

The Invocatory Drive

From a still small voice to the scream of nature

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In his endnote to what is customarily referred to as the first Book of Kings, in the 1997 Oxford edition of the Authorised King James, Stephen Prickett isolates the episode described in chapter 19 when Elijah flees to Mount Horeb and takes refuge in a cave.¹

The LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind: and, after the wind was an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and stood in the entering of the cave. And behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? (11-13)

Prickett observes that there is something of an enigma here, for whence did all the phenomena of wind and earthquake and fire come if not from Yahweh Himself? “The whole mysterious experience seems to affirm”, writes Prickett, “and simultaneously deny certain connections. Unlike Baal [...] Yahweh both *is* and *is not* a god of nature.” In other terms, as Prickett affirms, this incarnation of God is both *immanent* and *transcendent*. Note too that the enigma extends to the voice itself, which when first heard carries no designated articulation of signifiers. Only in the second moment, when “there came a voice unto him”, does signification emerge. Is it the same voice repeated? Or is the same moment of voicing being depicted from two perspectives? Or, indeed, are there two voices, the second distinct from the first?

Prickett’s following assertion is stronger still: “Classical Hebrew had no word for ‘nature’ as [...] independent of divine manipulation. [...] This attempt to separate external forces from inner experience may be one of the first to express the paradox of a natural world at once divine, yet independent of its creator.” Epistemological ruptures and paradigm shifts are hard enough to diagnose in the modern era, so how far we can go down the path of considering these verses as introducing a polarisation effect some six centuries, perhaps more, before the Common Era is moot. But structurally speaking, that is, synchronically speaking, the passage from chapter 19 of Kings I harbours a problematic that goes straight to the heart of the question of the object such as we meet in our own scientific era.

¹ Pages 343-4 of “Explanatory notes” in *The Bible, Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*, Oxford, 1997. [Whilst the copyright to the Introduction is held by Prickett, and the copyright to the Bibliography, Notes, and Glossary by Carroll, the quoted passage is to be found almost word for word in Prickett’s excellent 1986 volume, *Words and The Word: Language, poetics, and biblical interpretation*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 11-12, leaving little doubt as to its authorship.]

Indeed, here in this passage, we have two pairs of oppositions that are explored in great depth in Lacan’s tenth seminar: the theme of immanence and transcendence in so-called aesthetic experience (aesthetic in the Kantian sense); and the theme of seemingly natural phenomena whose status is overhauled by the immixing of an absolute alterity, as represented by the capital A by which Lacan denoted the big Other.

Division and Remainder

The tenth year of Lacan’s Seminar marks the close of the first period, what the French term the “classical” period, of his teaching. It’s a convenient cut-off point in that it coincides with Lacan’s effective dismissal from the IPA in 1963 and the Seminar’s move from Sainte-Anne hospital one mile north to the École normale supérieure. The new location of the Seminar brought with it a new and much younger audience, which in turn generated a change in the style of teaching; circumstances to which Lacan alludes in the 1965 report on *Seminar XI* published in the *Annuaire* of the École pratique des hautes études.² So, the cut-off point is often supposed to fall between *Seminar X* and *XI*, but we might legitimately nudge this point forward slightly, to include *Seminar X* in the middle period of Lacan’s teaching. What I want to show this evening is the consistency in Lacan’s presentation of the object from 1963 through 1964, in spite of certain apparent differences owing to stylistics and the examples adopted. Any points of contrast, on the other hand, emerge only when we rewind to 1959 and the recently published *Seminar VI*.

Seminar X seeks to lay out the successive steps in the constitution of the object as a product of the subject’s interaction with the big Other. This is a two-phase exposé, with what we might call a *coarse* and a *fine* separation. The first term of *Seminar X* returns to the tables of division used in *Seminar VI*, where the two essential fields are those of the subject and the Other. So, the table that we meet in lesson 20³ sets out the following series of binary oppositions:

A	D
RS	D
A̅	S
a	S̅
A'	
A''	
A'''	

Even at this stage there is some variation in Lacan’s theorisation because, as Jacques-Alain Miller indicates in his marginalia (note 444⁴), Lacan also reproduces a similar table in the following lesson, where the Real Subject (RS) is replaced by the Real Other (RA). Meanwhile, the full, mythical, proto-subject, represented by the unbarred

² Lacan, J., “The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Report on the 1964 Seminar”, in *Hurly-Burly*, Issue 5, March 2011, p. 17.

³ Lacan, J., *Le séminaire livre VI, Le désir et son interprétation, 1958-1959*, Éditions de La Martinière, 2013, p. 439.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 598.

S, stands opposite this Real Other, and not the barred Other as we meet it here. These variations are fairly minor. There is, however, one further addition that will be of consequence for the tables we will meet in *Seminar X*: in the second of the two tables from *Seminar VI*, the D which stands for the Demand⁵ to which the proto-subject is reduced (much like the hypothetical delta in the graph of desire) is explicitly articulated with the signifier of the barred Other.

$$D \longrightarrow S(\bar{A})$$

When we meet this table in *Seminar X*, it has been stripped back to the elementary terms S (subject), capital A (Other) and lower case *a* (object). So, on page 26 of the English translation we find the following table:

$$\begin{array}{c|c} A & S \\ \bar{S} & \bar{A} \\ a & \end{array}$$

Whereas the tables in *Seminar VI* conform more to an intersubjective model, where the subject and the Other are progressively modified within their respective fields, the tables from *Seminar X* show that the subject only becomes a barred subject once he has crossed over into the field of the Other. Likewise, the big Other properly speaking is only constituted as such once it has been found to harbour a certain inexistence, thereby reducing it to elements that switch over to the side of the subject. Lacan is perfectly clear as to what these two passages entail: the subject “has to situate himself as determined by the signifier” by moving into the “locus of the signifier”; meanwhile, the Other crosses over to the side of the subject in so far as it is reduced to the elements that go to make up the subject’s unconscious.

