

Jacques-Alain Miller
To Interpret the Cause:
From Freud to Lacan

My first point is entitled: *Aetiologia*. But first let me dispel any conception that my title, "To Interpret the Cause," is a Lacanian catch-phrase. When Freud introduces the wolf dream in Chapter IV of his *History of an Infantile Neurosis*, he stresses this very point; that he was convinced - and he mentions that his patient accepted his conviction - that the cause of the infantile neurosis of the Wolf Man was hidden behind the dream. The text says precisely: "das hinter ihm die Verursachung seiner infantilen Neurose verborgen sei."¹

So, this farfetched interpretation, Freud's augury about the dream, going from its explicit content to its concealed content, is an interpretation aiming at the cause, the hidden cause. And the very notion of the hidden cause is central to psychoanalytic practice and to psychoanalytic theory. At this preliminary point, which I have made to accustom you to the very idea of the cause, let us not forget that from the outset Freud's investigation began as a tentative aetiology of the psychoneuroses. Aetiology *means* a discourse of causes. From the start, Freud was going in search of causes. And you remember that at the beginning he was looking for *actual* causes of the psychoneuroses. For instance, he considered the practice of masturbation as a cause for deficiency of sexual potency and for the neuralgias. Then, Freud had to concede that psychoneuroses were present effects of past causes, and not actual causes. Moreover, he conceded that the real past causes were hidden to the consciousness of the patients. And, it is in *this* past that Freud was obliged to invent the very concept of repression. That is to say, he reinvented the concept of a hidden cause with deferred effects, *Nachträglich*, a triggered *après-coup*, *a posteriori*, and by a second event. In the famous case of the Wolf Man, this concept of the *Nachträglich* is present on every page. It is the major text by Freud which presents

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precisely this; that those effects are as a posteriors. In the Wolf Man case, the second event which triggers the effects of the hidden cause is the famous dream itself.

So, I believe that I am on a very solid ground when I propose that psychoanalysis has always been a discourse about the cause. And psychoanalytic practice has always been looking for the cause. Let us take a shortcut now. What is a cause? If we refer to the case of the Wolf Man, there is no ambiguity in Freud's answer. The cause, broadly speaking, is the sexual act between the father and the mother as absorbed by the one-and-a-half-year old child. In psychoanalysis, interpretation not only aims at the cause, we may even say, interpretation stumbles on the cause. For instance, the use of the myth of Oedipus in psychoanalytic practice, the Freudian Oedipus that is the symbolic frame of interpretation insofar as interpretation aims at the cause, conceived here as the sexual relationship, the erotic relationship, which binds together father, mother, child - the family. And, we may even say, that the Freudian cause taken as pre-Oedipal cause is the key to the transference insofar as transference *may appear* to be a repetition of the fundamental relations of the patient to the parents.

And you know the consequences of this point of view. It paved the way for interpretations of transference construed as "paternal" or "maternal" transference. You know that some modern analysts say that Freud analyzed from the position of the father, that he accepted the position of the father in the transference, and they prefer that the maternal position now be more operative in analysis. In any case with this reference to the Oedipal cause, you also have a key to the various theories of transference. Transference and interpretation are, as you know, the classical pair of interrelated notions. I am not going to give the would-be classical presentation of this pair of notions, however, because I gave it in some sense four years ago in Amherst, Massachusetts, at the colloquium on transference.² At that time, I was preoccupied with giving the *classical presentation* of this pair of notions.

Today I am going to try, if I may say so, to break new ground by following Lacan in understanding what psychoanalysis is about; new ground in understanding, in articulating as they say, the desire of psychoanalysis. And this talk falls in the same sequence as my course in Paris, whose title this year is "Cause and Consent" [1988]. I see Bruce Fink here who attends my course and participates in my weekly seminar. Well, perhaps, he would tell you, in effect, that what I have been saying here is precisely the point I was trying to

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present fifteen days ago in Paris, and which I continue to come back to. And this point is also an effort to give a unified theory of the Freudian field or to see how Lacan has given such a unified theory of the Freudian field. I do not know if I will have time to get that far, but that is my aim.

Causes Versus Law

Now, let us take a second point, which I shall call "Causes Versus Law." This is still preliminary. The first two notions of cause and law are easily confused I would say, one with the other. As a matter of fact, thinking in a scientific framework, we consider that there is a fixed relationship between cause and effect, a stable and fixed relationship. And so we may try. Eventually scientific investigation aims to formulate laws of the relationships between a given cause and a given effect. That is elementary epistemology - which is not our central topic today - so I shall skip a lot of the various concentrations I cover in my course. What is central in the idea of a law, from the scientific point of view, is - I would select two words - first, regularity. When there is a law, we anticipate the regularity of the manifestation of the effect once a cause is present. So, a law allows anticipation of what is going to take place. It allows predictions. When we have laws and no capacity for prediction, we always wonder if we truly have a law, if it is truly a science.

