

The Responses of the Real

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There is nothing more hopeless than having things to say. I took this sentence yesterday from the mouth of a person who comes to see me to talk about herself and I suppose it is so that I give birth to what she has in her being. In psychoanalysis, that happens by her stretching out on a sofa. Or, one can be seated just as well. That depends solely upon the acuity of the resistance offered by the will of the subject, which is of the order of the body. For this person, this word, proffered with the full accent of a curse, and proffered from the place of the analysand, where quite precisely there is something to say, is inscribed in a wish which would be to make love like an animal. A wish that is a little infantile. And she has not failed to perceive that this is not within her grasp and that it is certainly not within the grasp of her partners who, despite her pleas, get sentimental: this interferes with her ideal of a copulation without the sense of a sentence, one that would be happy. This is obviously a person who has a strong sensitivity to the decline involved for man—that is to say, for the species in general, especially for the male, and one must say that this person is a woman—in the fact of having to express oneself, to express the states of the soul, as one says. What I called a copulation without the sense of a sentence is what takes place when there is a sexual rapport for a living species: that is to say, all the animal species (except man), where the partner knows what he has to do. And it is because he does not know this that this [human] partner finds himself trapped, parasited, eaten by what we can call *discenda* – this is from Latin: things to say—moreover this sounds a little like piranha, that carnivorous little fish. There is a fatality in this which is well made to be interrogated because one knows what follows from it. On this point, at least, there is no uncertainty in our living species. This is a word that will

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have all its weight for us this year: uncertainty. There is no uncertainty on this point: what follows is always death. Death is not uncertain except, for example, for the psychotic who may believe himself immortal. This is because he is already eaten alive by language.

Death is not uncertain, and in death there are no more *dicenda*. For the dead person, there are plenty of little letters that take up the relay to clean you to the bones. Obviously, one has, however, invented a beyond death where one can put a lot of beautiful things: for example, an infinity of life. Death is, however, what awaits us at the bottom of the staircase, if I can say this. The problem is to descend it in the right way. One can tumble down it head first, on one's bottom, miss a step.... It is very important to know how to descend the staircase. It must be said that the staircase occupies a very important place in the music hall. When what is said speaks or sings of love, there is almost always a staircase. And at the bottom one can ask oneself: did I descend it well? *This* amphitheater is also a staircase.

In regard to this, I would like to thank the Director of the Conservatory of National Arts and Works for wanting to put this room at the disposal of this Course. It is in this respect that

psychoanalysis finds itself in the neighborhood of what one calls The Arts and Métiers, which founded this Conservatory during the French Revolution at the place of a priory, by a decision of the Convention: it is in this respect that psychoanalysis finds itself in the neighborhood of The Arts and Métiers. I'll say it outright: this honors us. Obviously, we must act in such a way that our practice not enter too quickly into this Museum.

I am in the position to have some things to say. I have found in the interim that this does not especially carry me away with enthusiasm. I notice, moreover, that Paris is full of people wandering around with placards: "I have some things to say." And apparently this enchants them. I will say that this is not immediately [*spontanément*] my case. And since I have been doing this Course, it has been, rather, with a feeling of obligation, of duty. Obviously, sometimes, I give the impression of enjoying it a little bit, but that does not constitute an objection to the fact I do it by duty. Quite the contrary. This is an affair of the Superego. I can be even more precise since I have an

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idea of what the superego is. The superego is Dr. Lacan; more precisely, his teaching: [Its weight] on me [*sur moi/* on me]] and then on some others. I can tell you that it is a weight. It is a weight that one can measure also in the extent of the Seminars of Dr. Lacan. And after all, for me, and these others, it is indeed like Aeneas carrying Anchises through the fires of Troy. This superego has a concrete form: it is you. And, in addition, I've noticed that there are a certain number of you who take what I say very seriously. Because of this I feel unequal to your expectations. Then, obviously, I can say to myself "you wanted it." But this saying—"you wanted it"—does not prevent one from also feeling like a laughing stock [*le dindon de la farce*].

I will stop on this "you wanted it" because it links up with the problem of choice and even precisely of the forced choice that I briefly put into play three weeks ago before another assembly. But, finally, you can understand very well that if desire articulates itself in a question by a "what do you want?"—in any case, in the end, there are no other responses that can come than a "you wanted it." This is the emblem of all final judgments.

The person who said this sentence, "There is nothing more hopeless than having things to say," took that, it seems to me, by the right end, perceived from the analysand's position of the teacher since this thought came to her in its precise form at the resumption of a course of the department of psychoanalysis. She listened to someone other than me. This is a Lacanian topos. Any teacher worthy of this name speaks in the position of the analysand. In any case, this is what Lacan said of himself. Speaking in the position of analysand means that if this works, he says what he does not know. Saying what one does not know passes, obviously, through the fact of not knowing what one says. There is a gap between: between not knowing what one says and saying what one does not know. But one must start by not knowing what one says to be able to end up saying what one does not know. Obviously, the two are distinct. They are distinct and in analysis one must effect a transmutation that demands the analyst.

