

Hermeneulogy - VII - Holes in the stream

By Clémence Ortega Douville

'Je crois que c'est essentiellement la parole réduite à son trognon. Ce n'est ni lui, ni quelqu'un d'autre. Il est évidemment *Le loup* ! pour autant qu'il dit cette parole-là. Mais *Le loup* ! c'est n'importe quoi en tant que ça peut être nommé. Vous voyez là l'état nodal de la parole. Le moi est ici complètement chaotique, la parole arrêtée. Mais c'est à partir de *Le loup* ! qu'il pourra prendre sa place et se construire.'

'Nous avons été amenés à souligner cette face de la résistance qui se situe au niveau même de l'émission de la parole. La parole peut exprimer l'être du sujet, mais, jusqu'à un certain point, elle n'y parvient pas. [...] La parole pleine est celle qui vise, qui forme la vérité telle qu'elle s'établit dans la reconnaissance de l'un par l'autre. La parole pleine est parole qui fait acte. Un des sujets se trouve, après, autre qu'il n'était avant. [...] Dès ce point posé, vous avez déjà pu vous en apercevoir, beaucoup de choses s'orientent et s'éclairent, mais beaucoup de paradoxes et de contradictions apparaissent. Le mérite de cette conception est justement de faire apparaître ces paradoxes et ces contradictions, qui ne sont pas pour autant des opacités et des obscurcissements. C'est souvent, au contraire, ce qui apparaît harmonieux et compréhensible qui recèle quelque opacité. Et c'est inversement dans l'antinomie, dans la béance, dans la difficulté, que repose notre méthode, et, j'espère, notre progrès aussi.' In Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire - I : Les écrits techniques de Freud*, Ed. Seuil, coll. Champ Freudien, 1975 , pp. 121-126.

Speech is awkward. Anytime one would try to pronounce a speech would find themselves hesitating as to the place taken by the speech. Is it that I am speaking to inform the others of an object ? Or is it that I want to express that I am the object that speaks and presents a quality of being speaking to the others, but more surely for myself ?

The question was posed by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. He answered by saying that what was spoken could either concern the subjects involved in the exchange of words, in a certain intersubjective context ; or it could be about an object that is external to them. The first situation would affect the subjects directly in their being, the second would affect their perception of their world.

In any way, the question placed at the centre is : what is the subject, and what is the object ? The word that names the reality of the object is here in the middle ; and it says also that there is a subject speaking, that can be the subject behind the subject, the one hidden, the one that is the shadow of the first seen. If I say 'I am speaking', in fact, the one that means is behind the voice that speaks, that says the word : *I*.

The subject behind the word

The theme that we are going to tackle now is perhaps the most delicate amongst those we have tackled so far, because it goes beyond theory as language goes beyond the subject. Observing the case of Melanie Klein's little boy named Dick and Rosine Lefort's other boy named Robert¹, Lacan introduced the idea that those children were living in a sheer *real*. That means with no symbolic mediation, no access to the objects of the symbolic that involve the capacity to make them

1 *Op. cit.*, pp. 105-122.

a function of speech, a distance to plain reality.

For the little Robert, the subject and the object merged in the few words he could bear. Speaking was only diverting attention from the subject that he was. When we speak, we try to include ourselves in the conditions of speech to speak to another and for all the parties, including ourselves by this way. Here, we can suppose that the failure of the conditions for speech made unidentifiable the fact that the word *I* would ever leave the subject off.

The idea suggested by Lacan of the perception and acceptance - hardly acquired by the boy - of the separation of the content and the container, of the *thing* and the tool, proves accurate. The boy expresses himself by exclaiming *The wolf!* in any occasion words find a way out to reality. Yes, the imaginary and reality confront themselves with the blocking point : the subject lives with unmediated, undistanced real because the subject is living themselves as an imaginary subject in an imaginary body.

The stage of the mirror, in lacanian theory, means that not only I see myself entirely in the mirror but that someone else is attesting that *I* see my *self* in the mirror, commenting the meeting. The discourse is mediating the conditions of reality, because everybody else is acting as talking people, and those talks make some sense thanks to their correspondence to a certain reality that is made coordinate.

Yet here, Lacan says of Robert's words that it is truncated, because the subject is withdrawn. Words are *before* him. They fail in relating him to common conditions with the others. They are properly idiosyncratic before they can bear common knowledge and meaning. Words, even few words like *The wolf!*, are *ahead of him*, meaning that something is *there* that I cannot see, but who knows what all this means for him ?

