

THE MOTHER-CHILD RELATION

(The Newsletter is grateful to Marie-Hélène Brousse for permission to publish a transcript of the seminar she gave at Ivy House on 25/11/87).

The theme of Marie-Hélène Brousse's recent seminar at Ivy House was the mother-child relationship in which she discussed the impact that the work of Winnicott was to have on the development of the Lacanian teaching.

Winnicott was one of the few Post-Freudian analysts who had a relationship with Lacan, and Lacan's interest in Winnicott dates from Winnicott's article Transitional objects and transitional phenomena (1951). Furthermore, Lacan was to use the concept of the transitional object in relation to the development of his thought.

Lacan refers to the work of Winnicott during two precise periods in the development of his thought. In the first period, there are two Lacanian texts that bear witness to Lacan's interest in Winnicott's work: La relation d'objet et les structures Freudiennes (Séminaire IV - unpublished) (1956-57), and The Direction of the Treatment (1958).

It was not until eleven years later that Lacan was to refer to Winnicott again, this time in l'Acte psychanalytique (Séminaire XV - unpublished), (1967-68), an account of which can be found in Ornicar no. 29, and in Discours à l'École Freudienne de Paris, Scilicet 2-3, p 23.

These two periods covering a span of eleven years mark two very different periods in Lacan's thinking. The first period deals with the concept of the transitional object and the second period is concerned with Winnicott's concept of the 'self'. These two periods or encounters between Winnicott and Lacan indicate the problems that confronted psychoanalysis at that time. The first problem is that of the object and the second problem concerns the 'analytical act'. When Lacan works on Winnicott's transitional object it is connected to his 'return to Freud' in opposition to Ego-psychology and to a lesser extent the Kleinian school.

Thus in the seminar La relation d'objet, Lacan introduces the question of the object by way of the phobia and half of the seminar is centred on a re-reading of the case of Little Hans. Lacan discusses the object-relation in connection with the phobic object and not from a genital point of view as is the case with other Post-Freudian analysts. Lacan also discusses the question of the object in relation to fetishism, and it is at this point that he refers to Winnicott and the transitional object.

In The direction of the treatment Lacan says that the object-relation question is one of the main streams of psychoanalysis. This theory has, according to Lacan, a noble origin. What does Lacan mean by 'noble origin'? It is in a way the origin that Lacan recognised as inaugural in psychoanalysis. This refers to Abraham's concept of partial love of the object which he introduced through a text on kleptomania. The object he is referring to is the object as seen in two cases of kleptomania, and is related to the father's penis.

However Lacan argues that this original sense has been corrupted by those who take the part-object to be the beginning of a total object. That is to say an object-relations theory that begins with the part-object in infancy until it reaches a total genital object when development is complete. Lacan constantly criticises this idea.

In this context Winnicott is in a peculiar position. In a way he is in opposition to the total object theory. For Lacan, the transitional object is really the negative of the total genital object. It makes the direction of the development of the child impossible and it emphasises the phallic function, which at that time is Lacan's conception of the object in relation to the phallic object.

Object little (a) has, at this stage, a different sense to that of the second period (late 60ties). At this stage it is more on the imaginary or symbolic side, for example, the imaginary in terms of the phantasy and the symbolic in terms of the phobia. In the phobia, the phobic object is nothing but a signifier. Therefore, at this stage, the object is not really related to the real although it is beginning to be, and this is when Winnicott becomes important to Lacan.

In the first period the object is related to the phallic function and we shall see that Winnicott's transitional object is related to the phallic function as is Abraham's partial love of the object.

In the second period Lacan conceives of object little (a) in terms of the real. L'Acte psychanalytique immediately follows Lacan's seminar on la logique du fantasme, where the status of the object as real is completely theorised with his logic. At this stage the reference to Winnicott is no longer to the transitional object, but instead Lacan criticises Winnicott's conception of the 'self', saying that it is a 'lapseus de l'acte analytique'. Lacan also talks about Winnicott's passion as a result of Winnicott's relation to psychoanalysis. Lacan feels that what is lacking here is logic to temper this passion. At this time he is himself in the process of elaborating psychoanalysis as a logic which refers to the formalisation of psychoanalysis. Winnicott, on the other hand, is more on the side of passion than on the side of logic.

