functions represented as the set of all subsets of four colors

- 1 1110
- 2 1101
- 3 1011
- 4 0111
- 5 1100
- 6 1010
- 7 0101
- 8 1001
- 9 0110
- 10 0011
- 11 1000
- 12 0100
- 13 0010
- 14 0001
- 15 1111
- 16 0000

(# Note to code: in order to signal the 'risk' of representation to the debutant of logic, we have declined to interpret the binary code in a spatial correspondence with the closed curves. Thus, the code is used in a more presentational manner to indicate an intrinsic change of region (color) -irregardless of the regions connotation of being contained 'inside' or 'outside' another. Later, it will become important to show precisely how such extrinsic concerns leads us to consider not merely coding the inside and outside of closed curves in the manner of Venn, but the *embedding* and *immersion* of diagrams in logical knots.)

What is important to note is that a *representation theorem* serves to pass from the language of what Koyre calls a theory of the 'un peu prés' to that of precision: that is, from "this box weighs a lot" to "it has a mass of 100grams". In which case, it is supposed that we literally do not have a

mass or number in our hands then “apply” or “verify” it in reference to the weight of a physical object; rather we are stating that we can prove that the structure of the ordinary language of observation (or the axioms of physics) is the same as a subset of certain arithmetical operations. For example, in the theory of knots Vaughan Jones proved that certain knot theoretical problems can be represented in what are called Hecke Algebras. Yet, sometimes it is not possible to prove a *representation theorem* – at which point it becomes possible to ask if there are *embedding* and *immersing theorems* of one theory/language into another. The basic idea is that any complicated theory/language can be explained by assuming that it is transliteratable into another more global theory/language. For instance, Champollion showed how the Egyptian hieroglyphs were not represented by the Coptic language, but had certain ‘embeddings’ such that there was no 1-1 translation from one to other, but that such a translation would only preserve certain neighborhoods, while leaving blanks or holes in others. What needs to be made precise in such an intuitive example, is that Lacan proposed that a discourse was not merely a terminological affair, but a letter, number, name, or mark, could have a place and introduce a difference of structure where certain singularities (points de caption) and transparencies (fadings, effacings, holes, etc.) occurred in a local presentation of a language. In which case, Lacan proposed that the theory of psychoanalysis could actually be written in a topological theory in transliterating its fundamental signifiers in the embedding of the Borromean lock.

(image)

Yet, unlike the use of Set theoretical Venn diagrams to represent Boolean Algebra, the Borromean is not a representation of psychoanalysis in a model. Rather it is a practice of *embedding-immersing* a theory itself in extension. In future articles we will show precisely how this leads quite directly to the notion of an analytic *structure*. For the moment, let us simply note that this interpretation of space affirms a correspondance to the Freudian postulate that reverses the cartesian notions on the nonextended nature of thought and the extended nature of the body. Since Freud, if thought itself can be unconscious, then this implies a certain *extension*; just as if the body can be the seat of consciousness, then this implies a certain *intension*. Translated from the language of philosophy and psychoanalysis, such sentences become propositions on a topological structure of the practice of psychoanalysis. It may be remarked here, that with such a reversal, there is not one psychoanalytic theory and different practices or models, but one practice (fundamental rule/clinic), with many different theories (fantasies) and languages possible, but whose only hope of being the same is not in the comprehension of the sense of the theory (or the homogenization through guilds and schools); but in the explication of the theory in extension, in a structure. An introduction to Lacanian psychoanalysis to the letter, then, occurs exactly as a mental symptom, or more precisely *sinthome* – something that cannot be understood or appealed to in *intension*, but only shown or explained in *extension*: as such, its theory is by definition given a place or does not exist at all.

We put forward here four propositions on the initial conditions without which a psychoanalytic association, since Lacan, can not begin to isolate the symptom/sinthome of its clinic:

1) There is only One practice of psychoanalysis: this is the fundamental rule of what is commonly called *free-association* in the session, extended into the second fundamental rule (Ferenzi) in the school; extended triply by Lacan as the basis of the psychoanalytic clinic.

2) There are Many theories (fantasies) of psychoanalysis: this forms the basis of Lacan's introduction of topology in the homogenization of the diverse theories through a work of *extension* or topology. This condition is explained in the article referenced above, but briefly, it states the theory of psychoanalysis, in all of its diverse symptoms of incomprehension – impostures, immaturity, nonscientificity, etc. – can not be understood in *intension* (hermeneutics, infinite historical and philo commentary, etc.), but only explained in *extension*.

3) Traversing the intension (comprehension) of psychoanalytic theory requires reconstructing its assumptions in extension as the first move towards traversing the fantasy of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is the only theory to come out of modern medicine that includes itself in its own clinical symptomology. Setting up psychoanalysis as a theory in *extension*, the theory itself has the structure of a symptom - something that is shown, but not understandable by definition. More precisely, psychoanalytic training is an introduction to the psychoanalytic *sinthome*: an ignorance that cannot be removed by understanding or erudite commentary, but must be constructed 'off'.

4) Any presentation of psychoanalysis – whether a dream, fantasy, or delire – is not simply what is transmitted but its manner or style: there are two modes of using a style in Lacanian psychoanalysis,

a) one, in *intension*, where through a certain charm and passion one attempts to subject oneself and others to a *no matter what* (sense or nonsense) and *no matter how* (i.e. without a construction);

b) the other, in *extension*, that actually passes the variants of style as a *no matter what, but not no matter how*: that is, as having invariants of

extension or a structure.

It is this latter mode that is crucial in a contemporary Lacanian analysis as it constructs the sinthome in *extension* as a problem of style and structure.

(First draft text proposed by Robert Groome March 1, 2007// not yet judged by web committee)

Santa Monica, CA 2007

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