The distance is produced with something that is not seen, but as a signal. *I exist* because the signal of *The wolf!* being *there* exists. I show, in fact I let it out. Yet by doing this, I only stay behind the signal, and fail speaking for myself, or for something else than my *self*. It only makes sense for it that I speak.

We can suppose that Robert's world was a world of continuum, where it was impossible not to stay awake. Because his words could not go back to him after being taken. The other cannot say : 'I understand.' That is why eventually, the ritual of his own milk bathing and baptism, naming himself *Robert*, is so moving to read. So far, words had not gotten off the imaginary place of the body, unable to express but a signal of the boy's own existence inside of it. Then he could find a way out of it and eventually, get back to it.

To choose to be in or out, you need to move between two separate places : beyond or behind the word. Robert could just not get out beyond them.

Had anybody else acted out of language, out of speech rules, savage and wild, he could have managed the impact. But how to confront speaking and still people, and make it half between both sides, to let room for a mediating object to be common to, that would also be including you ?

There was just no room in-between, and the wolf had already entered the place of the subject.

The *me* paradox

As quoting Lacan in the introduction, there is something opaque in a harmonious object. A crack in its unity would allow us to enter, to seek for more objects inside of it, to eat the fruit's flesh to another bone. Yet it is round, and that is why a plain object can only be a mediating object.

In our previous work, we introduced one irreducible object that we called the *tensor* or the connector. In fact, the tensor is the subject behind the word that we were talking about. In our theory of the three paradoxes, it relates to the paradox of the word *me*, that cannot reach its object completely.

When I say 'me', I realise that I haven't moved an inch physically. It hasn't projected me outside of myself. I have kept stuck in my own skin, so to speak. It has been made *for the others*. And I am changed because of that. Saying *me*, talking about the subject that I am, trapped behind the words, to another subject, is changing me because it is pulling on the *me* at the root of the structure, it is working on it.

When Robert fails to say that *he is too*, a 'me', he only expresses that he doesn't want to leave the *me* that is : am I going to *be* me outside of it ? Will I have to play not behind the word that names me but beyond it, on the other side of it, where the word projects me ? His physical moves, his behaviour is erratic, chaotic and discoordinate because moving in a rectilinear and binary way is obeying by a rule that is patterned, sequenced, recognisable and predictable.

Do you know where I am, says Robert ? *I am hidden in the forest, like the wolf, and it is unlikely that you would ever find me*. Erratic moves create signal, but a confused one. Saying *The wolf !* is only specifying that there is still a subject, there is still a *Robert* somewhere, but that he is unseen. Unseen, but not invisible. Only the others only see the alien part of him, the one that is shattered in misunderstanding.

Who is Robert, asks Robert ? Who is he, indeed ? He is a response to the super-ego '*Robert, obey*' ; he is a *no-Robert*. There is no Robert. To say that there is one would be accepting that the word would unveil the presence and the visibility of this *one* - one time, only once, mortal. When I say 'me', I unveil that during all this time, there was somebody listening on the back of my head, that is the back of the mirror, and the back of language.

Sinking in the blink

This opaque screen on the back of the mind is what the tensor means. It is a hole in the stream. A black hole. It is the point that language cannot reach, the paradox, the sensorimotor gap opened by the hand.

Recent studies in Neurosciences, led by Tamami Nakano of Osaka University, focused quite wisely on the resetting role of blinking in the attention effort.² We might extend the concept of attentional blinking to intentional blinking, because it seems that it also breaks the continuity of a possibility for action. If the blinking marks the switch of object for attention, it also means that the world is different, that I may act toward it differently. It would be polarised differently because I intend to enact another possibility toward another object.

This *other object* is driving the polarity of the contextual meaning according to other concerns. This is a different play for another world of meaning and possibilities. Of course, there is a larger world, a larger context that is still in course, but on another scale, the scale of micro-decision, of the sequencing of thought and sensorimotor organisation, the colours, the situation where I am placed has changed.

Thoughts are then organised in moves, in micro-acts (re)creating a certain situation, a certain scene, with something very precise, whether small, at stake. I will try to convince different people. I will, each time, recreate a different scene. I am still here, but it is all retried each time I blink my eyes. The world ends and I will end with it ; then reborn.

That is where the hand paradox proves efficient : while I am gazing my hand, I can hardly blink my eyes and then, I prevent identity from changing on a sequenced model. I don't allow myself to die and to come to another life again. If I could do that, the world wouldn't have to change, because I would rediscover a new kind of world, orientated differently each time I would

2 In Tamami Nakano, Makoto Kato, Yusuke Morito, Seishi Itoi, and Shigeru Kitazawa, Blink-related momentary activation of the default mode network while viewing videos, PNAS published ahead of print December 24, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1214804110>

open my eyes again. But if I keep my eyes wide open on *that thing* that doesn't move and keeps me still, what of the world outside ? It has all the chances to be reborn, I have only one.