However, Lacan respects Winnicott as an analyst because of Winnicott's faithfulness to Freud as can be seen from the following passage in the écrits (p. 250):

'Genetic research and direct observation are far from being cut off from properly analytic realities'.

Lacan constantly criticises the idea of genetic research and direct observation, and this refers to the work of Anna Freud and the ego-psychology school. However, Lacan is also pointing out that Winnicott, although involved in genetic research (a genetic approach to child development) and direct observation, is 'far from being cut off from properly analytic realities'. I think that here Lacan is referring to an article by Winnicott published in Vol 22, International Journal of Psychoanalysis - The Observation of Children in a Set Situation (1941). In this article Winnicott describes the way in which children play with objects on his desk. We can use another example from chapter 3 of Playing and Reality - the case of Diana. Winnicott received both Diana and her mother and he notes that he had to conduct two consultations in parallel; one with the mother, and a play relationship with Diana. In this text Winnicott describes his interaction with Diana and her responses.

In both of the above examples, observation and development take place in an analytical situation, that is, within a system (*dispositif*) of words. 'C'est un dispositif de paroles'. This is the way in which to understand the analytic situation; it involves words and it is under transference: in Diana's case, the transference of the mother to Winnicott, and of Diana to her mother and Winnicott. Thus we can see that two of the main characteristics of the Freudian discovery are present in Winnicott's observation of children. I think this is the way to understand 'far from being cut off from analytic realities' - i.e. words and transference.

Lacan continues (in Seminar IV): 'I showed the value of a conception in which child observation is nourished by the most accurate reconsideration of the function of mothering in the genesis of the object.' This sentence merits further consideration.

In the first place it is concerned with the genesis of the object and not the genesis of the child. This difference is important for Lacan in terms of the opposition between child development and (even at this stage in Lacan) the subject's history. Thus Lacan refers to the genesis of the object and one of the differences between Winnicott and Lacan is that when the latter refers to the object, it is always in relation to the subject. What characterises the transitional object is that its relationship to the subject is not all clear. Lacan, at this stage, is interested in the genesis of the object.

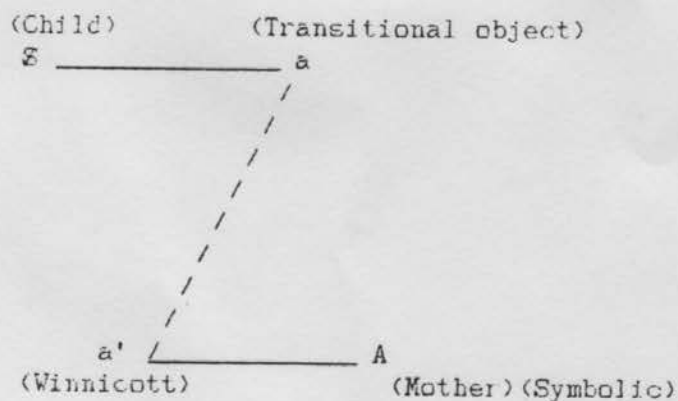
Now why does Lacan talk about 'the most accurate reconsideration of the function of mothering'? In French 'la plus juste remise au point de la fonction du maternage'. For Lacan, 'juste' is related to 'approprié' and it has a very precise meaning. What is accurate, what is 'juste' when considering psychoanalysis has to do, since Freud, with one requirement of which Lacan talks in Kant avec Sade saying:

'Depuis Freud une structure quadripartite est exigée pour rendre compte de l'ordre subjectif.'

(From Freud onwards a quadripartite structure is needed to account for the subjective order).

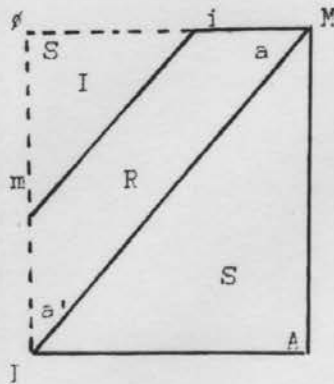
Winnicott's reconsideration of the function of mothering is accurate because it is related to a quadripartite structure. By closely reading Winnicott we see that quite frequently there is the following situation: the mother (1), the child (2), Winnicott (3), and the object (4) - the teddy in Diana's case. In this way we can see the function of mothering within a quadripartite structure. This is why Lacan says it is 'most accurate', it is very precise and we may ask why is it necessary to have a quadripartite structure. It is necessary because of the Oedipus complex, or more precisely, because of the castration complex. The mother-child relationship is not a dual relationship. It is initially a three-placed structure and later a four-placed structure.

