

Jean-Pierre Klotz
***Sex and Identity*¹**

In my talk today I'll try to introduce the theme of this conference by shedding light on some misunderstandings which are inherent to psychoanalysis, and which Freud and Lacan helped clarify. Sex is known to be a central issue in psychoanalysis and, since its beginnings, misunderstanding is what characterizes everyday discourse about psychoanalysis. Freud was accused of being a "pan-sexualist." He refuted the charge, but maintained, in opposition to Jung, that the libido is primarily sexual in nature, and thereby produced one of the first major schisms in psychoanalysis --an irremediable one, as it turned out.

I want, therefore, to focus first on the following point: sex is not a matter of agreement or understanding in psychoanalysis, but a matter of division. It is what gives rise not only to a division between psychoanalysis and the outside world, but also to a division within psychoanalysis itself: it is part and parcel of the nature of psychoanalysis. Those who don't know (or don't want to know) what psychoanalysis is often display a tendency to avoid the question of sex. Sexual freedom, for example, has been promoted in loose association with the name of psychoanalysis, when such "freedom" is as impossible to obtain as it is to domesticate. Freud and Lacan spoke, of course, of what psychoanalysis is, and their way of dealing with the issue of sex will help me demonstrate my point.

Freud, the "pansexualist", certainly emphasized sex, but in a manner which runs counter to promoting sex: castration. To broach this topic as involving a lack, and more precisely, a lack encountered in the mother's body, introduces at least a complication and even a certain oddness. There is no sex in psychoanalysis without the dimension of lack, i.e. an absence makes it present. Castration also means lack of satisfaction, lack of *jouissance* (German: *Lust*), and the impossibility of reaching total sexual satisfaction. But the oddness

increases when we learn from Freud--who himself learned it from his clinical practice--that castration is nevertheless a condition for satisfaction of what Lacan calls the subject, the subject being neither the individual, nor the ego. Sex involves a theme of division, then, which at least poses the problem, right from the outset, of identifying sex and even speaking of sexual identity. And when we recall that Freud connects the question of the end of psychoanalytic treatment with the notion that one comes up against what he calls "the rock of castration," it is no longer clear whether or not the word "identity" can be used to speak about sex after the completion of an analysis.

If sex is eventually encountered as an obstacle which divides, psychoanalysis itself begins with a practice, and it is necessary to consider its conditions and means. Lacan defined the function of speech and the field of language. To define the function of speech, he introduced the subject in relation to the Other from the dialectical viewpoint he developed beginning with the mirror stage, linked here to the field of language, where he redefined the unconscious as structured like a language. (This definition marks the beginning of what he would later call his "teaching".) First he elaborated the structure of language. That's what gave him his reputation as a "structuralist" (to which he objected), suggesting the optimistic horizon of the imaginary's symbolization. The Other is the place of the signifier, while the subject is in the place of the signified. Analytic experience, thus viewed, can appear as a reduction by the symbolic of what is

imaginary in the signified--as a kind of process of identification through a path regulated by metaphor and metonymy, the keystone of which is the paternal metaphor as the law for the subject whose desire works via metonymy. It looks like a process of emptying the subject.

Many then asked Lacan why he maintained that the subject is divided, a view which seemed opposed to a structural perspective. He continued to maintain it, notwithstanding, and didn't even stop to recast the signified of this signifier. "Divided subject," for psychoanalysis is not a new Idealistic point of view. Its "ethics"--a term Lacan reintroduced and renewed at that time, and by which he gave a complementary orientation to the general concern with symbolization in the practice of treating individuals (i.e. a concern with the subject's relationship to the real, and not simply to the symbolic and imaginary) obliges one to consider the subject not only from the vantagepoint of its signifying relationship with the

Other, but also from that of resistance: the obstacles encountered in the course of analytic practice.