In this second lesson of *Seminar X*, Lacan refers to the two sides of the table as the “objective” side (on the left) and the “unconscious” side (on the right). The object thus emerges as the product of the operation of division, as a leftover, on the objective side.

Of course, the elements that go to make up the subject’s unconscious are signifiers, but they are not just any signifiers; they are the signifiers of the Other that constitute the non-objectifiable locus of the Other. In this sense, we may borrow the series A', A'', A''' from the *Seminar VI* table to denote this expanding sequence of signifiers that continues over and beyond the operation of division.

The third part opens, in March 1963, which the most profound modification yet to the table of division. This time, the barred S and the *a* still both appear on the left-hand side, but they have been inverted so that the *a* appears at the second stage and the barred subject at the third. This allows Lacan to qualify the three levels respectively as the stages of jouissance, anxiety, and desire.

$$\begin{array}{c|c} A & S \\ a & \bar{A} \\ \bar{S} & \end{array}$$

⁵ Here and hereafter, demand is to be understood as much in the economic sense, first described by Denham-Stewart, as it is in the sense of an urgent request or order.

Notice that the object *a* is still in a position of remainder, as the leftover following the first operation of division between A and S. The chief difference with respect to the previous tables is that now the subject is in the position of being the ultimate *response* or *effect* of the complete operation. The subject, as subject of desire, is the final product of the full progression. Meanwhile, anxiety and the object stand at the same level, at the intermediary stage between jouissance and desire. This intermediary stage may be understood both at the level of the primordial constitution of the subject in his passage from the hypothetical proto-subject of demand to the subject of desire, but also at the level of each renewed occurrence of anxiety which, in the Lacanian schema, indicates that the subject is on the path of his desire, that something of his desire is being engaged.

In this latter sense, the intermediary stage calls upon an effort on the part of the subject that is akin to his effort at the first level, where it was a question of situating himself in relation to the signifier. At this intermediary level, the subject has to surpass, to come through the experience of anxiety in order to become fully congruent with his condition of desiring subject. This operation correlates with the designation of anxiety as a “sign of desire”, the title of the second chapter of the book.

“Sign of desire” is a formula that Lacan himself uses neither in this chapter nor elsewhere in the Seminar; it is Jacques-Alain Miller’s deduction of Lacan’s conception of desire at this point in *Seminar X*, and it is deliberately and conspicuously contrasted with the later formula that we find in the title of the twelfth chapter: “Anxiety, signal of the real”.

Two remarks about this dual designation of anxiety:

1. Between the second and the twelfth lessons, Lacan is gently but progressively grappling with the paradox of the object such as it appears in *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety*. This paradox is of such scale that initially, during the first lessons, Lacan actively discourages his audience from reading the text.⁶ The teaching value of *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* is compromised, or at the very least complicated for Lacan, by the apparent contradiction raised by Freud’s assertion in the supplementary remarks (Appendix B) that careful speakers refer to anxiety, unlike fear, as being without object. But just before he had said that anxiety is *vor etwas*, anxiety *in the face of* something (or “*about* something” as Strachey puts it, but not without a footnote specifying the notion of “*before* something”⁷). Lacan’s effort is to insist on the objectal quality of this “something”, but by still respecting Freud’s formula that anxiety is without object. Or rather, Lacan only respects it by modifying it: anxiety is without *common* object, without *objectifiable* object. But it is not without object *per se*. It is a question, therefore, of specifying the status of this object. As Lacan says in lesson 7, there are “objects that can be shared, and those that can’t.” There are objects of exchange, and then there are other objects which, when they “enter this field which they have nothing to do with, the field of sharing [...], anxiety signals to us the particularity of their status.” So, this kind of object is evidenced at the level of a signal. Something is signalled. Lacan highlights two factors in the way this something is signalled. On one hand, he underlines the appearance of so-called

⁶ Recall that at that time the majority of Lacan’s audience were analysts or analysts in training who were affiliated in one way or another with the SFP, which was then seeking recognition from the IPA, and thus Lacan is taking care not to take direct issue with Freud for fear of jeopardising the *Société*’s application.

⁷ Freud, S., *Inhibitions, Symptoms, and Anxiety* in *S.E. XX*, p. 164.

“rim phenomena”, on the other, he insists that logically, if the signal appears in the imaginary dimension of the ego, then the “sign” function – using C. S. Peirce’s formula that a sign represents something for someone else – must imply the subject, in so far as the subject is not the locus of the ego.

$$\frac{\text{ego signal}}{\text{rim phenomenon}} \longrightarrow \text{subject}$$

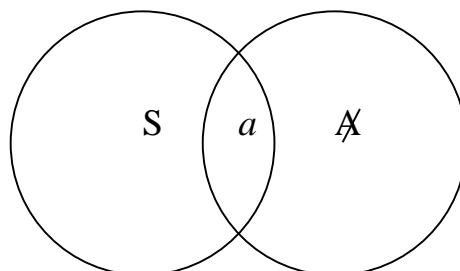
2. The second remark is that the rim phenomenon seems to be coherent with the formula of *anxiety as a signal of the real*, a formula that could be thought to supersede the formula of *anxiety as a sign of desire*. But the very last lesson of the Seminar opens with a fresh insistence on anxiety as a sign that refers “back in a complex way to the desire of the Other.” Lacan specifies that to appreciate the complexity of this signal function we need to move through the construction, the sifting, of the relationship between subject, object and Other until we reach a distribution that is more intricate than the distribution we met in the tables of division. It is only with this development that we will be able to isolate the obscure articulation between the rim phenomenon and the desire of the Other:

$$\frac{\text{rim phenomenon}}{\text{desire of the Other}}$$

This development will also allow us to clarify the complex relationship between the two aspects of the mysterious object that we met in Kings I: the voice on the mountain which presents as both a pure phenomenon devoid of signification – a rim phenomenon, if you like – and then as a sign of the desire of the Other – *Che vuoi? What woudst thou? What doest thou here, Elijah?*