I shall now try to apply Lacan's schema L to Winnicott.



The mother can be placed at A without any doubt, because at that time, when Lacan talks about the mother, he refers to the symbolic A. The child is placed at E. However, the subject is not the child, the child is more or less the ego. Winnicott is placed at a' which is interesting because this means that as an analyst he is placed as an object even if it is an imaginary object. The transitional object is placed at a.

The transitional object is directed towards the phallus. At this time Lacan refers to the phallus as coordinated with the imaginary and the symbolic. We can complete this model by using schema R, (Ecrits, p. 553).



in which it appears that Winnicott is located in the place of 'I' as the ego-ideal, and that the transitional object appears in the position of signifier of the primordial object in relation to the Real Other, the Mother.

Towards the end of Winnicott's article Transitional objects and transitional phenomena, he refers to the phallus, relating the transitional object to the maternal phallus:

'We can admit that the transitional object is virtually the maternal phallus although originally it is the breast, that is to say the thing created by the child and at the same time furnished by the environment.'

Winnicott's reference to the relationship between the transitional object and the maternal phallus seems to be immensely important for Lacan: in relation to Freud's paper on Fetishism (1927) in which Freud points out that the fetish object is a substitute for the mother's penis that the child originally believed in. Therefore we can see that for Lacan, the most appropriate figure of the object is an object related to the phallus, that is to say, to the mother's castration.

The transitional object is important as a concept for Lacan for at least four reasons:

- 1. The transitional object is related to weaning. Winnicott points out that the transitional object appears roughly between the ages of 4-12 months and this corresponds to the weaning period. In Les Complexes familiaux (1938) for the first and last time Lacan proposes something resembling a theory of child development. He discusses three successive complexes, the first being the weaning complex (le complexe du sévage). The importance of the mother in Lacan's work is the moment when she is absent, when she is missing. In other texts Lacan refers to weaning as a 'subjective drama' along the lines of the Kleinian school. Lacan's reference to the Kleinian school is only to point out that it is the mother's drama and not the child's. This point is raised again with reference to the object which is part of the child's body and not the mother's body. Thus there is a change of perspective in the two points of view.

This period is important because it shows that the mother-child relationship is not dual and that it never has been. It also emphasises the mother's desire. When theorising the function of the mother Lacan introduces the mother's desire from the beginning as a function that makes her missing in her place (which weaning shows clearly) and this is the origin of the introduction of the object in the symbolic. Thus the transitional object is important because of its relation to weaning and the function of lack in development.

- 2. The transitional object is important because of its relation to the place of the phallus, that is to say it is related to the castration complex. Child development is organised around this main point in the lacanian teaching.

- 3. The transitional object should be understood in terms of its relation to the Other. Winnicott points out that the transitional object is not in the Other and that it is neither internal nor external. I would say that it is not out of the Other but that it should be understood in terms of 'extimite' as is the relation between (a) and A. We can refer to Winnicott's point that the interest in the transitional object lies more in its actual reality than its symbolic value. The transitional object does not function as a symbol although it can be named.

- 4. The transitional object is related to the paradox of human satisfaction and this is important for both Lacan and Winnicott, although it is more enigmatic in Winnicott. When Winnicott points out that this object has nothing to do with the kind of satisfaction concerning consumption, this can be understood as it having a relation to the satisfaction which is tied more to the phantasy than to the real. That is to say that this object plays a part in the causation of desire. We can in a way consider the relationship of the child to its transitional object as a matrix of the jouissance of the subject, that is, a kind of satisfaction related to the phantasy as defined by Lacan.

The main characteristics of the transitional object are the same as the object in the phantasy; it is mutilated, sampled, inert and invariable. It is not an object of repression and so it is not to be understood in terms of a formation of the unconscious. It has more to do with the organ that Lacan talks about in Position de l'inconscient and its function is to prevent forever the temptation of genital totalisation as never attempted. It is absolutely clear in Winnicott's work that genital totalisation is not possible. Winnicott says that the difference between the two sexes is between doing and being, but in any case the transitional object plays its part alone. It has more to do with the thumb than with the good milk.