According to this new viewpoint, the subject remains "divided," but we must consider more particularly into what the subject is divided. This is an important point when one considers the *particular* dimension for every subject of what causes that division. The best way to show this is to take an example that includes the dimension of particularity. I'll choose the case of *the hysterical subject*. When we speak of an hysterical subject, we don't consider (as I did just now when I recalled the structural definition of the subject as depending on the structure of language) the subject according to a general definition, but rather according to a particular *position*. And when we speak of subjective position, we consider the subject in its relation to the real: the subject as a response of the real. It is not a question of all subjects. It is not something to be considered as just *any* case, i.e. a typical case of a typical subject. But rather, it is every clinical case, taken one at a time. Lacan characterizes the hysterical subject by her question, which has a symbolic structure. It is a sentence and includes a lack which makes of that sentence a question. Every clinical structure, indeed, at least in the register of neurosis, is characterized by a question. Hysterical structure can be formulated as follows: "*Am I a man or a woman?*", regardless of the subject's biological sex.

The advantage of this clinical point is that it allows us to state the problem of "sexual identity" at a convenient level when we want to consider it from the perspective of analytic experience. It is a clinical level, that is to say, when defined as a particularity of cases in which regularities may be found, regularities like the question I just quoted. That is the level of the subject. In other words, the subject is the matter determined by the effective practice of psychoanalysis. The subject is not something like the individual or the ego, which come before the subject, and are, at best, partial identifications of that subject. The question appears to be tied to subjective division.

If we consider the subject as a response of the real, we are obliged to hear this question concerning the subject's sexual identity as a *response*. The point is not to answer the question by saying: "I am a man" or "I m a woman", because such responses, while identifying and conferring an identity, can only be partial and tangential. They fall short not only of the other side, but above ail of the gap between the two sides, which indicates an impossible-to-

symbolize: *the impossibility of symbolizing sex itself*. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

The subject has no sexual identity. That is one of the things that the hysterical subject teaches us, and we know how important the hysterical subject has been in teaching us in the course of analytic experience. The subject has, at the very most, sexual identifications, complete with tensions and conflicts--varied manifestations of the imaginary mood--which indicate the impossibility of symbolizing the real, the real that is especially at work in analytic experience: that of sex. The subject's division is encountered at every level: between male and female identifications, question and response, symbolic and real, symbolic and imaginary, and imaginary and real.

There is a radical separation between sex as identified and sex as present with no possibility of identification. For if we have the impression that we immediately understand what identified sex is--sexual identity--this immediacy of understanding is a problem in its own right. Lacan often advises us not to understand too quickly, for understanding preempts logical articulation. Mathematics, as a model for the psychoanalyst, does not operate in the register of understanding. Sex as not identified seems highly enigmatic, and rightly so. Sex is the cause of enigma itself, and it introduces the dimension of enigma within the subject, as subject of language.

Recall what I said above about Freudian castration: sex as marked by a dimension of lack or negativity. Here we encounter the dimension of the signifier; the word "not" in the expressions "not identified sex" and "sex as not identified" indicates that quite clearly. From the perspective of the sign, and no longer that of meaning, it is possible to see therein the *association* of sex with a negative which separates what had previously seemed to be united in the Other of meaning. Why not say "alienated" or "united in the Other"? Stress is placed here more on metonymy than metaphor, more on the unidentified gap in the relation than the castrated state of the identified subject which is the way of metaphor.

Let us now make a jump. Lacan's supplementary step with respect to Freud regarding sex is summed up in a statement that follows his establishment of the signifying structure of the unconscious: "There's no such thing as a sexual relationship," a statement formulated to situate the real of sex. The "there's no . . . doesn't get rid of the problem. On the contrary, it establishes the problem according to Lacan's definition of the real as the impossible (the impossibility of writing it more precisely here). Now this impossibility

impedes the subject's sexual identification (singular), but leads to the subject's identifications (plural) with a gap or hole. Where? In the Other, the locus of signifiers, and thus the place of identifications. "There's no such thing as a sexual relationship" is the cause of the Other, of the barred Other (\bar{A}), which fits with the barred subject (\bar{S}), an ironic fit since it *passes on* a radical separation, a non-identity with oneself. The bar of castration has not only the meaning of castration, but also the material consistency of a bar, i.e. something real.