I do not know if it is a bad memory for some of you [reference to a recent stock-market plummet], but there are various phenomena in the economic field which cast a certain doubt on a scientific rationale, for instance, of the economy. Nevertheless, there are always prices in economy; such novelties are not for psychoanalysis. When you can

not even predict, and you have a whole lot of laws, you wonder what field you are in. So, regularity.

And, second, I would say, continuity. As a matter of fact. When a cause is inscribed in a law such that you may say the same cause produces the same effect, you are faced with a *continuous* chain because you may ask of the cause itself, what is the cause that causes this cause? That is to say, a cause is at the same time the effect of another cause. So, when you inscribe the cause in laws, you are, as a matter of fact, faced with a chain of necessity, determinism, where you have not - it is very difficult to do - pinpointed a cause. You have a chain of causes and effects, and when you think about that in a theoretical way, you wonder where this chain of

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cause and effect begins. And you know that those who introduced the scientific discourse in our culture in the seventeenth century were inclined to have, had to have, a theory of God which - we are accustomed to making a separation between science and religion made a link between science and religion. From the start, scientific discourse was grounded precisely on this continuity of causes and effects.

The cause I am talking about, the cause in psychoanalysis - the word *cause* is in the very title of the *École de la cause freudienne* - the cause we are speaking of, the Freudian cause, is a cause with another *content*. It is a *cause* - not as inscribed in a law of regularity and continuity, but rather a cause which so preoccupied David Hume in the 18th century when he showed that the very term the "cause", as separate, as primary, was non-conceptual. And, you know that the reasoning of Hume triggered the philosophical effort of Kant himself. I cannot take up again the argument of Hume. And you know, perhaps, that Karl Popper, in our century, has built all his schemology on Hume's arguments about causality I cannot give you a resume of these arguments, but you may understand that, if you have a continuity in this way, you may *never* be able to pinpoint the cause as separate. So, as a matter of fact, if you think of the relationship between cause and chain, you may understand that cause, the very notion of cause, involves a breaking up of the chain. That is to say, the question of the cause can only appear when there is a breaking up of the chain. So, you may ask, where is the cause at the very moment where there is this lack? I would say, in the concept of causality as distinct from legality, one finds a concept of cause as distinct from law. And it always implies the notion of a missing link. You direct yourself to the idea of cause precisely when there is this missing link. That is to say that discontinuity, and not regularity, is essential to the notion of causality. And, if you think - let me take a shortcut - of the chain as a chain of signifiers, precisely the famous chain of signifiers, well, you may understand that with the concept of cause, the chain of signifiers Well, I would put it like that:

S - S' - S'' - S''' - S''''

You may understand that cause necessitates the removal of one signifier, as being the missing link. And this removal of one link is precisely what we could write like this:

S - S' - § - S''' - S''''

with an S and a bar, which is Lacan's signifier for the subject. And perhaps through this - it is only a beginning - you may

understand in what sense Lacan says that the subject is involved in the very structure of causality. The subject as a lacking, as a missing link, is involved in the structure of causality versus legality.

Perhaps this may appear to be abstract, but let us take the Wolf Man, let us reread the Wolf Man, and we see clearly how Freud finds his way about in this clinical case, locating the various breakdowns of continuity. There are three great discontinuities in the Wolf Man's origins. The first discontinuity is when he was a kind child, a loving child, a very quiet child. And then at a moment which can be precisely dated he grows into a naughty child. Freud asked why there is this change? You know that it was from those discontinuities in the origins of the patient's life that Freud found the seduction by the sister and by the Nanny. Then you have another discontinuity when the Wolf Man becomes phobic. He had no phobia of animals. And then wolves appear in his dream, the famous dream, and a phobia develops. So, there are the seductions, the dream, and then a third discontinuity when he becomes obsessive. He presents an obsessive fear. The same commentary is written by Freud. Freud's account marks these three essential discontinuities.

So, if it is a clinical investigation, I believe you understand the importance of discontinuity - whereas in a law we are looking for regularity, and we find that regularity necessary. On the side of causality as we understand it, there is no regularity, but surprise! It is true that in psychoanalysis, at a certain level, you have laws. In Lacan, for instance, you have the laws of language, the well-known famous laws of metaphor and metonymy. And you have the wellknown example by Lacan concerning all these apparatus of plus and minus which have been attracting so much attention for the last 25 years or 30 years. We see people, generation after generation, coming to verify the Lacanian schema, etcetera.

But, let us not forget that the Freudian unconscious had no laws. We know as a practical matter that the unconscious does not allow anticipation. And you cannot predict when the phenomena analyzed by Freud in the psychopathology of everyday life, you can never predict, will appear. And, moreover, I would say that there is no effective interpretation when an interpretation is predictable. The patient knows that very well. Nowadays, the patient comes, already presenting himself with a predictable interpretation: "You're going to say that I was in love with my mother Ha! Ha!" So, you understand, the element of surprise is not an advantage. It is a surface. It is something which is structurally implied by the

interpretation *because* the unconscious has no law. That this element of surprise is essential to interpretation was pinpointed enough by Lacan in 1958. But it was first pinpointed and developed by [Bruno Hike] in his books that are here. We may say that the effect of interpretation is a surprise for the patient, and eventually - this was recalled by Hourik Zakarian this morning - it is also a surprise for the analyst himself. He may prepare interpretation; he may prepare the framework of interpretation, but, usually the effect of the interpretations come as a surprise for him himself. You have at the same time both calc-