This allows Winnicott to formulate a new interpretation of narcissism. Narcissism is not the absence of object as is the case with other Post-Freudians. Like Winnicott, Lacan points out that the observations of the child indicate that he is interested in objects from birth.

Winnicott constantly emphasises that the transitional object has nothing to do with the drive. This could be seen as contradictory to the lacanian position but I would argue that it is not. What Winnicott means is that it is not a hallucination because it can be lost and named. Also, when Winnicott points out that it is not an object related to the drive he means that it is not an object correlated to the satisfaction of need. He stresses that it is related to love, however, a very special love and he talks about 'concern' and 'non-concern'. It is in a very 'non-concerned' way for the mother that this object is loved. I would say that it has more to do with the Freudian model of the mouth that is able to kiss itself than with any definition of the drive in terms of need.

In concluding on the transitional object and its value for lacan, I would argue that it is related to what Lacan calls 'le manque d'être' (both 'want to be' and the lack of being) because there is something missing in Winnicott's work which can be found in Lacan; the theory of the subject. Winnicott has developed a theory of the object without having reference to the subject as produced by the signifying alienation. This of course has many consequences. As an object it is still concerned with the 'want', the 'lack', but it is not the 'want to be' which is correlated to the subject.

Winnicott points out that the transitional object can only appear if the mother acts properly as a mother, which, he says, is disillusioning for the baby. This means that the mother provides the child with small wants, with appropriate wants, and in a way, this is the problem with Winnicott: the want has to be created for the child by this good, almighty Other which doesn't exist. Thus, without this maternal disillusionment there would be no possibility of a transitional object. In view of this we can say that the root of the transitional object is a certain want. But two wants overlap here: the 'want-to-be' of the subject as effect of the signifying order and a real want, constituting the core of the object, its being of loss, related to the 'Trieb'. For Winnicott, it has more to do with a substantive want, with 'separation' rather than 'alienation'. This refers to the two modes with which Lacan theorises the construction of the subject.

Thus we can see that it is an object that comes in the way of the drive ($\mathcal{S} \rightarrow \text{D}$). The object little (a) is the partial object of the drive and in those particular organisations, the neuroses, appears in the fantasy: ($\mathcal{S} \rightarrow a$), but related to the \mathcal{S} . That is why the transitional object can only appear if the Other is functioning, that is, if the mother is defined by her function which is desire. The mother is nothing but the function of desire: 'le désir de la mère'. Lacan includes this notion in an equation (the paternal metaphor) which is his way of formalising the Oedipus complex at this stage.

Thus the mother is the Other and functions in the 'demand of the Other' which can be understood in two ways, subjective and objective: the mother as desire which functions in the demand of the Other and produces the possibility of an object which Winnicott calls 'transitional' thus emphasising by this name the relationship between the real and the symbol. This is the first use Lacan makes of Winnicott's work. Lacan is able, with Winnicott's help, to introduce a new theory of the object into psychoanalysis.

But a problem remains in Winnicott. The transitional object is part of a relation to the mother, that is to say, to the desire of the Other. In this sense it is linked to the subject, introducing the signifier and death. What Winnicott fails to see is that there is no relation possible between the pure living being and the object: as the object presupposes an initial lack, it necessitates the Symbolic order. The transitional object bears the mark of the signifying operation and supposes the symbolic dimension. Winnicott himself writes: 'The fact that it is not the breast or the mother is just as important as the fact that it represents the breast or the mother.' It is true that the object deals with the Real but this can only take its value if the symbolic order, and the thus subject, is central.

In the second period Lacan no longer requires Winnicott's help as he has already produced a theory of the object in relation to the logic of the phantasy. On the contrary, in this period Lacan criticises Winnicott's analytic practice and in particular the concept of 'self'. The concept of the self, like that of the transitional object, is Winnicott's answer to a question common to both Winnicott and Lacan, as Lacan uses the concept of the subject where Winnicott uses the concept of the self. This coincidence once again points to an important problem in psychoanalysis at the time.