A statement that is correlative to or synonymous with Lacan's "There's no such thing as a sexual relationship," from the viewpoint of an ironic identification, is this well-known statement: "Woman doesn't exist." This statement seems rather shocking, but is really only logical. It shows women (plural) existing only one by one. The kind of existence implied in the two statements--"Woman doesn't exist" and "There's no such thing as a sexual relationship"--come down to the same thing, "thing" being quite appropriate here. Both statements designate the same real. And

one can only "designate" a real--which is radically different from "signifying"--in a certain number of ways.

To emphasize the term "sexual relationship" is different from emphasizing that of "sexual identity." The former aims at the active part of sex, instead of what seems static in identity, and it also distances the sexual problem from what takes place between partners, one partner being considered able to function alone. Put another way, it implies the Other and bars the idea of identity as One. There are at least two partners, and these two don't function without a third, which is "sex" itself: one way of situating sex as the structure's cause. The problem that remains now is that of trying to explain how it functions practically using Freudian and Lacanian references. I'll take advantage of the course Jacques-Alain Miller gave last year, when he commented on Freud's "Contributions to the Psychology of Love." We must distinguish love life and sex life here, though they are, of course, related. The subject is subjected to his sexual life. He can only operate with the real of sex. He can't domesticate it, for it remains Other, extraneous.

But love, so Lacan teaches us, is what appears instead of sexual relationships which do not exist; it serves as a substitute, and electively tends to mislead. Love opens a possible way for the subject to operate with sex, but only insofar as love is not sex. There is a love life, inherent in the subject, which is correlative to the subjective dimension. That is what makes analytic experience

possible; and that transference love, whose emergence signals the presence of an analytic experience, is no other than true love. Freud already stated as much when he discovered the phenomenon of transference love.

The fact that the subject's feminine or masculine identifications can only be partial doesn't prevent him from having to situate himself in relation to these kinds, not of identity, but of *jouissance*; this thus constitutes more a definition of a position than of an identity. How is it to be explained? When we start with the subject written $\$$, we define it as undetermined. It is essentially a place, a recessed one, which indicates precisely a reservation of enunciation with regard to any determination. That is what makes it possible for us to pose the question of how the subject commits itself to [*s'engage dans*] a clinical structure (e.g. in hysteria, when I spoke of the hysteric's question). Following Freud here, we may use the phrase, "choice of neurosis." The Freudian term, "choice," always seems amazing when it is used in psychoanalysis, since neurosis appears, according to the scientific Freudian ideal, to be the result of determinism. That's why, when we speak of choice, it is a forced choice that is in question. But as such it is not equivalent to pure determinism, since this choice is made against a background of indetermination. It connotes the presence of the subject. What we have to indicate is how this undetermined subject becomes determined in embracing a clinical position.

Having admitted we may wonder how this undetermined subject commits itself to a clinical structure, we have to admit the same thing with regard to its sex as well--we may well wonder how it commits itself to its sex. The undetermined subject has no sexual identity as such; therefore sexuality at this level (the subjective one) only occurs in terms of the assumption of sex. That is to say, we want to know how the subject makes do with its biological sex and, more radically, how it makes itself belong to one sex or another. That is the radical level at which Lacan introduced the term "sexuation", which is distinct from "sexuality". Sexuation means the

choice of sex, which is also the question raised by Freud in what he called "object choice". The dimension in which one's sex is determined is more that of object choice than of sexual identity. It is clear here that sexuation is not biological sex; it is a better term than Freud's psychical term, but it designates the same thing. Non-biological sex is objectively grounded by transsexuals, who testify to its existence. It runs against the grain of anatomy. Transsexuals are not resigned to the Napoleonic dictum, quoted by

55

Freud, that "Anatomy is destiny." The notion of non-biological sex is already justified in the very consideration of the inversions and aberrations of object choice, which appear when that choice doesn't conform to the requirements of sexual reproduction.