Separation and Amboception

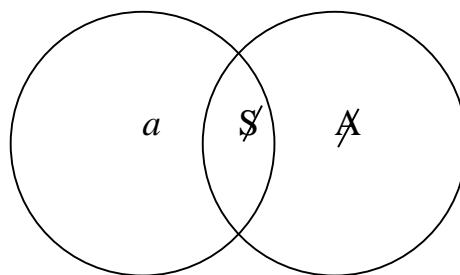
Earlier I called the tables of division a course sifting and I alluded to a finer sifting to come in the later lessons. The finer sifting will depend above all else on a complexification of the frontiers between subject and Other. Whereas in the tables of division there is just a single frontier between subject and Other, the schemas developed in the final part of *Seminar X* employ the Euler circles to figure overlapping fields that produce two frontiers: an outer and inner frontier, as it were, for each field with respect to the other. Thus, we meet the terms from the first level of the table of division in the first Euler diagram that Lacan presents, and which he says represents the first operation of constitution of the object.



We have the hypothetical undivided subject faced with the Other that lacks at the level of the definitive guarantee. The object *a* takes shape in the overlap zone (the intersection). At the oral level, we can read these elements in relation to Freud's observation in his July 12th 1938 notebook entry collected in "Findings, Ideas, Problems": the nursling first thinks: "The breast is part of me, I am the breast.' [And] only later [realizes]: 'I have it' – that is 'I am not it'..."⁸ Lacan reformulates this by saying that, "the breast is part of the subject's inner world and not part of the mother's body." He tackles this quality of the object in reference to the *amboceptor*. With the breast, "the cut does not pass through the same spot for the one [the nursling] as it does for the other [the maternal subject]. There are two cuts, which are so far apart that they leave different off-cuts." Lacan will use these two frontiers, these two cut-off points, to localise two sites: the *point of desire* and the *anxiety point*, which he carefully distinguishes: "At the level of the oral drive, the anxiety-point lies at the level of the Other." The point of desire is the point to which the subject addresses his demand, to the extent that what he needs is to be found *in* the Other, without being the Other as such. At this primitive level, the subject is reduced to his demand and to his object of need, *his need in the Other*, and the lines of separation are organised around demand, need, and the Other that lies behind the object. As Lacan says here, it's less a matter of separation than *separation*. There is a double partition that produces a curious subset: the object *a*, which is both the partitioned-off portion of the subject's Being and a portioned-off section of the Other.

We may draw a contrast between *separation* and division. At this first level, the division bears on the Other, not on the proto-subject. Lacan alludes to the fantasy of the breast drying up, without specifying on which side this fantasy lies: is it the mother's fantasy or the child's? Perhaps this is an example of what Lacan calls the communication of anxiety from one side to the other. Be that as it may, this stands as a fantasmatic representation of the lack of guarantee in the Other at the oral level, a lack of guarantee that is concomitant with the bar that falls on the Other.

The next Euler diagram accounts for the nature of this *separation* at the anal level.



Whereas Lacan's construction at the oral level might have been supposed to be a meta-representation of a natural process of suckling and weaning, when we move to the anal stage there can be no doubting that the process under study is a process that includes a signifying dimension from the start. Lacan argues in different ways not only how potty training is a uniquely human activity, but also how already it brings with it a whole series of variations, mishaps and anxieties that must be attributed to the influence or interference of the signifier in the biological function. For example: a

⁸ Freud, S., "Findings, Ideas, Problems", in *S.E. XXIII*, p. 299.

child's tendency to assume the imperative to "hold in" or "retain" over and beyond the period for which the imperative was intended; the inopportune or, more precisely, absolutely punctual and timely evacuation of faecal matter given the materialised circumstance of some signifying configuration; or the parental apprehension over any discrepancy that the child might display in what is supposed to be the "norm" in matters of hygiene and development; all of the above are phenomena that cannot be accounted for without some notion of the action of the signifier.

Indeed, this is the conjuncture at which we should heed Lacan's reminder that what he is setting out in terms of stages, steps or phases, has nothing in common with the developmental phases such as they were theorized by Abraham and elaborated in developmental psychology. Regardless of Abraham's initial designs in this regard, it has to be said that the legacy of the developmental stages has been an increasingly normative one, where the perspective of intellectual advance and corporeal mastery has been matched with ideal temporal phases measured in months or even days. Practically the only useful element to emerge from this model has been to demonstrate how it can generate yet more anxiety for the parents; anxiety that is perfectly transmissible to the infant who has the misfortune of not conforming to the model child.

For Lacan, the anal stage is not a diachronic development from the oral stage, but a synchronic addition at the level of the drive. It does, however, introduce a profound modification at the level of the subject. This modification is depicted in the diagram through the switch in positions between S and *a*, and the division of the subject as represented by the bar. Whereas at the previous level the object of the subject's need was in the field of the Other, this time it is the subject, who is now identified with the articulation of his demand, who finds himself in the field of the Other. Lacan says that the anal object is the remainder following the re-positioning of demand in the Other.