There is a fundamental opposition between the subject and the self. They represent two opposed answers to the same question in psychoanalysis. Winnicott's concept of the self first appears in 1945, is developed in 1949 and reviewed in 1953. It is a concept which quite naturally introduces the pathological formation of a split-off mind. At first, then, this concept bears witness to the authentically Freudian approach of Winnicott, turning, as it does, around the idea of division. But the elaboration of the 'self' from that point on takes another road: in 1953, 'continuity of existence', in 1955, 'impulsiveness defined by motoricity'.

Then Winnicott refers to the self in terms of true and false. This is also a coincidence because Lacan too deals with the problem of truth in psychoanalysis, and opposes truth of the subject to exactitude of facts.

True and false are two qualities of the self for Winnicott, two logical values for Lacan. However, Winnicott's use of the concepts 'true' and 'false' is not from a logical point of view. In opposition to this, Lacan is endeavouring to logify psychoanalysis.

Lacan's use of the concept of truth changes during his teaching. However, in, for example, The direction of the treatment, Lacan talks about the truth of the subject or the effect of truth which ties the subject to the symbolic. The truth of the Subject is another word for the unconscious. This emphasises the fact that the unconscious is an effect.

This is in opposition to Winnicott's 'true self' because the 'true self' is a pure living being, a pure continuity of biological life. That is to say the exact opposite of the subject as being the effect of the signifying mortification. What characterises the subject in Lacanian theory is that it is tied to death because of the nature of signification. Winnicott, on the other hand presents the self as something living exterior to any verbal expression, something which cannot be said, something which cannot enter into the process of words, something which is absolutely silent.

Winnicott defines the 'false self' as a social construction to protect the 'true self' - the pure being. This presents a problem; what value can be given to Winnicott's 'false self' regarding the lacanian teaching at that time, because at that time Lacan talks about 'false being' which in a way is similar to the Winnicottian 'true self'.

Winnicott's 'false self' can be described in two ways. Firstly if one emphasises one characteristic of the false self, which is that it cannot be analysed, and that the analyst must assume the function of the false self during the cure, producing a process of regression in the patient until he encounters his true self, in that case, false self is to be related to object little (a). But as it is a symbolic construction, being formed by social ideas, it is concerned with alienation. In view of this we can consider the false self as the subject.

The concept of the false self emphasises the problem Winnicott has in integrating the transitional object in the direction of the treatment. It also emphasises the impossibility of producing a theory of the object with consequences on the direction of the treatment without tying it to the subject. Thus Winnicott produces the right theory of the object in psychoanalysis but without the other term of this strange heterogeneous production of psychoanalysis which is written: $S \langle \rangle a$.

At this point I shall try to clarify where Lacan has got to in L'Acte psychanalytique. At this stage Lacan is dealing with the consequences on the analytical discourse of what he calls alienation, that is, a modification of signifying alienation. In the écrits Lacan referred to alienation as one of the two processes in the production of the subject by the processes of metaphor and metonymy.

But at this time Lacan is elaborating another alienation as well as giving a new analytic interpretation of what he called the 'cogito', the Cartesian cogito.

In La Science et la Vérité Lacan interpreted the Cartesian cogito as being the possible historical birth of the subject of science and consequently of the subject of psychoanalysis. This is clearly defined by Lacan and it is most illuminating. In Les méditations Descartes gives a formulation which is very clear; he says 'je suis j'existe' each time I announce it or think it, which is the first step of the cogito. The second term is the reference to God which is going to eternalise this small moment of the emergence of the being of the subject. At that time (1966) Lacan gives another interpretation of the cogito, that is to say, of the problem of being in psychoanalysis. What he calls 'a psychoanalytical cogito', although peculiar, is important with reference to Winnicott.

Winnicott has a very definite theory of development in terms of being (cf. Playing and Reality):

1. Being
2. Being one
3. Doing and being done.

In a way it is Winnicott's theory of sexualisation. Psychosis can be placed at being. Delinquency can be placed at being one, and neurosis can be placed at doing and being done. It is also related to the lack of maternal care and is concerned with sex. For Winnicott femininity is related to being and masculinity is related to doing and being done. Each of us starts out by being a woman.

