

Serge Leclaire

The Analyst in his Place?¹

[**Editorial note: this manuscript file will be replaced by a definitive pdf in early 2013**]

[50] I am going to try to say in what sense the position of the psychoanalyst is irreducible to all others, and is perhaps, strictly speaking, inconceivable, taking as my point of departure Jacques-Alain Miller's exposition of 24 February [1965].²

In his enterprise of interrogating the foundations of logic, of what he calls the logic of logicians, and in gathering together from the work of Lacan the elements of a logic of the signifier, Miller himself comes to present us with a logical discourse, or even an archaeological discourse, as he puts it, one capable of comprehending the discourse that issues from the analytic experience.

Now to arrive at such a discourse it is necessary, if I may say so, to hold firmly to the point that makes the articulation of a logical discourse possible, that is, the point that Miller presents to us both as the weak point and as the crucial point of every discourse, namely the point of suture [*le point de suture*].

We need to understand, Miller reminds us, that 'the function of saturation is not peculiar to the philosopher'. 'It is important that you are persuaded', he insists, 'that the logician, like the linguist, also sutures at his own particular level' [CpA 1.3:40]

I am quite persuaded of it. *It is clear that Miller, as a logician, or archaeologist, himself also sutures.* But here is the difference: the analyst, whether he likes it or not and even when he attempts to [51] discourse upon psychoanalysis, *the analyst does not suture*, or at least he ought to strive to be wary of this passion [*passion*].

I could stop there. This would obviously be the most concise form. Nevertheless, I would like to try to take my argument a bit further. Of what does the point of suture evoked here consist?

One of the pivotal propositions of Miller's exposition is as follows: 'It is this decisive proposition that *the concept of not-identical-with-itself is assigned by the number zero* which sutures logical discourse' [CpA 1.3:44].

Far be it from me to contest the importance of this remark. But I would like to go further.³ The introduction of this concept of non-identity to itself follows on from the Leibnizian concept of identity-to-self advanced by Frege, namely: 'those things are identical of which one can be substituted for the other without the truth being lost.' It is starting from there that one arrives at this other proposition: 'The truth is: each thing is identical to itself.' What is this thing that is identical to itself? It is the thing insofar as it is one [*une*], namely, the object. That everything is identical to itself is what permits the object (the thing insofar as it is one) to fall under a concept. *It must be* that the thing is identical to itself so that truth can be saved: here, we might discover the major accent not only of Frege's book, but also of Miller's exposition, namely, the saving of the truth. However, the analyst, *for his part*, is not necessarily concerned with saving the truth.

¹ TN: A version of this article was first presented in Lacan's Seminar XII, *Crucial Problems For Psychoanalysis* (1964-65), in the session of 24 March 1965, and it was first published as Serge Leclaire, 'L'Analyste à sa place?', CpA 1.4 (January 1966), 50-52. Translated by Christian Kerslake, revised by Peter Hallward.

² TN: The reference is to Jacques-Alain Miller, 'Suture', CpA 1.3.

³ TN: the text here omits a phrase included in the version transcribed in Cormac Gallagher's unofficial translation of Lacan, S12 (online at <http://www.lacaninireland.com>), 301: 'and to question Miller's interest in the concept of non-identity to itself'.

The analyst will happily admit, or at least I would, that 'truth *also* is [*la vérité est aussi*].' But reality *is* also. And reality, for the analyst, forces him to envisage the thing insofar as it is not one, to envisage the possibility of the non-identical to itself.

Frege certainly does this, but by blocking immediately, as Miller shows, the non-identical to itself with the number zero.

If we renounce, for a moment, the saving of the Truth, then what appears? I would say that for me it is radical difference, otherwise known as sexual difference.