A psychoanalyst, by function, believes in the virtues of the "not knowing what one says," since he invites

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the analysand there. The problem is when it does not bother the psychoanalyst to express himself on psychoanalysis, and analytic literature is made up in large part of this gibberish. It is necessary, then, to try to attain to something else in the “saying what one does not know.” How can one say what one does not know? This is a problem for the teacher; it is a problem for the analysand. Very well, perhaps one can let the cat out of the bag here: how can one say what one does not know? For this, one must invent it. This is what one occasionally calls mythomania and it is what leads, for example, to qualifying the hysteric as a mythomaniac. Telling stories does not necessarily deserve this deprecating qualification. One can, on the contrary, valorize hysterical mythomania. There is, on the contrary, a subject attached to saying what she does not know. This agrees very well with her disposition. On this point, comparison with the obsessional turns rather to the advantage of the hysteric. The obsessional adheres more willingly to saying what he knows. He needs a certain apprenticeship in the experience to come to confront the gulf represented by the “saying what one does not know” against which, occasionally, he fortifies himself with an empty ritual [*ritournelle*]. Indeed, it is because the hysteric is the subject attached to saying what she does not know that she has forged the path of psychoanalysis.

There is still another kind of mythomania which in the framework of this year’s Course—for which I have kept the title that came to me at the end of last year: “Some Responses of the Real,” which, in a first moment, almost made me draw back, because in order to do this course I must adhere to the point of what I do not know—in the framework of this Course we will have to speak again of this different kind of mythomania—a pseudo mythomania—which one can call matho-mania: the mythomania of the matheme.

I wonder if everyone hasn’t written the word matheme at least once. It is a word that does not truly exist, for the moment, in French. Dr. Lacan took it from *mathema* and has made a French word of it. The matheme is also a mythomania in the sense that it is another way of saying what one does not know. Obviously another way, because it means that in this case one constructs, one invents in the manner of construction, indeed of

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deduction; one constructs and one deduces with some signifier that means nothing. If this matheme has what it takes to interest us this year, this is not simply the analytic matheme, but the matheme period, because the psychoanalytic matheme was recognized by Lacan as an imitation matheme, an effort towards.

He borrows mathemes most often from mathematics. The hardest ones come from there. If the matheme must concern us in this Course, it is because when one operates with the matheme, one observes an altogether singular phenomenon and it is precisely this: that it responds from the side of the real.

Here I approach with small steps this expression that I took up last year from an *écrit* of Lacan’s at the same time that Eric Laurent took it up in a presentation. Let us say that from the start the expression is enigmatic. One would think, rather, that the real has nothing to say.

The matheme makes us experience this as responding from the side of the real. One perceives when one takes things from this angle, that the fact that it responds from this side is the most profound ambition of every speaking being, who is always ready to go to any length [*faire les pieds au mur*], to turn himself on his head for [what he has to say] to respond from this side. As evidence of this, we have, for example, the practice called divination.

From the fiscal point of view, divination is indistinguishable from psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysts are ranked with fortune tellers from the point of view of the ministry of finance. And this is very clearly seen. We are at home in the Conservatory of the Arts and Métiers and we are also at home with fortune tellers. Basically, divination is a signifying montage, a signifying creation which can be extremely variable but which in every way is an apparatus that fundamentally isolates a space, and one interrogates this portion of space and it is quite variable.... I will borrow the enumeration of the bric-à-brac from Jean-Pierre Vernant, the bric-à-brac that can function there: scales of tortoises, viscera of sacrificial animals, figures traced randomly on the sand, some visible parts of the sky (in antiquity the divine isolated a part of the sky with a stick, waited to see the signs [zoziaux] of the zodiac that were going to pass there, and then drew conclusions from this), aspects of

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the face and of the body.... based on which, if a man had chest hair one could, in one sense or the other, draw conclusions, the same for moles [*grains de beauté*] and other deformities. You know that there are objects like that: dice, cards, twigs.... This is bric-à-brac—everything that one has been able to invent to make the real respond. Far from that, it must appear paradoxical [to analyze] the real if one considers things beginning with this, if one perceives that one passes one's time doing this: questing for the responses of the real. And this heteroclitite bric-à-brac that I borrow from Vernant is an enumeration of what Lacan called the pieces [*bouts*] of the real. Obviously, for the Greeks, it was a little different because this passed, rather, by the way of the word [*parole*]. There is a very illuminating study by someone named Roland Crachet which shows quite clearly that the essence of what one sought in the form of the oracle was not truly to predict the future: that, to begin with, it was an exception for the Greeks if these oracles presented themselves clearly: when the response comes, it is, to begin with, an invitation to bad interpretations, an invitation to misunderstand these equivoques, word games, enigmas—I could give you loads of examples. I believe that this is quite definitively known. The oracle did not truly give a prophecy, a prediction of the future. If it were only that, it would appear quite distant, for example, from psychoanalysis. But what Mr. Crachet notes so finely is that one came, rather, to seek a caution from the oracle, the attestation that the thing to be done did not go against the divine order. This, obviously, says something to us because the psychoanalyst would be a poor divine if he were not precisely, before all, a caution. After all, the essential part of his act... is to pose himself as the Other of the guarantee. He too gives an attestation. There is no need to write anything down on paper for this. He gives the attestation that one can go there because, without that, one would not know, going from not knowing what one is saying, where this is going to lead you. We can very well call the psychoanalyst the respondent.