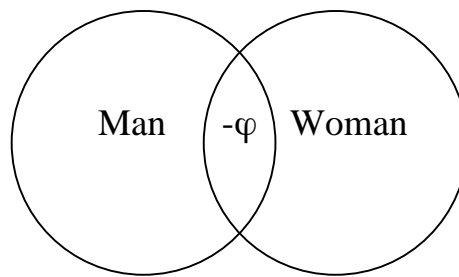
What we have called here, somewhat ambiguously, the subject "identified with the articulation of his demand", is properly speaking a subject identified with the Other's demand: the Other's demand to "hold in", to "retain", and then, paradoxically, to "give" to "let out". One cannot stress highly enough the importance of the emphasis on the articulation of the Other's demand over and above the materiality of the object as such. Anality is much better grasped at the level of the modified circuit of the drive than at the level of the partial object – excrement.

The crucial import of abstaining from a complete identification between the object and excrement in the anal drive, is that ultimately it is at the anal level that the subject has "the first opportunity of recognising himself in an object." It is, as it were, to the subject's own person that the metaphor of the gift or of the unwanted, cast-away object, can be appended. Lacan notes, for instance, how the obsessional offers to his partner an image of himself, an image that he gives "so entirely that he imagines the other party would no longer know what to do should this image of him go missing." Meanwhile, the clinic of melancholia offers a host of variations of identification with the ejected object, and it is surely no accident that it was in relation to melancholia that Freud asked why it is that the subject can only gain access to his truth at the price of such suffering.

A fine example of the supremacy of the drive's logic over the drive object was presented to us in Ghent in 2008, in a clinical case where the anal level predominated through the fantasmatic insistence of the father's arrested gesture of a raised arm, described by the subject as "retained" or "held back", unable to deliver the

reprimanding blow that it promised.⁹ This is in perfect continuity with Lacan's effort in *Seminar X* to privilege the logic behind each of the guises of the drive over the partial object that comes to be caught in the circuit, and which may be quite different from the physical matter that is primordially associated with ingress or egress through the body's rims.

I want to skip fairly rapidly over the next level, the phallic phase, which as Lacan observes is less a contribution to the construction of a distinct drive as such than a profound modification of desire that has consequences not only for the subsequent levels of the drive but, most especially, retroactive consequences for the oral and anal drive.



In positioning the phallus as the mediating element between the sexes, Lacan underlines three factors: firstly, the object, in the guise of minus phi, is defined by lack, the lack of an object as such; secondly, this lack of an object is equated with the evacuation of *jouissance* from the field of the subject and the attribution of *jouissance* to the Other – *jouissance in the Other*; thirdly, this loss of the object that carries a specifically phallic value brings with it a further modification of anxiety. At this level, we can speak in terms of castration anxiety as such. Lacan qualifies this anxiety as a “translation” of the forms of anxiety met at the previous levels. Recall, however, that for Lacan castration anxiety is not simply the threat of castration, the supposed threat of losing the penile organ or one's phallic status as an object. For Lacan castration anxiety is specifically indexed to a non-matching of desires, to the impossibility of an object that would resolve the subject's desire by simultaneously satisfying the Other's desire. The phallus might seem to hold this promise, but when called upon to honour its pledge, it is missing, lacking, elsewhere. It is what accounts, definitively, for the fact that desire is insatiable.

Why does Lacan speak in terms of a translation here? At each of the other levels, anxiety is explicitly identified not with the absence of the object but with its proximity and immanence, with the return of what was supposed to be lost. In a sense, the phallic level is the sole level at which, by means of this translation, there seems to be an equivalence between anxiety and loss. He calls it “the only level at which anxiety is produced at the very locus of the lack of the object.” Furthermore, if Lacan insists so often in this Seminar – expressly taking issue with Freud – that castration anxiety does not constitute a final term for the subject, that castration anxiety is not the point at which analysis runs aground, it is because something of this translation can be re-trod in the opposite direction, re-translated back into its original terms. This is not a circumvention of castration, but a clarification as to its originitive conditions.

⁹ Skolidis, V., “Bringing the anal object into play” in *Bulletin of the NLS*, Issue 4, 2008.

Oral-anal Transcendence

Whereas in the first part of my talk I contrasted the new developments in *Seminar X* with the earlier formulations from *Seminar VI*, we stand to gain a great deal by looking at the fate of some of the theoretical developments from 1963 when Lacan takes them up a decade later in his late teaching. This is especially evident in relation to Kant, with whom Lacan is dialoguing, between the lines, throughout *Seminar X*. I also intend this development as a somewhat belated reply to the young man in the audience of my conversation with Nancy Gillespie in New York earlier this year, who observed that perhaps *Seminar X* already constitutes an advance refutation of the contemporary object-oriented ontology championed by the likes of Tristan Garcia, Quentin Meillassoux, and Levi Bryant. This comment calls for further clarification.

In the lesson of 21 February 1962 from *Seminar IX*, Lacan informs his audience that over the half-term break he had read the first chapter of the *Critique of Pure Reason*. Lacan immediately expresses his reservations over Kant's transcendental aesthetic, but the terms of his dissatisfaction change over the following months and through the successive constructions in the *Anxiety* seminar. First of all, Lacan says that, "there is no cause to maintain Kant's transcendental aesthetic as tenable, in spite of the [...] impassable character of his great service to us in the *Critique*."¹⁰ Lacan criticises Kant's reliance on the geometrical models of his age in his account of the dimensions of space and time. Lacan will make a similar point a few days later, on 10 March, in the second of his Belgium lectures: "the discourse of science has unmasked the fact that nothing remains anymore of a transcendental aesthetic by which an accord would be established, even a lost one, between our intuitions and the world." This accord is what Kant theorised as an a priori unifying principle that allowed for the possibility of an intuitive grasp of time and space. Kant holds that space is not something objective and real, and thus requires a transcendental condition, dependent upon the "subjective constitution of the mind", in order to come into existence. This unifying principle is held to be concomitant with cognition. The accord would thus be a cognitive accord.

