

## Locating and Annotating the Expression 'The Later Teaching of Lacan'

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Jacques Lacan consistently used the word 'teaching' (*enseignement*) to describe the lessons contained in his annual seminar in Paris and he used the word quite often. As a result, the word teaching figures regularly in his seminars, as well as in his invited lectures and writings that usually followed his seminars. However, Lacan never used the expression 'later teaching' to describe any part of it himself. In fact the phrase later teaching did not come into existence until twenty years after Lacan's death. Though Lacan's later teaching was naturally contained in Lacan's seminars, the credit for identifying, naming and describing it as such goes to his literary executor, Jacques-Alain Miller, who drew the attention of others to it by speaking on it for the first time in his 'Course' on Lacan on 6 and 13 June 2001. Until then, Miller had either stayed silent or spoken only allusively of this stage of Lacan's teaching.

In his 2002 essay called 'Le dernier enseignement de Lacan' ('Lacan's later teaching') that is based on his 2001 Course on this theme, Miller stated that the cut that distinguishes Lacan's later teaching had to be 'isolated' and it had to be constructed in order to be described because it 'isn't obvious' in Lacan's works (Miller 2002 [2003]). Miller went on to distinguish, name, add an accent to and thus 'individualize' Lacan's later teaching while speaking on it in 2001. But why did Miller take so long to introduce this stage of Lacan's teaching by its proper name? Miller's reply to the question in his essay is that, since this teaching is situated beyond Freud and psychoanalysis, that is to say since it is about the psychoanalysis that emerges following the annulment of Freudian psychoanalysis, the introduction of this teaching had to be properly timed so that it could be followed up by the work of cleaning up an old system that it necessitated:

Once everything has sunk, everything is annulled, what remains of the shipwreck? This is how I myself view Lacan's later teaching. This teaching treats the existence of psychoanalysis as a superstition in a cryptic way. A cleansing, a degradation of psychoanalysis is needed in order to make it work. This is why the later teaching was kept at a distance, why it was only approached through its technical side—making knots, designing knots, complicating the knot. This is the time period when

Lacan came to describe psychoanalysis as a fraud (Miller 2002 [2003]).

In other words, Lacan's later teaching 'ex-sists'— is situated outside— his earlier and latest teaching. In his later teaching, Lacan distanced himself from Freud and stepped outside psychoanalysis itself so as to consider psychoanalysis from the perspective of a future time that has not yet arrived in reality, a time when psychoanalysis no longer existed as a practice (Miller 2002 [2003]). Lacan's later teaching on psychoanalysis-beyond-psychoanalysis is thus a kind of posthumous psychoanalysis that could easily have been addressed to Kierkegaard's 'Symparanekromenoi.'

When Miller wrote that a cleansing of psychoanalysis was necessary to make the later teaching effective, by the term 'cleansing' he meant the cleansing of thought germane to the later teaching itself, in so far as this teaching resulted from the hollowing of the signifier, and especially in so far as it is expressed with the help of knots. Unlike the first two stages of Lacan's teaching that are 'supported by thought' and that uphold with Freud that 'the unconscious comes from thoughts,' the later teaching: questions and cleanses all interpretations; it relegates thought to the 'symbolically-imaginary' or, while dealing with knots, it locates both thought and the unconscious at the level of the 'difficult relationship of the body and of the symbolic' called the mental, which is a non-Freudian definition of the unconscious; it opposes the symbolic with a body of knots one can manipulate but not deduce or imagine with; and, above all, it defines the real in terms of the exclusion of sense (Miller 2002 [2003]). But why did Miller introduce this teaching as late as in 2001? Was he waiting for the new century to arrive so as to help him add the new accent, as he had done in case of the publication of Lacan's *Autres écrits* in 2001?