It is here that, quite easily, the function of the subject-supposed-to-know is introduced. Lacan made this the pivot of the transference. Here, in divination, the role of the subject-supposed-to-know is clear: it is that he is supposed to know

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how to make the piece of the real respond. The oracle does not say what one's destiny is. He does not hide it either. He only signifies it. If one wants to translate the term of Heraclitus, *semanein*, in this way, he makes a sign. That is to say: he makes us see under a veil. In French,

this works very well: see it [*voile/vois-le*], an obscure sign that presentifies the opacity itself of destiny. The one who takes on the function of oracle furnishes a signifier to the consultant: a signifier that, no doubt, must decipher his situation, but that one glimpses in all the stories that he himself is to decipher.

If I evoke the oracle, it is because the oracle is altogether what I call a response of the real. Certainly, one can object that in the Greek sense... I insist on the Greeks precisely because when the Roman Empire took on a little bureaucratic consistency, it put a halt to all divinations, even to private consultations. One could not go to consult one's divine. This is totalitarian. A totalitarian power cannot admit that one situates the subject-supposed-to-know on this [real] side, in private, and that one seeks to make the real respond at every end [*bout*] of a field like that. On the contrary, [for a totalitarian power] the responses of the real are always especially regimented. With the Greeks, one can raise as an objection to this idea that the oracle is a response of the real, the fact that most often these responses are attributed to such or such god, that one is going to consult them by their name with their specialist; very well, but this does not constitute an objection if one admits with Lacan—and this is its most obvious justification—that the gods are of the real. Here I am speaking for the initiates. It is necessary to grasp that this sentence that one has often brandished as an aphorism of Lacan is not inscribed as an aphorism; on the contrary, it is inscribed in the articulation of his teaching (after...). I would have really been bothered if he had said the gods are of the imaginary, while here [with the gods in the real] the little peg falls exactly in its place. The gods are of the real and the oracle is, in this way, a response of the real as well.

Obviously this comes from this ancient idea that is not... if one likes, that the real chatters willingly. One must, precisely, not confuse the oracular practice with magic. Magic—I had the occasion of evoking it last year based on a frag-

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ment of the last text of Lacan to figure in the collection of the *Écrits*—"Science and Truth"—, magic is certainly also a business of response, as one perceives when one uses this key. It is in these terms that Lacan evokes it: magic supposes the signifier responding, as such, to the signifier. The signifier in nature is called by the signifier of the incantation. That is to say that one puts forth something of the signifier which functions as a call, then, this is expected to begin to move, this is expected to begin to send you some signs in nature. Meteors, the body itself, this is how magic, also, if you like, mobilizes a response of the real... And last year I dwelt at length on this sentence of Lacan's: "The Thing [*La chose*] insofar as it speaks responds to our entreaties." I will return to this sentence which is quite important to our investigation this year of the responses of the real. Obviously, in some measure, magic too gives a response of the real, but this is a real that, by principle, consents; it is a docile real, a real that does what one asks of it, what one tells it to do. This is why in this passage Lacan does not say the real, but says nature, speaks of the Thing. The Thing which responds, no doubt, but, rather in the mode of response (in English) than in the mode of answer; rather in the mode of reaction (*réponse*) than in that of the articulated response. Obviously, then, magical practice does not at all leave room for what emerges in the oracular practice, which is, on the contrary, deciphering; that is, the interpretation of the sign that is given. You are aware that there is a gap between the doing that is produced in the real, that is stirred up in the real by the desired storms, if I can say it in this way; and, then, you receive a statement [*énoncé*], which, it must be said, is enigmatic, so that you have to be

Themistocles to twig [*piger*] that the wall of wood must be the Greek fleet, must be for constructing ships, and not a stockade [*une palissade*].¹ One does not have this idea of the *equivoque* in magic.

We are going to leave magic a little to the side. It too involves a response, but not truly a response of the real. In order that there truly be a response of the real, it is necessary that everything not be truly possible. If everything is possible, there is no more real and this is why Lacan gave us the formula that the real is impossible, to which we can give many usages.

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Very well, I'll lead you onto level ground. One cannot remake oneself. I am serving it up to you on a platter. That is to say that I am showing you the simplest way to define the real. The real is approached starting with the impossible. All you have to do is to advance the contrary hypothesis: if everything is possible, then nothing is any longer real. Thus, leaving aside magic a little, for the best reasons in the world, notably, the definition of the real from which one must at least start; psychoanalysis is oracular in its practice. And throughout his teaching Lacan has never failed to establish this kinship, indeed, this identity between interpretation and the oracle. In other words, one must take Lacan with a touch [*brin*] of humor also! Or, then, one must also take very seriously the ancient oracle. It should be understood that the fate of nations—this appears more serious to us—could turn on a right interpretation of the oracle. If this would seem to you to have any weight, [it would be that] it is a question of life or death. Now it's different, it's rather—it is always also a question of life or death, but the question is what they truly wanted to say?—the puppet from Moscow or the other one from Washington. Also, one feels that if they do not understand one another, for example, if they give a bad interpretation of the oracle that the other has given, this can have consequences as regrettable as the mix-up over Athens' wall of wood. Obviously in the time in which we live, this has a little intersubjective allure. One calls it, for example, dissuasion. Okay, it is to this, moreover, that we will come: it is not because this has an intersubjective air that it is not also of the order of responses of the real for us. It is here that it would be necessary, perhaps, to begin to move a little the notion that one has of the real. Because I proceed carefully here, I would like, even so, to have the time to make explode—not an atomic bomb—but, all the same, to pulverize a little what one has all the same dragged into the muck for some time: that is, the real in Lacan's sense of it. One has dragged it into the muck because one has put it on a pedestal.