Exactly like Robert, who does only have one chance to survive his appearing beyond the word that would be naming him definitely.

As well, blocked by my own hand, there is only one way out : getting back to what is beyond it. Yet it supposes that I would be looking for objects, otherwise what would it be good for ? The hand paradox is a large hole in the stream of the perception of the real. It indicates that some things can block and hinder the real and put me behind it. If I can be *behind the real*, it means that it can swallow *me*. It can annihilate me. So I have to swallow it back first. Therefore I am looking for objects, because this is a signal that I am still alive in fact, that the monster behind the hand won't or hasn't eaten and swallowed me up yet.

There is a *wolf* because there is a possibility that I cannot see or hear *something*. The paradox of the hand creates a *non-object*, an incapacity to be projected beyond, that is intensely anxiety-provoking. I *cannot* relate to this object and it is fearsome because it is annulling *me*. And while it is annulling me, the world gets bigger than me only because I close all the possibilities down. The world is uniformised and unified to an extreme and limit point where it reaches a nothingness : my body becomes infinitely useless and the world then, meaningless, erratic, strange and dangerous - unpredictable.

The common object in analysis

That leads us to the object in analysis, the common object in the middle, the round and opaque one. There cannot be an impact between the two parties in analysis, that is why it is complicated that Freud should call the transfer love. Otherwise the subject falls in the holes of discourse, the blank spots where the mediating object falls. That means that there *is* a subject on the condition that there also is an object they can go round *in spite* of the presence of another one, another subject - Donald Winnicott's *capacity to be alone* with somebody else.

Let us figure the common object of analysis as a floating sphere between the two subjects, a *couple* in the sense of Mechanic Physics. Like suspended in a magnetic field, it is fluidly standing at an equal distance from the two parties. It is moved by a force pushing on both subjects. Then if one of them moves forward to the other beyond this distance, the object will move accordingly. If the other one doesn't in his turn bend backward, the sphere and the other subject would derail from the bond and create the impact.

That is love, the meeting, or death, a wound, but this happens only once, and then you cannot exchange it, only pass and get over it. It is very important that the attempt of either subject to get directly to the other one always finds at an equal distance the object of the mediation, the common object of relation. Otherwise, one would only find the real, that cannot be exchanged nor replaced, that only comes once.

That is why it is important to consider one thing that is : the *me*, the hidden presence that is behind language, behind the word that expresses it, in the hand paradox and the isolated uniform relation, does only come once, and that is why the rest is extended. Once the subject has realised their mortality, they would either try to protect it - *The wolf !* - or ask around them whether *they* have survived it or not. If the others have survived my own possible death, that is alright, it must not be imminent. Otherwise, how could I leave the place where I am sure I would not disappear, stay close to myself ?

The only way I can make sure that what happens only once would stay unchanged, is to split it, to make it a cell, and repeat it : to make it round, something *I* can go round - but not common to the others - imaginary. As it is only between me and the keeping of myself then, I cannot escape the convergence of this imaginary and the body at the same place.

The wolf ! The wolf ! Do you see it ? But one knows that there is no wolf, that it is pointless, but an event. Something in the unchanging of reality creates a slight movement, just a little variation. In fact, *The wolf !* is a way to point out that what should have happened once happened plenty of times, that it is pointless to see it as an extraordinary event. *The wolf !* is all ordinary, all unity. What is unordinary, is that the body does only come once in the conscious. Once I am out of it, it is finished, abolished, over. The reality of the body strikes like an impact.

This is why the real, the tensor, the room for objects that *is* without objects, that stands in the absence of objects and passing, in the absence of subject, in the annihilation of a subject by the most extreme uniformity of relation - hand paradox again -, is the repetition of those holes in the stream of conscious, these sharp moments of loss that make it a fragmented one - yet with the unity of what happens once and for all.

Language, in every blink of the eyes, is enacting the repetition of those *once* until there are no *once* left to play. What I give to the others, is my participation to its extension, that it would last a bit longer.

When one doesn't believe that it could last, they would have to go savage and wild again, free from moral restraint, crashing against society's wall to impact. Otherwise they would go round themselves, and nurrish their ego with their own matter until there is none left. In the end, it is all woven in the acts, that are contextual - and the context catches up with us eventually.

The important in analysis is to keep close to the object that is unnoticed, and always bring back the attention to its well being in silence. Like the reality of the *me*, it is unapproachable.

All you have to do then and in doubt, is to make peace with it.