In 'Lacan's later teaching,' Miller explained his deliberate delay in publishing *Autres écrits* in terms of the new effect that it enabled the writings to produce:

The appearance of Lacan's *Autres écrits*, at the beginning of the 21st century, has evidently produced a different effect than it had at the moment of its first publication following what was pouring from Lacan. Today it feels more like a meteorite, having nearly nothing to do with the present moment of universal discourse. One might ask: 'Where did that come from?' [...]

It also had a different effect from what would have been produced if this collection of texts had been published shortly after the disappearance of Lacan, when they would have had the value of a final pronouncement. This is why I have held back, with the idea that they would become a new signifier if one could wait a while, especially if one waited for the new century. One would have the occasion to ask not what was reflected of the past but what it announced about the future. (Miller 2002 [2003])

In other words, Miller punctuated and thus altered the meaning of Lacan's *Autres écrits* by delaying its publication. The duration of the delay was carefully chosen, for it was exactly enough to allow the twenty-first century to ensue. By ensuring that *Autres écrits* was published at the start of a new century and not at the end of an old one, which necessarily introduced a long gap of two decades, Miller made it speak about the future instead of the past. Was Miller trying to produce a similar effect by introducing the stage of Lacan's later teaching by its name and by publishing a seminar from this stage for the first time, after an almost identical delay?

It is hard to be certain but there are some remarkable overlaps between Miller's approach to *Autres écrits* and his address on 'Lacan's later teaching' to make us speculate on this line. In the first place, Miller released *Autres écrits* in April 2001 and he formally introduced the stage called the later teaching two months later, in his Course in June 2001, effectively waiting for the new century to begin in either case, advertently or not. More importantly, Miller mentioned this teaching using the expression 'later oral teaching' (*dernier enseignement oral*) for the first time in the 'Prologue' to *Autres écrits* written in February 2001, a month after the turn of the century, indicative of a haste to conclude following a delay. (Miller 2001: 8) Above all, in 'Lacan's later teaching' Miller speaks of both *Autres écrits* and Lacan's later teaching in terms of the delay he had caused to their appearance, using the expressions 'abstenu' and 'tenu écarté' respectively to denote the two types of holding back exercised by him (Miller 2002 [2003]).

Is Lacan's 'later' teaching to be viewed simply with respect to an 'earlier' teaching? Miller, who has a very precise notion of Lacan's teaching, states that Lacan's later teaching should be seen as the third of the four stages of his teaching. Going by Miller's classification, the first stage of Lacan's teaching, embodied by his first ten seminars, 'celebrates the domination of the big

Other.' His teaching takes the big Other as a 'basic given' and revels in the knowledge of the meaning of signifiers of this big Other's discourse in the unconscious. This was the stage of Lacan's return to Freud with a Lévi-Straussian twist. (Miller 2002 [2003])

The second stage of Lacan's teaching began in 1964 out of the first cut in that teaching in 1963 when Lacan found himself outside the Freudian institution owing to his 'excommunication' by the International Psychoanalytical Association. It is embodied by the next ten seminars in which Lacan relativized the big Other by introducing the side of the object small a. In the second stage of his teaching, the big Other is not all, for it is studied in conjunction with the object small a and thus also looked at from a place external to it. In this stage Lacan distanced himself from his first teaching in the name of analytic experience. He said that only from the point of view of the analytic experience is it possible to say that the unconscious is not real because it functions as a supposition— a supposition that allows the production of a large number of signifiers that in turn allows for the isolation of what is not signifier, namely, the object small a. In short, the psychoanalytic experience itself leads to something outside of psychoanalysis as a remainder or a refusal. In this stage Lacan looked at the universal in conjunction with the singular: While the signifier is shared with others, the object small a belongs to the subject; while the big Other is universal, the object small a is singular (Miller 2002 [2003]).