One must see how one speaks of the real among analysts! One is truly persuaded that the real is something solid, hardy, that it is not trash, or imitation. Obviously, the imaginary turns, there are mirrors, etc. The symbolic is dialectical; thus,

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one day it is white, one day it is black—but the real! There you have what it takes to found a certain security. It is this, moreover, that made me hesitate to put “real” in this title because there are truly a bunch... Since many have made titles from it, it has become very wide spread. But I said to myself that this might precisely have an effect on the idea that one has of the real in psychoanalysis. It is, indeed, necessary to put it in the title also; without that, one will not perceive it.

How, then, does psychoanalysis, oracular in its practice, inscribe itself in this business of responses of the real? I would say that there is a first choice which, nonetheless, is imposed, a choice for psychoanalysis, at least for a psychoanalyst: the choice of drawing his oracular practice towards magic, and there are some things which carry it there, and this is encouraged on occasion by the analysand. Or, [there is the choice] to draw it towards science. Towards magic? Of course! Of course, since this moves without one's knowing how. And then, especially, the hysterical subject works seriously to put herself in a state, and she waits for you to put yourself in a state too, and it, thus, mobilizes itself metaphorically from one to the other: without even counting all the testimonies in the corporeal support, this produces a terrible effect. The testimonies the hysterical subject gives are responses that she observes in what she believes to be the real of her body. This draws psychoanalysis towards magic, the magic of the word. The other branch of choice is science. I say choice, but I believe the psychoanalyst has no choice. That is to say, his choice is forced. In any case, it is Lacan's position that psychoanalysis is determined, conditioned by science. Though, of course, we have nothing to take from Freudian scientism and from his idea that psychoanalysis could be ranked among the natural sciences, since this is what he had in view. We have nothing to take from this except that psychoanalysis cannot do otherwise than to guide itself in relation to science—first, because one must pass by way of science for there to be the impossible. There is no real without the impossible, and this is what gives the real its obstacle value [*valeur de butée*]. Moreover, this is what makes one believe that the real is hefty, that it is made of concrete. Effectively, the real has the value of an obstacle, but there are many other

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obstacles than those walls one beats one's head against. In general, when one beats one's head against the walls it is because one has knocked against many other things than the wall before that. One is reassured to find the wall, while a real that constitutes an obstacle without being like the wall is much more substantial [*beaucoup plus coton*].

It is necessary that I clarify this forced choice because I will say that this year—I am going to try to say this for myself.

The function of mathemes in the psychoanalytic orientation, including in science... For science the real is put to the test of the signifier which does not mean anything. This implies, first of all, that the real itself not mean anything. Of course there are some scientific types who think, who develop everything that the real would mean – Teillard de Chardin, whom Dr. Lacan was especially fond of, was persuaded he knew perfectly what the real means. The real meant that its supreme creation was man, and especially that the real would aspire to point omega... One might say, a scientific psychosis. I say psychosis because, effectively, in psychosis there are some responses of the real. In any case there is a real that means something with all its force. Not that it responds, but it chatters on [*cause*] and the subject can't do anything about it. Thus, it is already reassuring when one is, instead, in the problematic of the responses of the real. This leaves us with the idea, more or less exact, that if you do not pose it a question, it leaves you in peace [*il vous fout la paix*]. If you do not tickle it with a question, it will not respond. There is only one problem here. As I suggested last year, in psychoanalysis one considers the responses; they precede the questions.

I invite you to look again at the pages Lacan devotes to this in *Seminar III*. It is not by accident that in the *Seminar* on the psychoses Dr. Lacan devotes so much space to the question

of science. He even gives some epistemological elements in this *Seminar*. There is a reason for this. Science is what, in our history, has made the real be silent, and in this way, in making it be silent, it has constituted it; properly speaking, starting with the impossible. I can do no better than to refer you to this. I will give you the page numbers some other time....

I will give you some other references from before Lacan

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on the fact, precisely, that before Lacan a certain mathematician said that there was nothing but silence in the heavens—and this was not just any old mathematician, but someone who operated precisely at the heart of this business of responses of the real—someone who said that there was nothing except silence in the heavens; this means, that before him the heavens buzzed with words, with songs, with signifiers, without one being, for all that—or, it was collective then—in psychosis. This was not collective; it was that one no longer believed in it completely. One believes that this is a novelty, the division of the subject in respect to belief. On the contrary, it is quite ancient. I do not want to be too allusive, so I will bring you the data some other time on the bla-bla of these spaces.