Lacan mocks this notion of cognitive accord on numerous occasions. The mental act that Lacan is considering when he employs the noun *connaissance*, or the verb forms derived from the infinitive *connaître*, concerns a kind of knowing, distinct from *savoir*, that is precisely not a re-cognition, but a "cognition", a "taking cognisance". Lacan's observation that this field of study is already coordinated into a theory of *connaissance*, a gnoseology, more than justifies in my mind the use of the terms "cognition" and "cognisance" in English (when often the distinction between *savoir* and *connaissance* is lost by lumping them together under the term "knowledge").

In *Seminar X*, Lacan draws on two of his recently published articles: "Remarks on Daniel Lagache's Presentation" (which although delivered as a paper in 1960 first came out in print in 1962, the year in which Lacan's *Anxiety* seminar opens); and "Kant With Sade" (initially destined to accompany the 1963 15-volume set of Sade's works as a Preface to *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* but eventually declined and included instead in the April 1963 issue of *Critique*. The text carries the date of September 1962).

¹⁰ Lacan, J., Lesson of 28 February 1962, from unpublished.

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The first of these two articles turns, at its midpoint, to the question of the union between subject and object. Taking issue with Lagache's claim that the subject "is not distinguished from the drive, from its aim and object", Lacan positions Lagache's stance within the classical theory of cognition. As Jacques-Alain Miller has noted, this "classical theory" encompasses everything from Aristotle and Plotinus through to Descartes and Kant. "Cognition" says Miller, "is a union; a union of which we shall say it has an immediate or mediate forms." The upshot of this, whether one is Plato or Bergson, is that there is an accord between subject and object. From this perspective, subject and object are, observes Miller, "of the same nature, [...] homogeneous."¹¹

Lacan encapsulates this somewhat poetically in a line I shall render as follows: "the cogniser in taking cognisance meets his co-nativity with the cognised." In other words, the act of taking cognisance would imply that the subject is born along with the object; they are made of the same stuff, they are *cognate*. "The whole of analytic experience runs counter to this", writes Lacan.

In *Seminar X*, this co-nativity features in the guise of Husserl's intentionality, where *noesis* is always turned towards some object. The noesis is born along with the perception of the object. The object stands just *out in front* of the subject. For Lacan, on the contrary, the object, the object of desire, lies behind desire as such, it precedes it, or it makes its presence felt from behind the phenomenal veil.

The second of the two articles ("Kant avec Sade") starts off from Kant's observation that, "no intuition offers up a phenomenal object in the field of the moral law" (*É*, p. 768). Lacan accepts this dictum, but adds that there is nonetheless a trace of such an object, that this trace can be found in Kant's oeuvre, and its unmistakable feature is a certain eroticism that is altogether palpable.

He follows with a reminder that if the analysis is to be a structural one, one would do well to avoid pursuing the path of a search for reciprocity. Not that reciprocity is necessarily absent from structure, but the place it is accorded tends to be greatly exaggerated, and in "Kant avec Sade", as in *Seminar X* itself, looking for any structural reciprocity between subject and object, or between subject and Other, can only throw us off the scent. Reciprocity here is another incarnation of the co-naturality we saw above. (We may note that this absence of reciprocity also stands at the root of Lacan's critique of Hegel's master/slave dialectic in *Seminar X*).

On p. 772 of the *Écrits*, Lacan puts the object in the position of a "third term". Considering the object as a third term is a direct consequence of refusing to read any reciprocity into the two terms of the "subject" and the "Other". Lacan's thesis, one of the pivotal theses of this article, is that the object that Kant deemed unthinkable yet necessary to the will that is evinced in the implementation of the Law is made accessible in the "Sadean experience" in the shape of the "tormenting agent".

Here in "Kant avec Sade", this shape is couched in Heidegger's vocabulary: *Dasein*, being-in-the-world. Lacan is deliberately contrasting this being-in-the-world with the thing-in-itself, the noumenon that lies beyond the thinkable phenomenal world. Sade's tormenting agent stands in the world at one remove from a subjective position strictly speaking. Indeed, as Lacan shows at different points in *Seminar X*, he stands in the opaque position of the object.

This opacity is of a transcendent nature, in the sense of Kant's transcendental. Here arises the complication in Lacan's use of Kant. On the one hand, he maintains the vocabulary and many of the consequences of Kant's argument. So, for example,

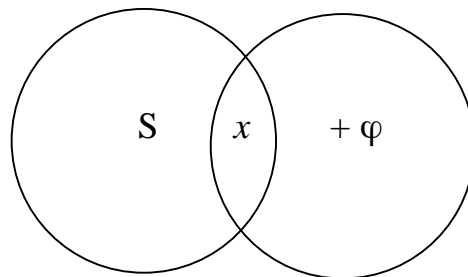
¹¹ Miller, J.-A., "Everyone is mad", in *Culture/Clinic* Issue 1, 2013.

when one reads the end of the third paragraph on p. 224 of *Seminar X*, regarding the constitution of space, it is an almost term-for-term paraphrase of the fourth clause from the first section of the “Transcendental Aesthetic” (A25/B 39¹²). But on the other hand, Lacan dispenses with the organising principle afforded by cognition. This is what allows Lacan to insist on the transcendental nature of this object of moral law, even though “Kant views this object as evading every determination of transcendental aesthetics”. This is a kind of Lacanian transcendental aesthetics, but one that is reconstituted, that reintegrates the excluded function of the object *a*, and does so precisely by reintegrating the signifying combinatory as the condition for the synthetic function of the apprehension of time and space.