The third stage of Lacan's teaching that is designated as the 'later teaching' and embodied by the next three seminars— *Les non-dupes errent* (1973-74), *RSI* (1974-75) and *Le sinthome* (1975-76)— reverses the perspective of the first two stages by looking predominantly from the side of the object small a and the singular and not from the side of the big Other and the universal. Due to this, the later teaching is 'haunted by the problem of autism', in so far as '[a]utism means that the One is dominant and not the Other.' Here singular stands for that which is particular to everyone, that which is not available to or shared by or common to all. Two of the inter-related consequences of the dominance of the One over the Other are, a questioning of Freudian psychoanalysis and the birth of the idea that a psychoanalyst authorizes himself. In general, Lacan's later teaching indicates a movement from the big Other, the signifier, language and desire— all pertaining to the universal and inherited from Freud— to the One, the *sinthome*, *lalangue* and *jouissance*, all pertaining to the singular and introduced by Lacan (Miller 2002 [2003]).

The editors of the excellent collection of essays called *Later Lacan* (2007) argued in their 'Preface' that the stage called the 'later teaching' began with Seminar XX: 'So the period we refer to as the later Lacan starts with Seminar XX.' (Voruz and Wolf 2007: ix) Moreover, although they rightly treated Seminar XXIII as a text belonging to this stage, they provided an unclear picture of the contour of the stage by not stating where it ended. Miller, however, had a far more precise idea of the contour of every stage of Lacan's teaching. In 'Lacan's later teaching,' Miller clearly regarded Seminar XX as 'the end of his second stage of teaching' and not as the beginning of the third or the 'later' stage (Miller 2002 [2003]).

The fourth and final stage of Lacan's teaching, named 'The latest Lacan' (*Le tout dernier Lacan*) by Miller in his Course in 2006, is embodied by the last four seminars. Since I was not sure from where the fourth stage began, I wrote to Miller, who replied on the same day, 'Seminar XXIV' (Miller 2014, private email to me).

In 'Lacan's later teaching,' Miller explained the radical difference between Lacan's later teaching and his earlier teaching from several directions. Let me reiterate the important ones retaining Miller's own wording as far as possible.

To begin with, radically unlike his earlier teaching in which the Name-of-the-Father and the big Other dominate, in Lacan's later teaching they do not exist. The change is shocking and scandalous because without the Name-of-the-Father there is no language or body. In Miller's words:

Without the Name-of-the-Father there is only chaos. Chaos means outside law, a chaos in the symbolic. Without the Name-of-the-Father, there is no language, there is only *lalangue*. Without the Name-of-the-Father, there is, properly speaking, no body, there is only the corporeal, flesh, organism, matter, image. There are body events, events which destroy the body. Without the Name-of-the-Father, there is a without-the-body (Miller 2002 [2003]).

The introduction of a psychoanalysis without the Name-of-the-Father and the big Other produced the effect of 'a fallen mask.' It was as though the mask that Lacan wore in his previous teaching had started to come off. In the later teaching, the Name-of-the-Father is 'reabsorbed in the multiple' and replaced by the signifiers of the paternal metaphor on Lacan's logical square (Miller 2002 [2003]).

Similarly, unlike his earlier teaching that is defined by the lack, Lacan's later teaching is defined by the hole. Miller says, Lacan's later teaching is different from his earlier teaching due to the difference between the hole and the lack. The difference is that, whereas space and its laws are operative in a lack— '[l]ack means an absence inscribed in a space, it obeys the order of spaces; spaces are untouched by the lack'— a hole more profoundly 'implies the disappearance of the order of spaces. It entails the disappearance of the space itself of the combinatorial rules.' Therefore, a hole, unlike a lack, makes 'ex-sistence' possible (Miller 2002 [2003]).