The real is, no doubt, a category introduced into psychoanalysis by Lacan, and one might say that without him one would not think of it oneself... One must see where the real comes from. And in general it comes now with the accent, as I've said, of being something of a rock. Finally, I wonder if we wouldn't make the old moon of the Sartrean *en-soi* return under the name of Lacan's real. I mean this *en-soi* which is "what it is" and which, in this way, distinguishes itself from the *pour-soi* in Sartre's definition, which is not what it is and which is what it is not. Because of this, they have a difficult life together. One of them is completely supple and has no flaw: his *en-soi*, his *être en-soi*. And then the *pour-soi* comes along, which is porosity itself. And then when they mix, it gets a little sticky. In any case, there are some very beautiful phenomenological descriptions in *Being and Nothingness*, precisely of what happens when the hole of the *pour-soi* strolls into the *en-soi*. Obviously, this is not appetizing. This *en-soi*, when it is all alone, if one can say so, is for Sartre something which has no supporter [*tenant*], as he says. I have reread this to see if this was how one was to take it. An *en-soi* which has no secret, which is massive and of which one can say that it is what it is, but of which one cannot even say that it is not what it is not, that is to say, which is truly the positive whole and which has no alterity; it does not even have alterity enough for one to say that it is not what it is not, which is truly the full positive and which has no alterity. One cannot even introduce

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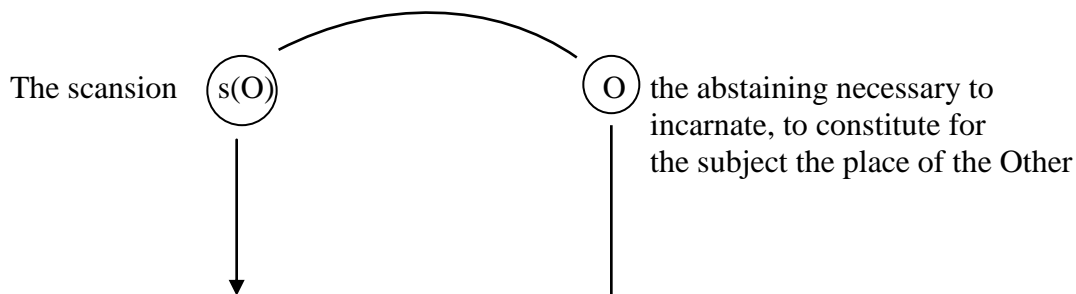
negation into its vicinity, and because of this it cannot support any rapport with the Other. It would be deplorable that with the real isolated, concocted by Lacan, that one go back to fiddling this silly *en-soi*. Who could that interest, this category where it is a question of something which is not even what it is not? All the interests bear naturally on the adventures of the *pour-soi*. But what could we do with this *en-soi*? Sartre says it is neither possible nor impossible; it can be derived from nothing, neither from the necessary, nor the impossible... This is a theology, negative if you like, of the *en-soi*, but which is found at the same time to be a pure positive. Could the real of which it is a question in psychoanalytic experience be a full positivity? Well, I do not think I am taking any risks in presenting it to you like this so as to say: absolutely not.

The fact that the real constitutes an obstacle does not mean that it corresponds to the fantasy of the *en-soi*, or to the real of science.

Lacan succeeded in fascinating psychoanalysts, and some others too, with the real, but apparently, still, there is in the position of this term something that limps. I will say that, even for Lacan, this real is the effect of a construction. The real that you find evoked in the *Rome Discourse* is still a summary real. Besides, he does not distinguish the real from reality there, an essential distinction which comes later. He considers that definitively, essentially, the real is what remains outside analytic experience, that one does not occupy oneself with it, that one isolates oneself in the sense where even in divination one isolates oneself precisely to obtain a response... And it is at the point that he can, at base, deny the function of the real in the analytic experience. [He does so] by the fact alone that one does not do any concrete investigations of the past there, that even the efforts of Freud to determine the biographical data where it was specifically a question of the Wolf Man arose from a still frustrated practice of Freud's. This is already sufficient to mark that, for Lacan, at that epoch, one took a distance from the real in psychoanalysis. Obviously, anamnesis is not a police investigation which does not, however, stop the neurotic from occasionally finding in the detective novel something to deceive his expectations as to the solution of his desire. In the *Rome Discourse*, at the beginning of Lacan's teaching, there

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are only two points in the analytic experience, two points of juncture with the real. It is very amusing, moreover, to see of which ones it is a question. And there, he could not have written: the responses of the real, but: the interventions of reality, which is truly something else. He sets aside, in order to approach the interventions of reality, the so-called interventions of active practice. One might think this refers to practices made fashionable in psychoanalysis by Ferenczi. If one does not enter into these active interventions in the analytic experience, two points of the real intervene in the analytic experience, two points of juncture. The first, he says, is the abstaining of the analyst in that he restrains himself from saying and he restrains himself from doing. This is what one called at that time "benevolent neutrality." And second, the function of time. Where one must hear—it is clear in the text—before all, the scansion, the punctuation of the interpretation. Two points of attachment are made from this, two junctures of the symbolic and the real. You will find this again in his schemas. The two points he isolates are these two key points of his graph:



The double juncture he signals in the *Écrits*, page 310 [Fink, 255], is the beginning of what is going to make the armature of his graph some years later.

Of this abstaining of the analyst, he makes O, an element of reality in the analytic experience. This is a point where the symbolic effectively encounters a block [*butée*]. The block of all the bla-bla which pours out in psychoanalysis is also blocked by this O, by what Lacan calls in his *Écrits*, note it well: the refusal to respond. This is of a nature to be awakened, to indicate, like so many of Le Petit Poucet's little pebbles.² Finally, there is a thread that runs through this. Finally, one must not mix up the little pebbles with the thread of Ariadne. There is a thread that runs over these little pebbles, whose

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pivot is this response business: the refusal to respond, based on principle, not on bad will. (Bad will can help out here, why not, even bad humor...) The refusal to respond is a point of juncture already defined here by the symbolic and the real: O, refusal to respond.