Winnicott talks about 'primary maternal preoccupation' by which he refers to the state the expectant mother is in, and, for him, this resembles a psychotic state. This is the time when the mother is completely centred on the fusion with the object (Being). In a very coincidental way, Lacan talks about 'being' in l'Acte psychanalytique. The new cogito for Lacan is:


Ou je ne pense pas ou je ne suis pas.
(Either I'm not thinking or I'm not being).

Now we are able to see the opposition to the first cogito 'I am, each time I am thinking or saying it'. Being and thinking. Here we have:

\bar{T} (not thinking)

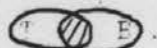
\bar{E} (not being)

The new alienation resulting from the cogito is dealing with the union of not T - not E, the union of two negations.

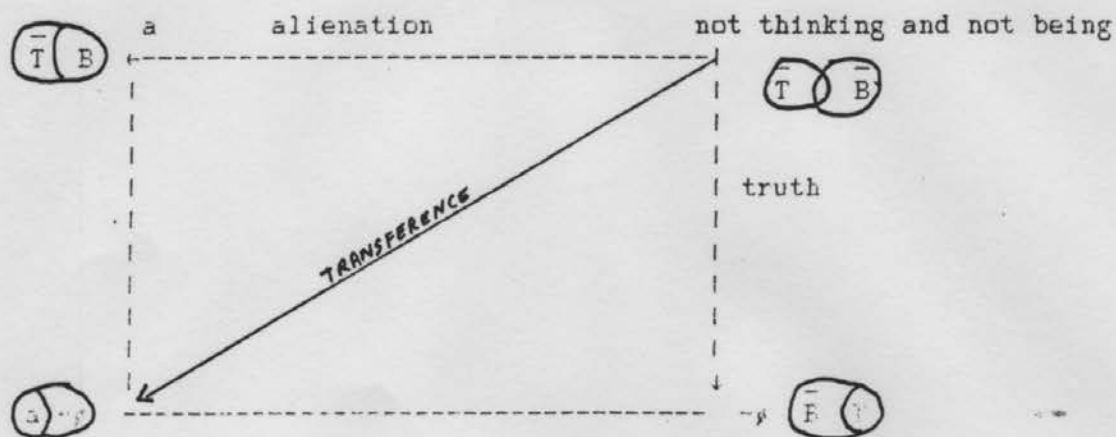
I'm not thinking - being : this way round, the union produces the object little (a)

I'm not being - thinking : this way round, the union produces -s, the phallic function related to signifying castration.

This is the result of the union of not T, not E. The first use Lacan made of the cogito was to emphasise the coincidence between being and thinking (as a moment of subjective truth). Lacan was not working on the union but on the intersection:



Lacan was concerned at this stage with the place where the precise moment of thinking and being were joined at this intersection for just a moment. But now working to elaborate on the analytical act, he uses the negation of thinking and being. In a way we can say that this is the opposite of Winnicott's theory: Winnicott is positivising what at the same time Lacan is negativising. The main difference from the outset is that for Lacan 'les pertes opèrent' (the losses are operative) whereas they do not for Winnicott, except by way of compensation.



The initial moment 'either I'm not thinking or I'm not being' can be placed at the top right corner. This produces two operations, truth and alienation. Alienation is what happens at the beginning of analysis. The alienated subject thinks he is natural when he is really incomplete: an 'I am' without that which, in being, does not answer to 'I', that is to say, the 'id', or in other words, everything which does not answer to the 'I' in the grammatical discourse. There is a 'I'm not thinking where I am' - what Lacan formulates as 'I am not thinking where it was' referring to the Freudian id and the Freudian imperative in the sense of the categorical imperative 'Wo es war soll ich werden' which he changes to 'Là où c'était, je comme sujet dois advenir' (Where id was, I as subject must come to be).

In the operation of truth we have 'not being' - 'I'm not where it was' which is the way Lacan formulates the unconscious. This is the formula of the lapsus. The lapsus is a place where you say you are not; that is, you are not there in your lapsus, the unconscious yes, but I am not. Here we can think of the famous Freudian example of unconscious formation 'My mother, no she was not my mother'. This is the effect of the subject. There is another operation which Lacan calls the operation of the transference, the properly analytic operation,

which correlates this being $\overline{T} \overline{B}$ to this $\overline{B} \overline{T}$. (That is, the being as a result of the negation of thinking and the thinking as a result of the negation of being).