Additionally, whereas Lacan's earlier teaching deals with the problematic of domination of the symbolic, his later teaching deals with the problematic of knotting and with questions related to knotting, such as: Are the three elements knotted by themselves? Or is their knotting together made possible by a fourth, supplementary element? (Miller 2002 [2003]) By prevailing over knowledge in the symbolic, the geometry of knots modifies the very concept of the unconscious in Lacan's later teaching in which, unlike in Freud's works where the unconscious is treated as a debility, mental debility stands for the disharmony with the symbolic, the real and the imaginary that the speaking being, going by his 'conflict, *Spaltung*, the interval between demand and desire, castration, sexual non-rapport,' is tormented by. The speaking being is structurally lost and badly oriented because his libido is narcissistic and his body is sick of castration. Appropriately enough, Lacan rejected all the glorious and elaborate psychoanalytic terminology in his later teaching and announced simply that 'the mental debility of [...] [the speaking] being means that his mind doesn't put him in relationship with the real.' From the perspective of Lacan's later teaching, the Freudian unconscious is 'a lucubration of knowledge on mental debility' (Miller 2002 [2003]).

Moreover, Lacan's later teaching consists of separating the real from the symbolic, or the immediate data from knowledge, in psychoanalysis by separating Freud's theory from practice. Lacan supposed in his later teaching that below the symbolic structure there is a real of immediate data that is not definable except in terms of the structure, which allowed him to organize a real outside meaning, a real preceding the structure and its meaning, and therefore a real indefinable in terms of structure. It is a teaching that urges one to distinguish between the unconscious as a theoretical lucubration of Freud and the unconscious as the experience of the real in the practice of psychoanalysis (Miller 2002 [2003]). Thus, in course of untying himself from Freud, Lacan was also

untying Freud's theory from the practice of psychoanalysis by assessing and restating Freud's theory in the light of the experience of practice. Miller clarified that Lacan's choice of the practice of psychoanalysis as his point of departure and his emphasis on practice are rooted in the numerous indications present throughout Freud's work of how the latter's theory was retroactively modified by his practice, though the practice was instituted by the theory in the first place. In Miller's summary, 'Freud was the theoretician who gave birth to the practice, and Lacan was the practitioner who elaborated the theory from the practice' (Miller 2002 [2003]).

Furthermore, contrary to Lacan's earlier teaching, his later teaching lowers knowledge 'to the rank of a lucubration' and upholds 'the reference to manipulation,' in so far as the analyst pays attention not only to the symbolic or pure logic but more importantly to the body and to the real as excluded from sense, and in so far as he has to work by manipulating his translation or by manipulating the knots. Miller shows us how Lacan stressed on the return to the immediate data of consciousness beyond logic in his seminar by translating Freud's German term for the unconscious, '*das Unbewußt*,' as the blunder, '*l'Une-bévue*,' in French, where the reconstitution of a meaning in French from the sound of a German word is itself a false translation, a blunder of translation. What allows for psychoanalysis is that blunders are always possible between words, and that the same signifier can produce different meanings, of which the translation of '*Unbewußt*' as '*Une-bévue*' is an example. One might call such translation bizarre, but it is precisely the method James Joyce employed in writing *Finnegans Wake*, which, Lacan stresses, is a difficult but necessary method for the psychoanalysts to grasp (Miller 2002 [2003]). Thus, in Lacan's later teaching, the unconscious is treated as a blunder of consciousness, whereby the final reference of the unconscious is consciousness in so far as consciousness is susceptible to error, deception and blunder. And this is why Lacan proposed that consciousness resembles the unconscious in negation. It is precisely this negation that enabled Freud to make a substance called the unconscious out of a supposed knowledge that the unconscious really is (Miller 2002 [2003]).

Finally, whereas Lacan's earlier teaching is instructed by logic, his later teaching is instructed by poetry, in so far as in his later teaching Lacan tended to assimilate psychoanalysis not to the rules of logic but to the rules of poetry. Unlike the engagement with language in logic or in everyday life, poetry involves an

engagement with language in which the meaning of a signifier is doubled by literal and figurative meaning, lexical and contextual meaning, subjective and allusive meaning, biographical and historical meaning. Thus, Lacan sought to resolve the logical aporia of the practice of psychoanalysis by relativizing the primacy of logic itself in that practice in terms of the introduction of a practice of poetry through his later teaching (Miller 2002 [2003]).

While discussing Lacan's later teaching these precise indicators of the stage, I think, should be kept in mind.

#### REFERENCES

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