He adds that this is founded—something that is very enigmatic on the first reading—on the analyst's conviction (his functional conviction) that all that is real is rational. That will lead us back to this: all that is real is rational because this is also the foundation of the position of the analyst as subject-supposed-to-know, while he knows very well the contrary, that all that is real is not rational, because in any case, reason, since Freud, has made a little progress [*un petit bout de chemin*].

The refusal to respond, then, is our first point. It is here that the presence of the real in Lacan's teaching is most manifest, in the refusal to respond. And then the second function: precisely, the moment when he responds: the scansion of the response. Besides, it is in this matter that Lacan produces the longest justification that he has ever given regarding his practice of short sessions. One must make this response of the real business clear because this response of the real passes specifically, precisely, through it. I refer you to this page. In addition, he keeps a third factor in reserve, where also, he says, the real is conjoined with the symbolic—that of money. I'm not going to expand on this point.

This has all of its value from the beginning of his teaching; real and response are linked in this way. Refused response, response withheld, and, then, response given, response punctuated. Obviously, one must say that this is going to move very quickly for Lacan since, as you will see in the *Écrits*, as soon as he takes up his commentary on Jean Hippolyte's presentations, he immediately introduces an already more refined idea of the real which he defines—do understand this—as the domain which subsists outside symbolization. He does this in regard to the Wolf Man and suddenly he is led to study hallucination—finally, pseudo-hallucination—and, thus, already, to put forward the idea that the non-symbolized reappears in the real as punctuation (...), which is completely in conformity with what he could have said before, that the real has something to

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do with these punctuations. And in analysis, it is precisely the question of the real that becomes acute in order to situate the end of analysis there also. Because if there is one scansion that has weight, it is this one.

Obviously, Lacan still has a real there that resembles the *en-soi* a little. He obviously has enough to make this move, but he, nonetheless, takes up again the Sartrean term for this, when he makes of the real what is identical to its existence. That is an echo of *Being and Nothingness*.

But already he exposes it in psychosis as chattering all by itself, which is not completely in conformity with this identity with its existence. We see that psychosis is already a matter of response at the dawn of Lacan's teaching, the years 1953 and 1954; we can read *L'Étourdit*, a text from 1972, and see there, also, clearly evoked, in reference to hallucinations, the response given in psychosis by what is perceived. I defy you to understand this without reconstructing this landscape a little. I defy you because for ten years I have not understood why the word *response* came there. Besides, in this text, he defines another interference between the symbolic and the real which is *acting out*. This is, moreover, a reaction—which would make one think, rather, of response—, a reaction that he attributes to what? That he attributes to the fact that the analyst does not ask the right questions. This is to say, that rather than asking the right questions, he asks questions that he should be able to answer himself. And, as a result, Lacan says, he attracts strong, incongruous responses (p. 390). It is very amusing that once one has these little compasses, terms that pass by completely unperceived, like *respond* and *response*, they suddenly begin to flash from the texts! One suddenly perceives that they were always there.

One believes one is done with Lacan when one remembers that he says that the real is what always returns to the same place, and when one takes up again his astronomical example, that one has always situated the real based upon the stars, and that this returns unfailingly to the same place. It is very reassuring to take the real in this way. Lacan, of course, continues to say that it returns to the same place, but one must still know which place! Because if one is content with “it returns to the

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same place” one imagines that it holds to its place very well, that in no case is it going to unhook itself...; and, this is what one hopes, that the real not move, that one might take it as said once and for all. It is on that point that Lacan evokes the ceremonies of the beginning of the seasons (in *Seminar III*). He recalls what Granet developed at length: the microcosmic sense of the operations in ancient China which consisted of aiding the real to function. Thus, it was necessary there that speaking beings make themselves the agents of the return of the real to the same place. It was necessary that they engage actively as *semblants*, that they multiply the *semblants* to accompany the return of the real to the same place. Obviously, one can, here, also, ask oneself: did the ancients, the Chinese, believe in their ceremonies? Did the Greeks believe in their myths? Obviously, belief is deeply divided. Thus, one can very well say that on the one hand they professed that on two days a week the sheep would not be devoured because the gods who would have chewed them up had left. This was the belief. And that on the other hand they would bring in the sheep anyway because they did not want to take risks. This division in regard to belief brings us up short [*est en arête*]. One must not, it seems to me, let oneself be dragged along too much by this belief arising from practices about which there is only a *semblant* there. [That] should tell us a lot.

This real that returns to the same place, in order to be constituted to return to a single and same place, certainly asked that one make the other places be silent. You have this in *Seminar III*. Why do planets not talk? Definitely, it is because science has in a way made it so the heavens do not talk. Lacan says: this is because the planets do not have a mouth. This is attached to the scientific invention that Lacan baptized—and of which was very proud, since he reminds us of it several times in his *Écrits*—on the 11th of April, 1956, in the *Seminar* on the psychoses, in having put forward the signifier that means nothing, which he calls the *asemantic*

signifier. Clearly, the asemantic signifier is the opposite of this *semanein*, it is the opposite of the semaphore signifier, the one that carries some meaning. The asemantic signifier is the condition of knowing...the asemantic signifier: think of the little letters of mathematical knowledge,

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think of mathematical formulas. Obviously [they are] asemantic. One also has all the possible ways to make numbers signify. One has invented significations for them. But, fundamentally, this does not constitute an appeal as such—let us say it using Lacan’s term—to *jouis-sens*. If this has some effects of sense, these are not as such effects of *jouissance*. One, of course, tries to make some *jouis-sens* with that. This is the condition for rediscovering the knowledge that is in the real. One tries to discover this. And mathematical writing has been revealed necessary for discovering this knowledge in the real. That is to say, for perceiving that nature is written in mathematical language. This is what Lacan translated as “knowledge in the real.”