ulation and an uncalculated element, an element of pure encounter. For an entire year in Paris, we met for twelve clinical meetings in the *Ecole de la cause freudienne* on the topic of the calculus of interpretation. Each time two analysts gave an account of how he or she *does* interpretation. And it was very clear that the most recurrent interpretations are not so effective as what comes from surprise. So, let us say now, concerning the cause, that the cause is a signifying chain. The cause, I would say, shines in the lack, in the very lack in the signifying chain. And, it is not a poetical metaphor. The chain translates the link there is between cause and lack. And, perhaps, I can already write this sentence down in our algebra: "This cause shines in the very lack of the signifying chain," writing here, small *a* as the name of the cause

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a

This is an anticipation of things to come, the question being, when does the chain of signifiers break down? When is there necessarily a lack in the signifier?

Couples

And now let us take the third point which I call "Couples." I believe it is the title of a novel by John Updike, *Couples*. Let us go back to the word of Freud. First, consider what he calls his knowledge as the cause of this knowing. He considered the observation of the sexual act between the parents as the cause of the neurosis of the Wolf Man later triggered by the dream of the wolf. And he considered this observation of the sexual act as traumatic, as a traumatism which determined the destiny of the Wolf Man's life. But it is not pure observation at stake because even in Freud's own terms it is a problem. It is not only observation. It is problematization that

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emerges with all the clarity which is not so clear from the observations that emerge. For the subject, for the patient, there is a problem, which Freud calls a problem of castration, which is something quite different from pure observation. The problem, castration as a problem, means, in this case, that the subject cannot accept for himself the castration of the mother. That is to say, she does not have the masculine member. And because of that he cannot accept what castration would be for him.

And, as a matter of fact, we know from analytic practice that the observations of the parents by the child pertain to the genitals, the use of the genitals, and more generally, to all the signs of enjoyment which the subject lacks by not being in the married couple: the signifiers of enjoyment and the signifiers of desire. And, what then, is the traumatism pinpointed by Freud in this observation of the Wolf Man? Traumatism occurs because the subject cannot manage to translate what he observes concerning the sexual relationship of his parents in terms, I would say, of sexuality, in terms of what a man is and what a woman is. He tries to confirm what the cause of the problem is. This is not observation. It is, rather that observation of the parental copulation is an effort to understand what a man is and what a woman is. That is to say, to go from the father and mother relationship to the man/woman relationship. Let us write it down. It is: from F ◆ M, goes

to the man and woman relationship, M ♦ W And, here we may use the term of Lacan, which in French is: *rapport sexuel*. We may translate it as "sexual relation," but by adding cause and effect, it is translated as a fixed formula, as a fixed signifier formula. And we may say that from the formula of the father/mother relationship, the subject tries to go to a man and woman fixed formula. And, precisely, on this point, in this case of going from father/mother to man/woman, there is no connection. And we may say that the only thing we would like to observe in our parents is precisely the formula of the sexual relationship, to understand through them, through their relationship, what it is to be a man to a woman or a woman to a man.

And the lesson of the Freudian field is that in no case do we learn that. That is what Freud called traumatism. The traumatism of sex-uality is essentially this lack of connection between those two relationships. What appears in Freud as a traumatism appears in Lacan as an axiom. As part of an axiomatic which says: There is no *rapport sexuel*. There is no fixed formula of sexual relationship between human beings. Lacan translates as an axiom what he takes from the Freudian cases that always appears as a traumatism of

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sexuality But this traumatism of sexuality is not incidental. It is structural, if we consider that in every case it translates clearly in analytic experience and in spite of the enormous novel concerning the family which every patient, or nearly every patient, spells out. In spite of this novel, he cannot obtain a fixed formula from it, an established formula of what the relationship between man and woman is. And that is what Freud calls a problem of castration.

It is a problem of castration. And there is a primary scene. But the problem of the primary scene in Freud is that it has to be translated in terms of castration. It must be codified through the phallus. We call it the phallus and you could call it, I don't know, the "pee-wee," the "dong," or the "shaft." I bought a book about the name of the male organ in English. A textbook. The only word lacking in this textbook is phallus. And we use this seemingly scientific term precisely to say that it is through this symbol that the subject tries to encode the family scene, that is, the relationship between father and mother.

And, as a matter of fact, we see that a certain elaboration of the relationship between father and mother is used by the Wolf Man to understand what kind of woman is his type. In the Wolf Man case, Freud analyzed very precisely how the subject's conclusion regarding the primary scene has a privileged love object, which is a certain type of woman in a certain position. That is to say, when he encounters a woman by chance, generally a poor woman, on her hands and knees, working at a humble task, and sees her from behind, when all those very precise conditions are realized, he falls in love! That is to say, it is precisely like a formula. You now understand the value of the term "problem" in this case. We have for the Wolf Man a very precise formula for falling in love. And, Freud says that the Wolf Man falls in love conclusively, as a compulsion, when those conditions are realized. So we have, in our humanity, precise conditions for men and women to relate one with the other. But it is not a formula at the level of humanity as such, as it is with animals. With animals, we know through ecology, that very precise formulas exist for the relationship between sexes, where the appearance of some signs on the body of a member of the species signals that he is ready for sex. He or she is avail-

able. This is a formula, a fixed formula, a fixed sexual formula, which is true for all the species.

