

EDITORIAL

The current issue of the *Newsletter of the Freudian Field* has drawn together contributions concerned with television, vision, voyeurism, peeping, looking, quizzing, gazing An odd subject, perhaps, for a psychoanalytic journal. For what is there actually to see with the naked eye in the psychoanalytic session? Arguably, nothing. Two people talking, one not saying very much. The other sometimes weeping or talking through the tears. Not necessarily a spectacle worth capturing on video

But when somebody says "I see," they often mean "I understand." So whatever they see in analysis, it lies in a realm that is *not* the realm of the visible. They "see" something invisible - let us say - in the mind's eye, by reordering previously misunderstood associations, in an often startling configuration, to produce some new, metamorphosized significance. This seeing has to do, then, with a kind of knowledge. In psychoanalysis, we might further suggest, knowledge of the literally visible may not even be worth very much, because the knowledge that makes a difference arises from a different place.

In the present number of *NFF*, Antonio Quinet opposes vision and the gaze (see p. 42), pointing out that the visible should logically be categorized under the Imaginary, while the *invisible* should be categorized along with the "gaze" understood in its Lacanian sense. This latter register also includes the Real, the scopic drive, and the object *a*: none of which are visible in themselves, but only in their effects on the subject in his/her actions. Quinet writes: "According to Lacan, as a matter of fact, such a being [i.e. Merleau Ponty's Imaginary being at the place of an eternal gaze] doesn't exist; what exists is the splitting between

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vision and the gaze. There is a gaze which is not apprehensible, it is invisible: a gaze which is erased from our regular world. It is exactly in this splitting that the drive manifests itself on the scopic level" (p. 41).

Now the notion of invisible realms which exert tangible and demonstrable effects does not sit too well with our criteria of causality in the so-called "exact" or natural sciences. But such a notion fits properly into the world of the inadequately named "human" sciences. This is because of the element of conjecture in them. As Alexandre Leupin states in his Introduction to *Lacan & the Human Sciences*: "The 'human' sciences (or social sciences in an Anglo-Saxon cultural context) do deal not only with fact but also with conjecture; they observe symptoms of a cause that escapes their gaze" (p. 4).¹ Though Lacan was later to grow bolder in his formalization of psychoanalysis as a science of the Real, he renamed the human sciences in 1954, saying: "*Conjectural sciences* here is, I believe, the true name to be given from now on to a certain group of sciences that are usually designated as 'human sciences.' It is not that this term is improper, since truly speaking, the conjecture is concerned with human action. But the term is too vague, too embedded in all sorts of confused echoes pointing to pseudo-initiatory sciences; by this contamination, the term is defused and leveled. We would gain from the more rigorous and oriented definition of sciences of conjecture" (*Le Seminaire, livre 11, 1954-1955, p. 341; Lacan's emphasis*).²

The exact sciences, we may say, construct their certainty on measuring *quantities* and properties of objects in the material world. Their watchwords are exactitude and repeatability. They are totally unaffected by any concept of unconscious desire. Psychoanalysis appraises

qualities in the realm of desire and interpretation using common language, such that the observer and the observed, or, in the treatment, the analyst and the patient, are subtended by the unconscious. In consequence, the traditional scientific delimitation of object and subject can no longer apply, once the existence of an unconscious object or meaning is acknowledged (Leupin, p. 4). To quote Lacan from "Science and Truth": "There is no such thing as a science of man because science's man [as an object conceivable as separated from unconscious effects]" does not exist, only its subject does" (*NFF, Vol. 3* [1989], 8).³

But is there such a thing as an example of a human quality, not actually visible in itself, which exerts an effect in the visible realm? What about the example of love? How would a natural scientist

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"measure the quantity" of love? There is a story of a skydiving enthusiast, whose ruling passion was to spend his Saturday afternoons leaping out of aircraft near a local aerodrome. He married and subsequently fathered two children. One Saturday, late in the day, he came home and greeted his wife in the normal manner, but was amazed when she broke down weeping. On asking her what was the matter, the husband was further taken aback when the wife replied: "I'm crying because you're alive." As they talked, his wife unwillingly told him that, although she knew how much the sport meant to him and how slight the real risk of death was, she lived forever in a state of mild dread that, one Saturday afternoon, she would get a phone call saying she was a widow and their children semi-orphans. After a few weeks, the husband decided to quit the sport, unsure of his motives.

This wife presented her husband with her picture of his relationship to *jouissance*. There could scarcely be a better model for solitary *jouissance* than to take a "blind leap" into the void and make a dupe of death, i.e. turning the death drive itself into a sport. Let us guess it was the man's encounter with the tearful Real of his wife's anxiety that acted as the invisible agent producing a visible effect, his giving up the sport: a case of that "reordering" which we spoke of at the outset. The visible was - to give a Lacanian twist to things altered by the gaze. And that is where most of us live most of the time.

The Editors

Notes

1. *Lacan & the Human Sciences*, Ed. by Alexandre Leupin (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1991).
2. *Le Seminaire de Jacques Lacan, livre II: Le moi dans la theorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse*, text established by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 1978). See also *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psycho-analysis* (1954-1955), Ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, Trans. by Sylvana Tomaselli with Notes by John Forrester (New York: W. W. Norton & Co.' Inc., 1988).
3. Jacques Lacan, "Science and Truth," Trans. By Bruce Fink, *The Newsletter of the Freudian Field, Vol. 3*, Nos. 1 & 2 (Spring/Fall 1989): 4-29.