Now, does science discover a subject in the real? Let us say in any case that Lacan’s thesis is that what analytic discourse conserves is the subject, which, as an effect of signification, is a response of the real. It is from there that I have taken this “response of the real”: “Analytic discourse conserves the subject which, as an effect of signification, is a response of the real.” Do we have this in science? One sees very well why the question can be asked, this is not as stupid [*abrupti*] as all that. One starts with the fact that a signifier has value for another signifier. This is Saussure’s definition. The question Lacan’s sentence poses is how a signifier that is articulated to another comes to represent a subject? What is needed for this? It doesn’t suffice to shout oneself hoarse, for example. This is completely different. Obviously, in science, the real responds. It responds because there is a knowledge in the real. It responds because there is some signifier. One is indeed obligated to say that it is already in the real. One is going to measure some constants. One is going to perceive that one can calculate the laws of gravitation... All of these are responses of the real. One is going, above all, to perceive that one succeeds in sending objects into space and that they begin to function in conformity with what one had predicted. Before this was done, one could not be sure in the same way.

The real responds for science because there is knowledge in it. And everything depends on the question one asks it. One must ask the right questions, ask it questions in its language. Science speaks the language of the Other, the Other of

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the knowledge in the real.

But would there be a subject in scientific discourse which, as effect of signification, would be a response of the real? To begin with, one could not say that this interests scientific discourse because it could be that even if there is such a subject, it is none of scientific discourse’s business. But why not go as far as to say that, in every way, the signifier has an effect of signification? One knows this starting from the structure of metaphor. That even if there is only one signifier, it already poses the question of what this signifier is, it is already to be deciphered. What decipheres it then? You know the general theory of that. For it to be deciphered, it must pass below, it must be erased, it must be barred since there is another [signifier] that implants itself in its place:

<u>S</u>	then: <u>S'</u>	<u>S</u>
x	S	x

S' the new signifier

X the effect of signification

It suffices that a new signifier be implanted for one to observe an effect of signification in x. Besides, as a parenthesis, the subject in Lacan's sense is written with an S barred. This is because there is no better signifier for the subject than a signifier less [*q'un signifier en moins*], than the signifier of an elision of the signifier. To go quickly, the subject-supposed-to-know in science does not emerge in any other way. Obviously, it is here that the subject-supposed-to-know emerges in science also, the subject supposed to know some science in science. Because this is a subject-supposed-to-know, supposed-to-know how to behave [*se tenir*], and especially how to keep [*se tenir à*] his place. Honest [*honnête*], in a way. And this is why passing by way of Descartes' deceiving God is essential to the procession of modern science and, as Lacan notes, it is also essential that for Einstein God had to be *honnête*, or fair. But, one also sees very well that if there is a God for science, the elision of this bar of the signifier . . . —what is barred are natural signifiers—

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as a result of which they return, for example, in the language of mathematics . . . ; [for understanding this] we are going to borrow this more or less from the everyday kitchen sense: filters, for example. In fact, one bars natural signifiers; one sets about producing some cipher [*chiffre*] beyond what the *jouis-sens* is. This is almost a quotation of Lacan's. Very well, when one introduces the asemantic signifier to this place, even the asemantic signifier still has an effect of signification. It has an effect of signification which is the signification of knowledge. Nothing imposes the signification of knowledge so much as something about which you understand nothing. It is obvious that it is precisely the opacity of a signifying articulation that imposes the presence . . . that signifies the knowledge to you. This has to resist you a little, it has to be opaque.

I know very well that I have the reputation of being clear. I try to be a little less so. Indeed, when I am clear, they say to me: "I already knew it."

The asemantic signifier—one must not fall into the trap [of "already knowing"]—, nonetheless, has an effect of signification of knowledge; only in science one imagines—and this is an altogether extraordinary supposition—that one is dealing with a partner who is truly an expert, who knows the rules of the game and who respects them. Lacan, in these terms—not exactly these—says that it is a true act of faith for science to be persuaded that one has a partner, and that this partner respects the rules of the game.

One must say that the psychoanalyst plays at this too. He plays at maintaining that nothing is without reason and that all the real is rational. This is even what justifies the psychoanalytic imperative [*consigne*] to go there and to not know what one says. Not letting oneself be stopped is, indeed, what, starting with the signifier of the transference which produces the effect of signification—because there is nothing else there—is the subject-supposed-to-know. This is a signification of knowledge.