With humanity we also have fixed formulas but which have validity only at the individual level. A fixed formula which would indicate that the man is such or the woman is such . . . if we had

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that, we would not have psychoanalysis. That is, I would say, the fundamental breakdown of the symbolic order concerning humanity, the fundamental lack of a fixed formula for the sexual relationship between the sexes. And, in some way, the unique formula a subject encounters in his life, which could *be* the fixed formula for sexual relationship, is the parental couple.

The compulsions of the Wolf Man, says Freud, are directly derived from the sexual act observed by the subject in the primary scene. The problem is it is not certain that the fixed relationship existing between father and mother is a *sexual* relationship, as we [Lacanian] read it. It would be simpler if you could directly translate a fixed relationship between father and mother into a relationship between man and woman. But, that is precisely the problem. Frequently in analytic experience we see how suspicious the subject may be concerning the fact that the relationship between his parents is *really* sexual. And sometimes it takes a form of: "It's really unbelievable." Or the subject may recall that at one point in his life he thought it was really unbelievable that his mother could make love with his father; that really was a scandal. Sometimes you see how fresh this impression still is, the subject's very discovery that this parental relationship was sexual. And, sometimes, the subject recalls that as a traumatism - precisely, that is, to have understood that there was something of this order between his parents.

As a matter of fact, all analytic experience from the start demonstrates, rather, that the parental couple not only cannot ground the sexual relationship between man and woman but, on the contrary, the mother is an obstacle to the access to women. And that because of this, THE woman or Woman with a capital W if woman has a meaning for humanity, is the mother. And that, the father, also, for a woman anyway, the father in hysteria, is an obstacle to the access to men. That is to say, in analytic experience, the marital couple seem to have assumed a role that is more an obstacle to the sexual relationship than a facilitation.

Now, in Freud, we may say that we are looking for what would be the correct codification of the sexual relationship. And there is a usual combination which we encounter in Freud himself, a combination of those two relationships at the same time. That is what Freud called by the terms "activity" and "passivity." But we may translate it bluntly. One angle from which to clarify those relationships, the usual conclusion, is to clarify them in terms of power. And we must remember that the family, as an institution, exists in

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the social realm, in the social space, the social place as construed by the master, from the idea of mastery. So, a way to symbolize this man/woman relationship, and which Freud

himself uses, is to view it from the signifier couple, that is to say, from the relationship of the master signifier, let us say, to the slave signifier.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} S_1 & \rightarrow & S_2 \\ \text{Master} & & \text{Slave} \end{array}$$

Activity and passivity translate themselves in terms of power like that. And through this, you may try to clarify the relationship between father and mother and between man and woman: F ♦ M to M ♦ W. As a matter of fact, it is usual in our culture that the father be head of the family, I would say. You know, for instance, that is also clear with the use of the name, the proper name, and it looks like a very long fight to try to separate the man and woman relationship, the father and mother relationship, from this codification. And all this is a topic, already well known, not only through psychoanalysis but through feminism. And I believe I do not need to expand on this point, on this codification in terms of power.

Let us say that this couple, master/slave, gives us a kind of *analogum* of the sexual relationship, of the formula of the sexual relationship, and is a way to explain the actual decline of the image of the father, a decline which is happening. Because the surprise is that a true father, a father that would be equal to the master signifier, would be a father who does not work. The work would be done by the slave. I must say that, contrariwise to the idea of activity and passivity, Lacan had already noted that women usually work much harder than men. But, at the same time, in our society, with our work ethic, the father works. And in some way this is linked with the decline of the image of the father, the true father. We call the true father the dead father to show really, that he does not work. The true father, I would say is the gigolo. Perhaps I shall not expand on that one, but obviously

It is an easy sociology, that is true, but you may understand in what sense the analyst does not work. The analyst occupies the place of the master who makes the other, the patient, work. And, yet, we know that for the obsessive patient, immediately, the analyst works, and is going to continue working for quite a long time in this relationship. The hysterical subject has the objective of trying to make the analyst work, to present the analyst with some kind of difficulties, with some kind of exigencies, to let him work.

This is the same as going to look for the deficiency of the Other or, as somebody put it, to obtain the castration of the Other. And if the analyst does not work, you understand how he should, but if the analyst does not work, it is to let the unconscious work, not to work instead of the unconscious. And if an analyst does not work, the sense is to vary an antimony between the working of the analyst and the working of the unconscious. And that is why Lacan spoke of the analytic act for the analyst as distinct from analytical work. We speak of the act of the analyst who authorizes the process, who guarantees the process, and the work of the patient. Perhaps, on this point, I would stop "Couples" and take up the fourth point which I call "Formulas."