There is, however, still an ambiguity here in Lacan’s reading of Kant on the temporal and spatial dimensions. In the lesson of 12 June 1963 from *Seminar X*, Lacan is saying that, “space is part of the real” (p. 283), that space is real (p. 283). Later however, in *Seminar XXIII*, he will be categorical that, “there is no such thing as real space.” Indeed, he will say that, “it is a purely verbal construction, which has been spelt out in three dimensions in accordance with the laws [...] of geometry, imagined kinaesthetically, that is to say, oral-anally.”¹³ The former position seems to be a product of Lacan’s effort to distinguish space from “subjective constitution” or “sensible intuition”, in other words, from synthetic cognition. Space is not a product of cognition. The latter position is not entirely opposed to the first, in that it respects a notion of intuition, even the notion of a sensible intuition akin to geometry, but it deviates from the Kantian version by making that geometry dependent upon a “verbal construction.” The 1976 “verbal construction” is a recasting of the 1963 “signifying combinatory”.

Incorporation and Extimacy

These issues of the transcendental become paramount when we move to the next level in our complexification of the frontiers between the subject and the Other: the scopic level.

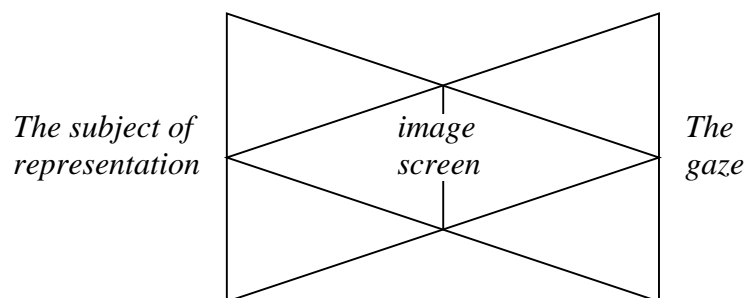
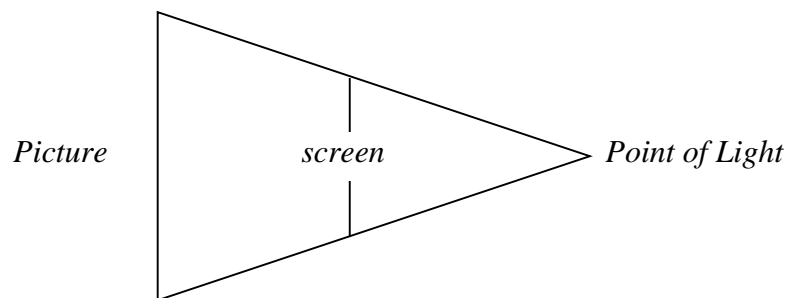
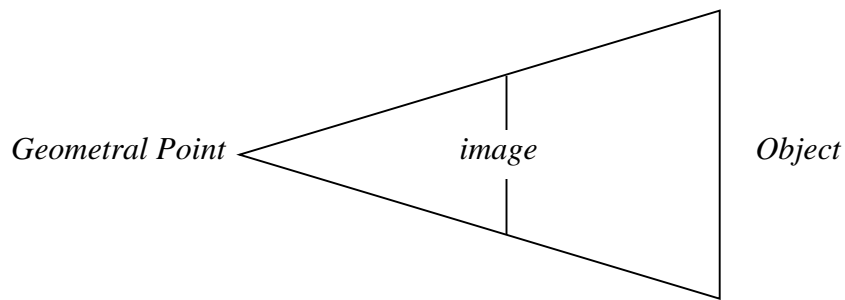


Here, we meet again the lower case phi that was introduced at the previous level, only this time it is no longer negative, but positive. The jouissance in the Other has transformed into a positivity as what Lacan calls *might*, but he is at pains to stress the illusory quality of this might. This is the “mirage of human desire”. Note too that the subject is no longer barred, as though through this mirage he has eluded his division, and indeed Lacan will speak of a cancelling out of castration at the scopic level. How does this work?

¹² Page 158 of the Guyer & Wood translation, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

¹³ Lacan, J., *Le séminaire livre XXIII, Le sinthome, 1975-1976*, Seuil, 2005, p. 86

First of all, I would like to juxtapose this diagram of the scopic level with the diagram of the gaze that Lacan introduces the following year in *Seminar X*.



The successive stages in the construction of the diagram for the gaze allow us to break down the elements in the Euler diagram from *Seminar X*. The subject is unbarred to the extent that he manages to hold himself at the place of the geometral point from which the world resolves into an image, the mirage of his desire. What he thereby eludes is the fact that the world looks back at him, from beyond the screen he has erected. The final consolidation of the two schemas shows that the subject can, at the scopic level, neutralise the enigmatic *x* of the scopic object by including it in the Other.