The curious thing in psychoanalysis, and this is different from what happens in science, is that in psychoanalysis one perceives, and one operates with this—the subject, this effect of signification which emerges in the real. And as I have suggested, you are going to see its mark, its piquancy [*sel*]. It

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is true that in the analytic experience, this subject, $\$$, does not remain very well limited to its corner, respecting the rules of the game—quite the contrary. And this is seen at the beginning of the analysis: this emergence of the subject in the real. It emerges on occasion by diverse types of lacking, even diverse types of loss. On occasion, one sees this. It also emerges in the dream and can emerge directly in the real in the form of acting out. In any case, it emerges in the unconscious; that is to say, it emerges in the signifying articulation. It emerges in the *lapsus*. It makes itself seen in unconscious knowledge as an effect of signification. Simply, it makes itself seen in some disturbance. This is not what is produced in scientific discourse. In scientific discourse one does not start to perceive like this, that suddenly there is a window that starts vacillating on every side because something is singing to it. This continues something that comes back to us. There is no response of the real that might be the subject. There is, however, an effect of signification which is produced as a signification of knowledge, but this does not for all that constitute the response of the real as such. What constitutes the response of the real is on the contrary quite solid [*du costaud*] and it is not wanderings, not stumblings. It is through this that the subject *supposed* to the knowledge [*au savoir*] finds itself mobilized, and one must indeed say that before it emerges as a response of the real, it is strictly undetermined. It is there that we will find again our business of uncertainty and of invention.

This phrase of Lacan, “Subject as effect of signification and response of the real,” I had the feeling, again last year, that this was really a tough one, but one must grasp that the subject, that is to say, those different elisions which walk around, which displace themselves, is all we have as a response of the real. And we do no more than redouble this response of the real in interpretation.

Already Lacan emphasizes on page 310 of the *Écrits* that we only give the response when the subject is already there. We do it in conformity with the formula of inverted communication according to which it is the receiver who emits the message. In this regard, the real in psychoanalysis has nothing to do with the *en-soi*, nothing to do, either, with the real of

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science which always tells the truth and which tells the whole truth to the extent one asks it the right questions. What is the response of the real in psychoanalysis if this response is the subject, and nothing but that? Very well, if the response of the real is the subject, we know what we have to expect from the subject: the response is a lie and it is there that—finally this will be an atomic bomb if one has any idea of what one trundles along with this business of the real in psychoanalysis. One must admit and must give all its weight and its worth to this fact; that the real lies, that in psychoanalysis the real lies. This does not stop it from constituting an obstacle, and how! There is no question here of a stable and solid real that one would always find again at the same place in the sense that it would hold its peace [*se tendrait tranquille*]. Besides, how would the subject emerge as an effect of signification, as a response of the real, except as an effect of sig-

nification in the transference, that is to say, as transference love, and if that is not a lie...? Then, obviously one imagines that in science one can find again a trace of this, in Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, for example, where one has the idea that there would be something like a cleavage of the discernable data which would almost resemble a subject as a response of the real. Lacan evokes it in the *Seminar* on the psychoses. There, obviously, one has some particles that do not respond where one interrogates them. You see that one is always in this response business. And what would happen if the atoms lied? Very well, that's it! From this moment the question that is asked of how, and which would not be asked of the analyst, is not of how to distinguish between the lie and the real because without this, it would suffice for one to found the real and the true. If utilizing the category of the real means anything, it is precisely that in psychoanalysis the deceiving God is not foreclosed. And if Descartes forecloses the deceiving God with his subject-supposed-to-know, psychoanalysis reintroduces him, and at the best place.

Freud already saw it very well; he saw it in regard to the hysteric when he spoke of the *proton pseudos*, of the original lie of the hysteric. This has value for the subject as such. The subject as a response of the real, that's it: the *proton pseudos*. Well, obviously, this emerges on occasion in the form of the laments of the subject, laments about being ignorant of the truth of her *being* from [the fact of her] being nothing more than a facet and a *semblant*. It is here that knowing that this is a response of the real comes back into analysis. And how can one not notice this when it is precisely this that leads the hysteric to brave the impossible; that is to say, to misrecognize what one imagines to be reality?

Next time I will take up this business of the lying responses that are necessary to what suitably constitutes a clinical category itself.

*I would like to thank Jack Stone for his suggestions. (ER)

Endnotes

¹ Themistocles was an influential Athenian statesman and military leader active during the during the Graeco-Persian wars. The incident alluded to here occurs in Book VII of Herodotus' *Histories*. After being told by the oracle at Delphi that only a "wall of wood" (7.141) would aid them against Xerxes' invasion, "[s]ome of the more elderly statesmen argued for the view that the god was predicting the survival of the Acropolis; in times past the Athenian Acropolis had been surrounded by a defensive stockade, so they came to the conclusion that 'wall of wood' referred to this stockade" (7.142). Themistocles, on the other hand, "advised them to get the fleet ready for battle at sea, on the grounds that 'the wall of wood' referred to the fleet. The Athenians decided that Themistocles' explanation of the oracle was preferable to that of the official interpreters who would rather they did not prepare for battle—whose advice, in fact, was that the Athenians should not resist at all, but should abandon Attica and find somewhere else to live" (7.143). (Herodotus, *The Histories*, translated by Robin Waterfield, with an introduction by Carolyn Dewald [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998], pp. 452-453) [trans.].

² Le Petit Poucet ("Little Thumb" or "Hop o' My Thumb" in the English versions) is the Tom-Thumb-like hero of one of Charles Perrault's fairy tales. Early in the story, when his impoverished parents try to abandon him and his six brothers in the forest, Le Petit Poucet leaves behind a trail of little white pebbles which allows the boys to find their way home. Andrew Lang's translation of this story can be found at <http://www.surlalunefairytales.com/hopomythumb/index.html>.