Being and thinking are products of the negation. Thinking is a product of 'not being', that is to say, 'I am not where there is', a lapsus. The unconscious is a result of this repression. : -p. Being as a result of 'not thinking' has to be related to object little (a). By the operation of the transference, the analytical act correlates the object little (a) and -p. The being of the object for Lacan is, I should say, the being of nothing. It is the being resulting from the process which Lacan defines as pure nothing.

The subject in the phallic function is the result of the want-to-be, which is in direct opposition to Winnicott. In l'Acte psychanalytique Lacan talks about Winnicott's 'lapsus de l'acte'. This is related to the fact that both the transitional object and the self are produced by a practice of psychoanalysis which, in a way, is well oriented but fails to take into account the want to be and the power of signifying mortification. Lacan says that in a way Winnicott acts the 'good mother'. This refers to a text of Winnicott's on the transference and countertransference. Winnicott points out that for certain patients the analyst should not interpret but just function as the environment, that is, pretend to provide the continuity that was never there before. When Lacan says that the analyst must place himself in the place of object little (a) as the cause of desire this means, in a way, to take the place of 'nothing', of emptiness, while Winnicott on the other hand takes the place of 'fullness', thus impeding the emergence and crossing of the fantasy.

In this sense, Lacan talks about Winnicott as an example of an analyst closed in the passion of his analytical doing: that which Lacan himself always tried to avoid by the power of logic and formalisation.

The Newsletter is grateful to Bill Phillips for transcribing this seminar.

ANTIGONE IN LACAN'S SÉMINAIRE VII. L'ETHIQUE

In his recent account of the various portrayals of Antigone throughout literature, George Steiner thankfully concludes that if 'Ulysses reinforces Homer; Broch's Death of Virgil enriches the Aeneid; Sophocles' Antigone will not suffer from Lacan.' (1). Lacan's elaboration of the discrepancy between the Thing ('la Chose') and the signifying chain is incompatible with Steiner's view which 'bears directly on art and poetry' (p. 125), and for which Steiner's paradigm is provided by Jung. Steiner maintains that 'we speak organic vestiges of myths' (p. 304) which in themselves provide 'an indispensable mapping' of 'the original Greek statement' (p. 125). He focusses on the possible-to-say and completely overlooks the dimension elaborated by Lacan around 'la Chose'. In his L'Éthique Lacan develops the consequences of a personal law which depends on 'l'humain, encore que justement l'humain nous échappe' (2), that is, eludes the possible-to-say.

If for Lacan the signifier introduces a lack in the real (symbolisation constituting, on the simplest level, a dialectic of presence and absence), and the cause is what suffers from the signifier in the real ('ce qui du réel pâtit du signifiant'), there is evidently a relation between the cause and this lack. Lacan proposes an analogy for this: the vase is fashioned around a 'nihil', a nothingness which is also the nothingness of 'la Chose' (p. 146). Sublimation operates in relation to 'la Chose' before the ego and its aims are integrated in the imaginary register. The act of raising an object to the status of 'la Chose' originally points to an absence of any specific signification, and merely indicates the simple opposition presence/absence. Being is excluded from the chains of its ex-sistence in a 'fundamental synchrony', and hence constituted 'après-coup'. Any being there is will be a product of the signifier.