This operation of neutralisation is akin to the mechanism of fetishisation. Think for example of the clinical example that Freud gives in his paper on “Fetishism”, the famous case of the *glanz auf der nase*. The *glanz*, the point of light that looks back at the subject, that turns him into a picture, is neutralised by the regressive linguistic construction *glance at the nose*, which transforms the subject into the active agent, the one who *looks* rather than being *looked at*. The nose becomes the little phi that is placed in the Other – Freud mentions the fact that the patient seemed to be able to attribute this shine almost at will – the fetish as such, which looks at the

subject, but from behind the veil of the shine, the *glanz*, that embodies the subject's own gaze, his "glance". The inter-lingual construction assumes its special place as an axiom in the subject's fantasy to the extent that its equivocation takes charge of the equivocation at the level of the object gaze: the veil that lies in the field of the Other and the veil that lies in the field of the subject.

In *Seminar X*, Lacan uses the example of the lowered eyelids of the Buddha, and specifically those of the wooden statue known as Miroku Bosatsu in the Chuguji temple in Nara, where the sculpted eyes have effectively worn down to nothing over the centuries as a result of being caressed by the temple nuns.¹⁴ But in the place of the disappeared eye-slits, there is now an accumulation of hand-grease on the wood, which gives the effect of a polish or lacquer¹⁵, allowing a point of light to radiate from the absent eyes. Lacan speaks of an "absolutely stunning expression of which it is impossible to know whether it's entirely for you or entirely inward." This is developed further at the close of the following lesson when he says that the Buddha's image seems to bring us to the zero point "to the very extent that its lowered eyelids protect us from the fascination of the gaze while at the same time indicating it to us." It is "entirely turned towards the invisible, but it spares us this invisible." In a sense, the Buddha's eye is an eye that doesn't see the visible world to which it belongs, and yet all the same looks out, from behind the eyelids, and does so in the most exemplary fashion in the Miroku Bosatsu statue where the radiance, the sheen from the camphor wood, stares back at the viewer without ever beholding him as such. Lacan's adds that the Buddha "assumes the anxiety-point fully unto itself and suspends, apparently cancelling out, the mystery of castration."

Lacan speaks in this regard of a coincidence between the anxiety-point and the point of desire, which could be understood as the point at which the x coincides with the ϕ projected onto the screen, or even the screen constituted by the eyelids. But he insists that these two points do not merge. The gap between the two reasserts its dialectical presence. In other words, the gaze object properly speaking is neither the eye that sees, whether that of the subject or the Other, nor the fetish object that satisfies the eye, but precisely that which looks without seeing, thereby disturbing the visual field. Indeed, the example that Lacan borrows from Sartre in *Seminar XI* – the rustling of the leaves that disturbs the voyeur at the keyhole – shows that just as the anal object is not to be sought out at the level of excrement, the scopic object is not to be reduced to the register of the visible. It makes its presence felt precisely to the extent that it perturbs the spatial and even temporal dimensions through its seeming paradoxes and contradictions.

In *Seminar X*, this disturbance of space-time is identified with Freud's *uncanny*. It is what Lacan calls, again on p. 772 of the *Écrits*, a "bulge in the phenomenal veil." In *Seminar X* he mentions how the field of fiction – as explored in works of art and literature – allows us to form a much better grasp of these moments when the uncanny emerges, which are in reality extremely fleeting since the scopic register eludes the anxiety-provoking aspect of the object much more than does any other register. He says that the emergence of the uncanny is "a kind of ideal point",

¹⁴ This, at least, is the explanation that Lacan was offered. Compare Moran, S. F., "The Statue of Miroku Bosatsu of Chuguji: A Detailed Study" in *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 21, No. 3/4, 1958, p. 186: "There is no attempt to represent the eyelids of the closed eyes in any naturalistic way. The place where the lids come together is simply suggested by a sharp ridge."

¹⁵ Again, compare *ibid*, p. 192: "On a great deal of the surface of the statue the dark, red finish is so thick, in some places almost gummy in appearance, that the grain of the wood cannot be made out at all."

but which can be attained through the effect of fiction which “allows us to see the function of the fantasy.” For a contemporary instance of this, I can think of few better examples than Nacho Vigalondo’s 2007 film *Los cronocrimenes*. It’s a fiction that is articulated precisely around windows and frames, but windows and frames that are each somehow faltering or deficient. This anticipates the moment in the film when the principal character, caught by the fascinating object that captivates him in a moment of voyeurism, is enticed across the plane of the fantasy, to the other side of the veil. This entails a whole series of warps and jumps in the temporal dimension, along with doublings and duplications, right up the point when, to restore a semblance of reality, he is led to choose between his fantasy object and his partner-symptom, in what is inevitably a fatal act from which he is strangely absent.

If later, in 1975, Lacan speaks more disparagingly of the uncanny as a mere imaginary phenomenon that is tantamount to a “specific inhibition”, we may take this as an invitation to pursue the spatial and temporal architecture of the fantasy at work in such fictions beyond the “bulge in the phenomenal veil” to isolate the precise coordinates that articulate an impossible by which some odd or end of the real may come to be secured.¹⁶

This brings us to the fifth and final level, that of the voice.

Curiously enough, this is the only level for which Lacan does not provide any diagram. Why not? Lacan does not offer any explanation. He simply notes that it is at this level “that the desire of the Other has to emerge, in a pure form.” We may speculate that the Euler circles do not furnish an adequate means of representing the paradoxical frontiers between subject and Other at the level of the voice. At this level, subject and Other are most fully intricated in an extimate fashion that problematises their representation as separate, albeit overlapping, fields.