There is a connection between sexuality and reproduction, to such an extent that some types of discourse answer the question, "Why sexuality?", with the response, "Because of reproduction." There are other modes of reproduction for living beings than sexuality, and when reproduction occurs along the sexual pathway, it is perhaps indicative of superior dignity, reproduction being situated as the final cause of the sexual act. But we can't help but notice that, in this case, the consequence is a serious restriction of sexuality. The tendency is to seriously overflow its final cause or deviate from it.

But if we consider pleasure as the final cause of sexuality, it is less idealized than when the divine will is invoked. The final cause is not the only cause. There may also be an initial or antecedent cause. It is precisely that cause which links Freud and Lacan. That initial cause is very closely related to the "condition," a term (*die Bedingung* in German) used by Freud. It is impossible to confuse condition and final cause. There is a link between the Freudian condition of love and the Lacanian cause of desire. In both cases, there is a condition that must necessarily be fulfilled for sexuality to function--i. e., a necessary condition for selecting an object and achieving sexual satisfaction. It is a necessary condition which doesn't stop being written unambiguously for the subject. One could add to this necessary condition the sufficient condition, but one ought rather to negate it and link necessity with an insufficiency, an insatiable "not enough," that Lacan tried to convey by using the term *Encore* [more, again] as the title for *Seminar XX*. The necessary condition, the one of a subject's typical choice, finds its way into what Freud called repetition compulsion, and into the sufficient or insufficient condition of sexual satisfaction or, as Lacan calls it, *jouissance*.

The question is a Freudian one, which was then taken up again and elaborated by Lacan: what plays the central role in the question of non-biological sex?--the *phallus*. The phallus is not a biological sign. It is the indication or mark of what Freud called psychical value. The phallus is cut out of the body but it is lacking in any general view. That is, at least, Freud's thesis, which sustains that a small child attributes this value to women, and especially to his mother, so much so that when he notices that women are lacking in

56

it, he goes on attributing it to his mother. Freud infers from that observation that the mark of the phallus is an indication of value.

For Lacan, the phallus is a signifier, and while it plays a role in the determination of the subject's sexual signification, it functions overall as the signifier of castration, as a most valuable

signifier, but one which signifies a lack in *jouissance* as well. The way in which he argues with the phallus is the manner in which the subject's choice of sex is made.

At first Lacan says that the subject desires to be the phallus, his mother's phallus. The subject finds out through analytic treatment that he isn't the phallus. That is a determined position, which is tied to what Freud called the castration complex. It is on that basis that he has to choose, in the guise of a forced choice, to have or not to have the phallus--a man or a woman's choice, respectively. This choice takes place within the subject. It is what Freud called bisexuality, and yet it is another signification of Lacan's divided subject. The "whole" of the subject is castration; the "not-whole" is the remainder of *jouissance* on the side of what is symbolized.

Later, Lacan proposes the formulas of sexuation as logical equations where the phallus is a function and the subject is a variable, x . I won't develop that here, but it provides a logical way of understanding how the subject situates himself in the men's camp or in the women's camp, regardless of biological sex.

All this is but an introduction. Many of these points require further development. I hope I've helped to clarify how sex and identity are separated by an irremediable gap, which is also a productive one. The difference between the sexes is, first, a difference in sex. It is the real of sex, i.e. the "there's no such thing as a sexual relationship" which organizes the subject's position in dealing with that real through logical arguments. "The choice of sex" is better than "sexual identity," since it implies the possibility of changing one's subjective position. What is expected from analytic treatment is a change in the subject's position, defined as the subject's clinical structure. Is it possible to change the subject's position vis-à-vis sex through analytic treatment? It ought to be possible, according to these indications.

But there is yet another condition: the choice of sex must become a symptom to the subject himself, because it is only his symptom which is likely to lead him to analytic treatment. If the subject complains of his sexual choice, expects meaning, and is ready to subject his thus constituted symptom to the work of transference with an analyst, then change is possible. But that is clearly a

sizeable restriction. Analytic treatment would be impossible for transsexuals, for instance. The subject must necessarily put forth a demand in order for the process to work.

Footnotes

1. This address opened the 1990 Kent State Conference devoted to "Lacan, Culture, and Sexual Identity" held at Kent, Ohio on May 24-27.