We can find an extremely precise reference to this in the work of Freud. At the moment in the 'Observation' in the *Wolf Man* when he discusses the reality of the primal scene, he focuses on the problematic of castration in its relations with anal eroticism, and comes up with the curious expression of an '*unconscious concept*'. [52]

This concept certainly involves a unity, but one that covers things that are non-identical to themselves: his examples include the faeces, the child, or the penis, or why not, the finger, the cut finger, the little spot on the nose, or indeed the nose itself. The notion of an unconscious concept emerges from Freud's pen to connote the unity of things that are small or indifferent, but which can be separated from the body. Perhaps we have here the concept, the reality of a thing that is non-identical to itself.⁴

When I say that the analyst does not suture, it is because for him, in his experience, it is necessary that not even the zero serve to hide the truth of a radical difference, of a difference to self [*une différence à soi*] that asserts itself in the last analysis in the face of the irreducibility of sexual reality.

Whoever does not suture is able to see the reality of sex sus-tained [*sous-tendue*] by fundamental castration. He can envisage the enigma of generation. Not only that of the engendering of the sequence of numbers, but also of the generation of people.

The domain of the analyst is a domain that is necessarily a-veridical [*a-véridique*], at least in its exercise. The analyst refuses to suture, I have told you. In fact, he does not construct a discourse, even when he speaks. Fundamentally, and it is in this sense that the question of the analyst is irreducible, the analyst listens [*est à l'écoute*].

⁴ Doctor Leclaire here gives an other example that we do not reproduce here: it will be the theme of a session of his seminar at the ENS.

TN: The example, Freud's analysis of the Wolfman, is taken up in Leclaire's essay 'The Elements at Play in a Psychoanalysis' (CpA 5.1), but the transcription of Leclaire's presentation of the example in the version of this paper given at Lacan's Seminar XII is already illuminating. Cormac Gallagher's rough translation of this passage runs as follows:

'[...] In the experience of the Wolfman, there are many moments where his experience pivots, turns upside down, where something changes radically.

In the supplement to the history of an infantile neurosis, that Ruth Mack Brunswick has given us, she signals textually one of these moments where the world pivots on its axis, where the structure of the world, the order of the world seems to vanish. It is the moment when, uneasy about the presence of this pimple on his nose, the Wolfman having questioned the dermatologist, hears it being said that nothing can be done, the pimple will remain the same, it will not change, there is nothing to do, there is no need to treat it or to take it off.

You will tell me, this pimple is therefore precisely one of these things, like that, which is found to coincide with itself. Does that mean that it is identical, that it can be located as identical? I do not think so at all. The proof is that he goes to see another dermatologist, has the pimple removed, experiences moreover an acute ecstasy at the moment that this pimple is removed. He is relieved about it for a while. The veil which separates him from the world is once again torn, and he is once again present to the world.

But, of course, this does not last. And what replaces the pimple is a hole. And of course his delusional preoccupation - in fact the delusion is not one that would frighten us - is going to be what is going to happen to this hole, this little scar, this little scratch, which cannot be seen, but he, at his mirror where he constantly looks at his nose sees this hole.

The decisive moment, another decisive moment, which this time decides him to begin a new slice of analysis, is when he is told that the scars will never disappear.

There again it is the same thing: whether what is involved is the pimple or the scar of the pimple; different things, they are nevertheless the same things. For him also, here the world pivots on its axis, he can no longer live like that, it is completely intolerable' (S12, session 20, pp. 302-303).

Listens to what? To the discourse of his patient, and what interests him in the discourse of his patient is precisely to know what is fixed for him at the point of suture. That for his part Miller situates himself, in order to speak to us, at a topological point that is neither open nor closed, we grant him that – but the analyst, on the other hand, is more like the subject of the unconscious, which is to say that he has no place and cannot have one.

I imagine that this position or this non-position of the analyst might give vertigo to the logician, the one whose passion is for the truth. For it is indeed what testifies in his action to this radical difference between a sutured desiring [*un désirant suturé*] and one that refuses to suture, a non-suturing, a desiring-not-to-suture. I know very well that in a certain sense this position is intolerable. But I believe that, whatever we make of it, we are not done with it, and nor are you Miller, you're not yet done with trying to put the analyst in his place, or as is said, to return [*remettre*] the analyst to his place.⁵ Fortunately, as it happens. If he puts himself there all by himself, then this results from lassitude, or because he is compelled to do so. Only one thing is sure: the day the analyst is in his place, there will no longer be any analysis.

⁵ TN: '...de mettre, ou comme on dit, remettre l'analyste à sa place.'