Formulas

I have said that the parental couple presents the subject with a fixed relationship, with a kind of fixed formula, which is not strictly sexual. I have said that the question would be: if this is true, what is this formula of the parental couple as distinct from the sexual formula, the formula of man and woman? This formula exists. I am going to write it down on this blackboard. The formula exists implicitly in Freud, and explicitly in Lacan. This formula exists in Freud in the form of a myth, and it exists in Lacan in the form of a formula which consists in what is usually called the paternal metaphor. What is the gist of the paternal metaphor given by Lacan? It inscribes a fixed formula of the relationship between the function of the father and the function of the mother. And, it is enough to write it down like that:

$$\begin{array}{cc} \frac{\text{Father}}{\text{Mother}} & \frac{\text{F}}{\text{M}} \end{array}$$

father, bar, mother. And this is the fixed formula of the parental couple. And when Lacan says there is no *rapport sexuel*, there is no sexual formula, you may understand it from the point of view that there exists a parental couple. It always appears as an enigmatic dictum of Lacan: There is no sexual relationship - as it is usually translated - and, everyone says, well, we know some. But the [culminate] is to make the difference understood between the fixed formula of the parental couple, which is called the Oedipus in Freud, and in Lacan is inscribed like that: M ♦ W. The point is to

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understand the fact that for man and woman you do not have any equivalent formula. And it is enough to write down the fundamental relationship between father and mother. Usually, in Lacan, you find it another way, or you find it in a more complete way. The father enters this relationship as name, the Name-of-the-Father:

$$\begin{array}{cc} \frac{\text{F}}{\text{M}} & \frac{\text{Name-of-the-Father}}{\text{D}} \end{array}$$

The mother enters this relationship as desire, with a Capital D. I shall not expand on those two letters by Lacan, but this desire is not the desire you usually hear about. This desire is a signifier, and, really, that is why I believe we can simplify this formula like that, the relationship between Father and Mother as signifier. And, that is why it is a true formula, a formula as a matheme, a true matheme. And, what is this relationship? It is a relationship of substitution, which translates the Freudian Oedipus in one single formula. And it is enough to write down the fundamental function of the father as the one who interdicts, the one who prohibits, and if you want to complete the schema, well you know how you do that. You have, let us suppose, a child, whose desire goes to the mother, and the father comes as third, who interdicts the relationship.



Let us say, that the subject as such, the Freudian subject, is a point which can identify. You know that the child, the subject, can identify with the position of the father, he can identify with the mother, he can identify with the child. So, Lacan put as a fourth term, the subject itself. And, perhaps, those who have read Lacan understand immediately that they have here the very structure of the schema of Lacan which you find in his text on the preliminary question to psychosis, to any treatment of psychosis.³ As a matter of fact, you know that this schema is done from the male point of view.

And there is a problem in Freud, that is true, for the feminine Oedipus where the object would be the father, and not the mother, and whose position of interdiction is supposed to be the mother. And you know that, as a matter of fact, when it is a mother, the person of the mother who comes to occupy this place of interdiction for a subject, generally, it is because you find in the family a certain

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complacency of the father in regard to occupying the place of the object, of the desired object. But, when the mother occupies this place, you have a dreadful relationship between the mother and her daughter. But what does it mean to speak of father and mother as signifiers? It means that *even* for the daughter, the fundamental object - you find that in Freud also - is the mother. And, *even* for the daughter, the supreme interdiction is the father. And that is why we speak of signifier as distinct from person. The signifier is a fixed function which enables us to structure the family for interpretation. And when we say the father as signifier, it means that for both sexes, the father is prohibitor, and for both sexes, the mother is a signifier of the primary object.

So, in analysis, it is true, nowadays, like in Freud's day, that there is a question about how the path of obstacles and objects have been distributed in the life of the subject. We may look for what person has taken up the part of obstacle and what person the part of object. But what we have to explain in analysis is the mystery; that is why these terms concerning the family are of such intricacy for the subject. This comes as a surprise. When you read Plato, for instance, as Lacan did, which Ellie took up an hour ago, when you read Plato, you could think that when you let someone speak freely about what he wants, when you liberate him from all constraints of social obligation, even of decency, the subject would speak about questions of high existential theories, the five Platonic theories. You would think that people would speak about mathematics, about the one and the two, and the third, that people would speak about the beautiful, about beauty, about truth. From a Platonic point of view, that is what you would expect from humanity. Or, that one would speak from the various interests we have in some distinguished topics such as philosophy and the arts, psychoanalysis, etcetera. It comes as a surprise that people speak, instead, about their parents and their family. That is, it takes an inordinate amount of time in analysis, speaking about father and mother. Why?

There are some practices, some psychotherapeutic practices which try to direct the subject to speak of something other than father and mother. For instance, Jung himself

said he was sick and tired of hearing people speak about father and mother and telling stories of Jack and Jill. When he heard about the relationship of father/mother, man/woman, he tried to direct them to speak instead about very fundamental ideals of Western civilization. Why? What is said when father and mother, the family, are spoken about? And why does the analyst wonder what he is speaking

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about when the subject tries to speak of something other than father and mother and man and woman. Lacan once said, someone was trying to speak about the author Dostoevsky, and I made him tell me about his phantasy of giving birth. So, if the subject tries to be a bit too Platonic, we urge him to come back to what psychoanalysis is about.