We can grasp this by seeing how this register builds on the previous register of the scopic drive. With the gaze we saw the dialectical movement that goes from *looking*, to *being looked at*, to the effort of *getting oneself seen*, an effort that is infinite precisely because the big Other only ever looks, without seeing. When Lacan returns to Theodor Reik’s study on the Shofar, it is precisely to underline that in the sounding of the Shofar, contrary to what Reik asserts, it is not so much God’s voice that is being reproduced as the subject’s own effort to awaken God’s memory at this time of remembrance. Thus, it is the subject *making himself heard*, but through this curious reverberation whereby his own effort resounds and echoes in such a way as to embody something that does indeed sound as though it comes from the Other rather than from the subject himself. A kind of circuit is accomplished that includes the Other, that effectively does seem to awaken the Other, but in a way that cannot help but imply that the Other is absent as a guarantee to the whole enterprise. This is captured in Lacan’s formula in lesson 20: “The voice responds to what is said, but it cannot answer for it” and “for it to respond, we must incorporate the voice as the otherness of what is said. [...] It is proper to the structure of the Other to constitute a certain void, the void of its lack of guarantee. [...] The voice resonates in this void as a voice that is distinct from sonorities. It is not a modulated voice, but an articulated

¹⁶ In a sense, the “uncanny” could be considered as the nineteenth century paradigm of what in the seventeenth century was the “curiosity” and in the eighteenth century the “sublime” (as identified by Katie Whitaker in “The Culture of Curiosity” in Jardine, L., Secord, J. A., & Spary, E. C., *Cultures of Natural History*, Cambridge University Press, p. 76). In each case a seemingly “natural” phenomenon disturbs the imaginary, indicating a real that eludes categorisation, classification or domestication.

one.” This notion of *incorporation*, which Lacan develops in reference to Otto Isakower’s article “On the Exceptional Position of the Auditory Sphere”, accounts for the final twist in the fine sifting between subject and Other that leads us beyond the “separation/amboceptor” model to a model of extimacy, where a more complex topology is evoked that cannot be described by means of the Euler circles. Incorporation, rather than division, separation or amboception, is the only model that allows the trajectory that leads from the capital D of demand to the signifier of the barred Other to come to completion. This is not, however, incorporation into a body formed of a simple outside / inside container, but one that is precisely modified by the process of incorporation until it is congruent with the Klein bottle, where inside and outside are no longer distinct. Hence the disappearance of frontiers as such in favour of rims.

Coming back to the sounding of the Shofar, Lacan asserts that, “it models the locus of our anxiety, but [...] this only happens after the desire of the Other has taken the form of a command.” It is in this command that the bond between desire and law is concretised, and in which the desire of the Other and the subject’s own desire fuse as one, since as Lacan reminds us, since time immemorial we have carried on as though the gods desire in the same way as we do.

It is here that this level of the drive may be qualified using a term that Lacan will not coin until the following Seminar: the invocatory drive. Here in *Seminar X* it is called a “vociferated” drive. The blast of the Shofar is a vociferation, an invocation, a call to God to remind him of the commandment he has already voiced. A “hail to the good listener” as Lacan puts it with respect to what Piaget called, misleadingly, the egocentric language of children. But if the reminder is necessary, it is because the Other is forgetful, absent, dormant, elusive. And when the Other presents no guarantee of his existence, there is always the risk that perhaps what was heard was actually nothing more than the wind in the trees, the rumble of a tremor, or the crackling of a fire, devoid of any immanence. As Lacan puts it at the close of his “Remarks on the Presentation by Daniel Lagache”, the voice that makes itself heard to the people at the foot of Mount Horeb is not evoked without an artifice that suggests that in its enunciation it sends back to them their own murmur (É, p. 684).

Prickett observes that what features in the King James as the “still small voice” heard by Elijah may also be rendered as “a voice of thin silence.” It has also been rendered variously as “the soft whisper of a voice”, “a low murmuring sound”, and even as a “sound of a gentle breeze”, the latter translations attempting to remove any last trace of equivocation between a silent voice and a natural phenomenon. But the Hebrew leaves little doubt as to the fact that Elijah hears a voice.

I would like to end by considering the passage from Kings I in the light of Lacan’s reflections in the lesson of 17 March 1965 from *Seminar XII* on Edvard Munch’s “The Scream”. He begins by noting that a scream, in general, generates silence, but in such a way that this silence is not some mere backdrop or ground against which the scream emerges. A scream sustains and supports the silence, rather than the other way around. “In some way the scream makes the silence nestle into the very impasse from which it bursts forth, so that the silence seeps out of it.” He clarifies this in reference to Munch’s painting: “the scream is shot through with the silence, without inhabiting it.” Scream and silence “are not linked by being together or by succession. The scream forms the gulf into which the silence comes rushing.”

This passage is complementary with Miller’s observation in his 1989 lecture on the voice, namely that the modulated voice, music, and so on, are made to cancel out the voice as object *a*. Music, especially what Adorno called the fetishistic nature

of music, or the various auditory means by which we screen off the object *a*, are made to elude this gulf into which silence comes rushing.

But ultimately, shouldn't we restore to Munch's painting its full title, which is so often abbreviated: "The Scream of Nature"? What screams is the natural phenomenon, evacuated by the divine presence, and leaving in its wake the still small voice, the voice of thin silence, which interrogates the subject at the level of his desire: *what woudst thou?*

We meet this paradox of an object that is present before it starts to assume the modulated contours of a recognisable form in the analyst himself, who, as Lacan observes, is always already in position as the addressee of the analysand's speech, prior even to the first appointment: a heterogeneous object that forms part of the subject's psychical reality by ensuring that it maintains a permanent point of opening to otherness, to radical and absolute alterity. This is the same object, therefore, into which the analyst needs to have merged his desire, as Lacan asserts in the closing words of *Seminar X*, in order to "offer the question of the concept of anxiety a real guarantee".

Holding ajar the door that opens onto the desire of the Other entails maintaining all the distance that lies between "I hear" and "I'm listening".