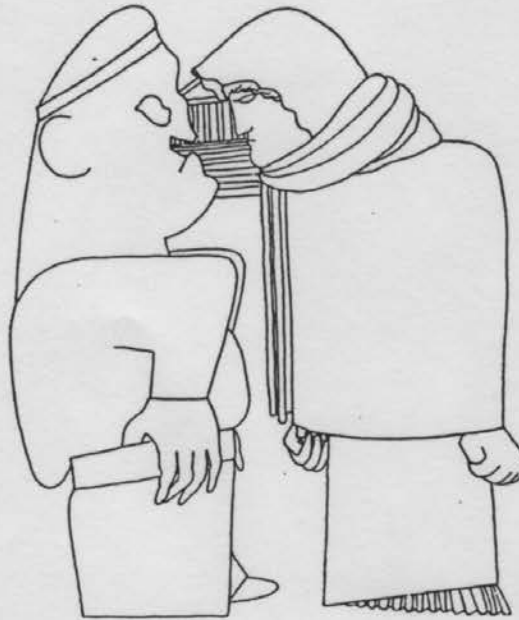
Antigone represents the boundaries of this place of being in the real at the moment when a signifier (in Lacan's example, the vase) is created. The original fixation of the subject by the signifier locates being in the lack outside the transformation and flux characteristic of the signifying chain. Antigone is the mirage which reveals pure desire at the moment when it is simply a want-to-be, and the real is evoked in a sentiment of unreality aroused by her beauty. Antigone's beauty incarnates a material quality in the signifier and reveals the presence of the drive in so far as it presents a stumbling block to the signifying chain. 'La Chose fait mouche' (- hits the bull's eye), and this beauty spot is precisely what halts the movement of the signifier. 'La Chose' does not enter the field of alienation because, unlike the signifier, it does not represent anything as such: it is not a 'Vorstellungrepräsentanz' (3). Once Antigone is in the cave and no longer visible to us, the actual circumstances of her death are not disclosed; there is an absence of the signifier.

'La Chose' is always beyond the image. Prior to the fabrication of the object there is nothing save the power to fabricate. This power always remains beyond the image if identifications with the counterpart will follow. The cultural and functional laws of speech require man to 'wear away' the oldest of the gods' (4). Antigone's 'great, unwritten, unshakeable traditions' (l. 505) must be transformed into disposable good(s): text-iles, if the Nom-du-Père is to properly function.

Creation acquires an imaginary and supreme creator for the tyrant Creon who subscribes to an imperative 'martial law' as when he threatens his impertinent sentry at the start of the play,

*Simple death won't be enough for you,
not till we string you up alive
and wring the immortality out of you.*

(II. 347-50).



Antigone et Créon by Jean Cocteau

His transgressive motive is pointed out by Tiresias: 'Where's the glory, killing the dead twice over?'. Antigone, however, shows a lack of any such motivation. Her beauty literally disarms (*esmayer*: to disarm, an old French word evoking both emotion and *mögen*, power (1'*Ethique* p. 293)) the subject of speech. When Antigone is brought to Creon from the palace, the chorus instantly retracts its tirade against the infamy of love which has set father and son at war with one another:

*But now...
.....when I see this -
I fill with tears, can't hold them back,
not any more.....*

(II. 395-97).

Antigone's position lies between the two symbolically differentiated fields of Being and Meaning. The second death which is not a biological death is inconceivable due to the absence of representation at the moment when the subject is in the domain of 'la Chose', where there is no signifier to represent it. Creon's frenzied efforts to offer Polynices' corpse as *an obscenity for the citizens to behold* (l. 230) are vain, for being is only truly eradicated by the signifier. Death is evoked on the side of life at the moment when the signifier casts its veil and before myths are born. Antigone's beauty resides in this veil.

NOTES.

- (1) George Steiner Antigones. The Antigone Myth in Western literature, art and thought Oxford University Press, New York 1984, p.297
- (2) Jacques Lacan Le Séminaire Livre VII, l'Éthique de la psychanalyse Editions du Seuil, Paris 1986, p.150
- (3) cf. the paper by Marc Dury in the last issue of the Newsletter (No. 8).
- (4) Sophocles The Three Theban Plays, Penquin Books Ltd, Harmondsworth 1982, (l. 382).

EVENTS

We would like to remind Newsletter readers of the following events:

1. IVY HOUSE SEMINARS (Middlesex Poly, North End road, NW3)

These are the remaining seminars for this term, starting 7 pm.:

2 March 1988

- Claude Léger: The black jacket: a case of transitory fetishism

9 March 1988

- Bruce Fink: Formulas of sensation

16 March 1988

- Richard Klein: Winnicott and object (a)

2. CHILD ANALYSIS WORKING GROUP (14 Eton Hall, Eton college road, NW3)

There is one meeting left this term, from 8.30 pm to 10.30 pm:

15 March 1988

- Observing the past: a hystorical approach.

The subscription rate for one term is £10 (£5 for subscribers to the CCFSR).

Coordinators: Danuza Machado (722-7383) and Bice Benvenuto (586-0992):

I wish to subscribe to the CHILD ANALYSIS WORKING GROUP for 1 term

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