And, the question is, what is said through the story of the family?' Well, the story is about how the subject was separated from his primary object, about how, through whatever traumatism was suffered, the subject was affected by a loss, a sudden loss, of his capacity for life. And what are the meanings that have emerged from this separation, what phantasies have emerged, and what subjective position, what enjoyment also, has he recuperated from this catastrophe? This is precisely what is present in analysis.

The analyst could think that in analysis he has to play the role of interdictor and accentuate all the parts of interdiction. You know that at the beginning of psychoanalysis, analysts used to tell their patients not to take up any fundamentally new positions in life during the analysis. This put a great deal of stress on the analyst as obstacle. And *now*, a trial which has begun in the United States on the idea of saying something like that. There is no credibility. When the whole analysis was three weeks, six months, you could ask a patient to give up everything for the analyst, but, if it lasts five years, ten years, it is more difficult to make this work. Well, that is not the fundamental point. It is this: that the interdiction which is present in the analytic experience is not grounded on any explicit prohibition by the analyst. It comes from somewhere else; it comes from the very injunction to speak, which is essential to analysis.

The paternal metaphor in analysis does not come from the paternal position of the analyst. It comes from free association itself. That is to say, it comes from the necessities or obligations made to the subject to symbolize his experience *through* language. And this in itself is the interdiction. Let me say this quickly before we get off again. As a matter of fact, what Lacan has seen in Freud and in analytic experience, what he has seen in the Oedipus, the *myth* of Oedipus, is that the father is speech itself. That is to say, it is speech that separates us from our fundamental objective. It is through speech that there is a lost object. That is why the father, including the dead father - the father essentially - is a signifier, contrariwise to the mother, who is a fact of life.

With the mother, it is always a sure thing. But the father is not a sure thing as Freud has pinpointed. You may think that a father is

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fundamentally linked to death as the mother is fundamentally linked to life, to take a few words that were at the end, I believe, of Professor Jaanus's commentary When Freud says that the father is already the phenomenon of sublimation, he is saying nothing other than

what I am repeating there. And that is why we may accept that what we call the function of the father is language itself, as dead. It is an error to speak of the life of words. And Lacan says somewhere: "Don't believe that there's life of words, because they change. Every tongue is a dead tongue, even the tongue you are speaking yourself." And this is not an incidental remark, it is a fundamental point. And, on the contrary, in analytic theory, we have some perception of this. On the contrary, the mother is always linked to *jouissance*, to enjoyment. And that is why, let us say this clearly, what appeared in Freud as the father prohibiting access to the mother appears in Lacan as speech interdicting *jouissance*. And that is why you find in Lacan the idea that enjoyment as such is forbidden to the one who speaks.

The Bar

Let us now take the fifth point if there is some time left. The fifth point has the title, "The Bar," the bar which we have already used here, E

M

between father and mother. It is a symbol. This bar is a very simple but operative symbol, which Lacan uses. It is susceptible of being transcribed as the conceptual functioning of Freudian theory itself. And this symbol enables us to unify the narrative between two parts of Freudian theory which are completely separated. Which are those two parts of analytic theory which are separate? You have, on one side, the theory of the Oedipus complex and, on the other side, you have the theory of metapsychology. On one side we speak of Oedipus, the complex of Oedipus, the complex of castration. There we speak of the mother, the father and the child. We speak of the mother as primary object and the father as interdiction. There we speak of castration. On the other side, we speak of the psychic structure of function. We speak of thought, reality, pleasure. And those two parts remain fairly separate.

What I saw, in working on this theory for my course, is that what Lacan has done - and we must realize what he has done is based

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very precisely on Freud - is to realize a unification of analytic theory which as such is the basis of psychoanalytic thinking.

This bar is a signifier. We see it as that because, as such, it does not have much meaning, this bar. Perhaps I shall try to write it with my chalk. It is a bar. I can do it like that or like that. As such, the bar has no meaning. That is why we may say it is a signifier insofar as we may give it some meaning and, eventually, different meanings. I do not say that the bar always has in Lacan the same meaning. It has no thematic use. I will take this bar as the bar of substitution, the bar of pure substitution. That is to say, it enables us to write this down: where there was one, there comes another.

$\frac{2}{1}$

And it is enough to write it down like that. Where there was one, now there is another. With this bar we can write a temporal organization. There is an organization of time which means first the 1, secondly the 2; and, the second term is substituted for the first one, such that the first one, we may say, is suppressed. Or, we may also say, in another sense, that the first one supports the second one, is the basis of the second one. Well, that is enough now. That is really the structure of the bar in all its simplicity

The Generalized Formula

And now, let us take point six titled, "The Generalized Formula." When I wrote down $\frac{F}{M}$ (father/bar/mother), I presented one aspect of this substitution; that is how the law of the father is substituted for the desire of the mother who is supposedly without law. And, this is the adequate sequence, this substitution of the law of the father for the desire of the mother. The consequence is that we suppose we know, after the installation of this metaphor, after this substitution, why the mother does not always stay near her child. We know the answer, as Freud himself tells us, as the phallus. And we may say that in Lacan this formula itself unifies the Oedipus theory and the castration complex. It gives a unified formula for Oedipus and castration. And in this sense, it is the Lacanian reference for saying that in the *sexual relationship*, which is what we have instead in Freud, we do not have

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a fixed relationship. We have a relationship of each sex with the phallus. If the essential partner(ship) of the subject is the phallus and not the other sex, then, let us consider this concrete statement: What is the *value* of this fact? What, preceding the subject, was shown of the law of the father for the desire of the mother? We may say that we did not know what the desire of the mother was. We have an X here: $\frac{M}{X}$,

that is to say, something we do not know. We do not know what the cause of her desire is. It is this construction: we do not know what she wants. And we do not know what and where she enjoys. The meaning of the phallus, in this sense is, precisely, to give an answer to, this X so that - I am obliged to go a bit quicker that I would like - the meaning of the paternal metaphor, of the Freudian Oedipus as inscribed by Lacan, translates itself as from an unknown *jouissance* to the phallusization of *jouissance*, that is, to a significantization of *jouissance*. And this is something a bit different from what we saw before:

$$\frac{F}{\cancel{M}} - \phi_x - \frac{A}{J}$$

What we saw before was the substitution of one signifier for another. Here, we are at a level where something which is *not* a signifier is substituted for by something which is a signifier. And this, I would say, is the secret of the paternal metaphor in Lacan, the secret to Oedipus. It is not only what had always been repeated as the father substituted

for the mother, etcetera. The secret of Oedipus is that it enables *jouissance* to be inscribed in the symbolic order. And that is why at the moment Lacan found the phallus as the signifier of *jouissance* its substitution was the significantization of *jouissance*. We know, for instance, that we have a biological sex, but this biological sex undergoes a significantization process. That comes to be involved with different significations for different people. That was known from the beginning of psychoanalysis. And before that you have biological sex and psychical sex. That meant that everything which is at the level of nature, at the biological level, is present for someone who speaks. And in our world, the biological is significantized or given meaning.

And that is why Lacan speaks of *sexuation*. This means that you have to go one step further than your biological sex. You have to get your subjective position out of your biological sex. There is not a

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determination according to law. You do not have a law saying that because have a biological sex "such," you are necessarily going to have a psychic sex "so." We may not even say that women are hysterics and men are obsessionals. We have hysterical men, a most interesting subject, and obsessive women also. What appears as a freedom here is precisely the incidence of the cause. So, in some sense, Lacan speaks of the elections of the selection, on one's own sex, which is a paradox, but a paradox at the level of the signifier, not at the level of nature. So, let us generalize this relationship. It says that what there is at this first level (pure enjoyment which is, let us say, primarily libido in Freudian terms) is Lacanian *jouissance*. It is not such a mystery. It is Freudian libido. We can write it with the signifier for *jouissance* in French: J.

What belongs to the order of libido *has to be* substituted for by an element of the symbolic order which we are going to write with A, the first letter of the word "Other" [Autre] in French. And this is a metaphor, I would say, a generalized linguistic metaphor which articulates the relation between A as language or as the place of the signifier, and capital J as primary *jouissance*, primary libido, what Lacan calls *das Ding*. Ellie mentioned it this morning, some time ago. Why does Lacan use this German word for that? Precisely to designate something which has *no* name because this capital J, in some sense, comes *before* language. It is the fundamental basis for libido which has to be substituted for by language. And it is in this sense of *das Ding* as *before* the signifier, that gives a sense of what would come before the capital A. As such, it is already lost because, from the outset, we are into language. So, this *jouissance* is already a missing *jouissance*, a *jouissance* of which we know nothing but that we have lost it because of language.

I am going to invent a little myth myself, just to make you understand that. It is a myth of Mephistopheles going across Creation by foot. There are always questions at the beginning of something. So, Mephistopheles comes across the fish and he asks the fish: "Do you want to exchange your enjoyment as fishes, (which is not so much) for language? Would it be more interesting for you, fish, instead of opening and closing your mouth without saying anything, to speak? What marvelous things you could do! You could even have a Plato fish." And the fish answers: "I can't." That is why it's a myth. The fish answered Mephistopheles: "I'd rather continue like I am, opening and closing my

mouth without saying anything because I enjoy this." Let us take a shortcut. There is no time to imagine Mephistopheles going across the species, and

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each one keeping his enjoyment. Mephistopheles would speak to the oyster, and asking, well "You also . . . you must speak; you have all that is necessary for that," and the oyster would say, "But I could lose my pearl." Perhaps this is the *jouissance* of the oyster. And in the end, Mephistopheles comes across a family of monkeys with a skin covered by hair. And he would propose the same exchange to a monkey. And this stupid monkey accepts that. And immediately he loses all his hair, or nearly all his hair. And he cannot relate to his companion of the other sex with immediacy. Immediately, he is obliged to look at what his parents are doing to try to know what to do with his partner.

In this myth I will not expand, you may understand why it was already a matter of speculation outside psychoanalysis for Lacan to know what began first, a loss of *jouissance* or language? If we had to go for a relationship of cause and effect, how would that articulate this lack? You understand also why Lacan came to say that the capital *Autre* is structurally separated from *jouissance*. This is the generalized formula of the Freudian Oedipus, strictly homologous to this. And when Lacan speaks in *Encore* [*Le Seminaire*, livre XX] of knowledge and *jouissance*, where he speaks of the separation of knowledge and linguistics - fundamentally linguistics and *jouissance* - he is prescribing for us, and generalizing, the myth of Oedipus. And what classical psychoanalysis called the forbidden mother translates in Lacan as *jouissance* forbidden to one who speaks. Or, you understand that in the *Ethics of psychoanalysis* [*Le Seminaire*, livre VII] Lacan may say the mother is *das Ding* as primary object of enjoyment, that is to say, that which is a prohibition of incest in our culture, which is fundamentally the prohibition of incest *with* the mother for both sexes. It is like a metaphor for the suppression of enjoyment, of the capital J.

This morning we heard about the body. In some sense the body is a big A. That is to say, in our species, the species of the stupid monkey, we use the body for inscription. And you know that the body is a very important metalanguage. I have written a whole book on symbolic wounds to say, precisely, that in order to socialize, culturalize, the body of a speaking being, you have to extract his enjoyment, his bodily enjoyment. You have to separate flesh and body. It is on that condition that you have a human body.

Let us say that now we have to study the relationship of those two terms, and it is no longer a novel. I would say, it is a matter of accounts, accountancy, accountability, a matter of balance, a balanced budget. That is what we see in the Rat Man, that he tries to

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translate all enjoyment, all the sexual enjoyment he has, precisely in terms of something that may be none of it. He uses the rats, the signifier of the rats, as the signifier which could permit him to number enjoyment. So, he tries to repeat this operation of substitution, for each orgasm, one rat, one florin. And let us say that this process never ends.

United Metapsychology and Oedipus

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \underline{F} & \longrightarrow & \phi & \longrightarrow & \underline{A} \\ M & & x & & J \end{array} = (a)$$

And, here, we come to the next point. I do not believe I have time to expand. The next point which we shall come back to is that there is something of the libido which cannot be translated in signifiers, cannot enter the place of the Other, cannot be marked and transferred as a signifier. And that is precisely what Lacan called small *a*, that is the *plus de jouir* as the difference between the libido and language which produces this small *a* as a residue, $J - A = a$. We remember that Marx's friend's worker gives his work in exchange for a salary. But there is something unpaid for, something which is surplus value. This small *a* is the part of libido which cannot be transferred to the place of the Other. You may think this is really only a convention made up by Lacan. But just take a look at Freud. I will not be able to expand on that, but just take a look, for instance, at his essay on "Repression in Metapsychology" when he speaks about *Trieb*, about the drives. He distinguishes two elements in the drives. He distinguishes the *Triebrepräsenz*, the representative of the drive or the idea which you cannot understand without Lacan. Lacan treats the idea of the drive and the element, the representative of the drive and what Freud calls a quota of affect. And what he is speaking about is precisely the division between the *Trieb* representatives and this part of libido which cannot be suppressed. You may read all this effort of Freud in light of this construction by Lacan. What Freud calls a quota of affect that cannot be suppressed is included in the value of object small *a* between the Freudian *Repräsentanz* which translates as A, and the quota, which translates as small *a*. And, first this line of equivalence gives us some principles for certain clinical considerations. Then it gives us a way to understand Freudian metapsychology. Perhaps, I could give you just this distinction. You have heard of the

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two principles, the *Lustprinzip* and the *Realitätsprinzip*. You will find it easy to understand what these are about if you write it like this:

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \underline{\text{Repr}} & \longrightarrow & \underline{A} & (a) & \underline{\text{Reality Principle}} \\ \text{Quota} & & J & & \text{Pleasure Principle} \end{array}$$

You will find in Freud himself the word, [*charsetsu*?], the substitution of one for the other. You will have no difficulty in inscribing the text of Freud in this schema. You will even find in this text of Freud's - I have no time to show you the text now - the small *a* in one sentence that says: inevitable. From this point on, we could even derive a fundamental conclusion concerning interpretation and transference. I have spoken nearly two hours. I suppose you are a bit tired. I am myself. So, perhaps, you can offer some questions or commentaries that I shall try to answer.

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Notes

1. *Aus der Geshichte einer infantilen Neurose.* in *Gesammelte Werke. vol XII.* London: Imago Publishing Co., 1955, p. 59.
2. "Structure of Transference" unpublished paper presented at University of Massachusetts - Amherst, "Lacan's Legacy: Lessons of the Transference," June 14, 1985.
3. "D'une question preliminaire a tout traitement possible de la psychose." *Ecrits.* Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1966, pages 531-83.