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## THE CHOICE OF WORDS

*Laure Naveau*

There was a relation to language and to the Real, or more exactly, to what was said and the way in which it was said (in its relation to the *whole* and to truth), that was very particular to me. As with others of my generation, marked by May '68, I encountered a colloquial, rather liberal way of saying; an interpretative style which was very much in fashion at the time of my adolescence and which left some marks in me. Let's say that I was marked, like everyone else, by the incidence of language, by the torrent of language, of which, according to Lacan in his *Geneva Conference* on the symptom, "something is left in passing, a detritus, with which, as he points out, it is necessary for us to cope".

There are events of speech which provoke events in the body, even though we can say that psychoanalysis has emphasised that the moment when desire becomes humanised is the moment when the child is born into language. Psychoanalysis reveals a humanity of language, which gives the subject its dignity.

Naveau goes between personal stuff and theory, so the reader has to thread her argument together as a hop-sotch array.

Why does the subject need dignity? This is another way to talk about humiliation and its relation to the imagined fort-da issue of childhood.

The Real of language is about how the RSI system is about interpenetration. The Real operates *inside* the Symbolic in this case, it is “what makes things happen.”

This is language’s expressive function, it’s fundamental rhetorical aspect, the ability to say no when you say yes and vice versa.

Do not get hung up in the traumatic Real’s meaning, go directly to the aspect of speech that has the Real already built into it, namely the *énonciation* component, the speech ACT. We say that acts are symbolic but that overlooks the fact that an act is primarily performative and thus an expressive function within the grammatical representational function, subject to revision, the conceptual function. RSI in French is pronounced “heresy.”

Maybe look at Henry Johnstone's essay on the role of silence in argument and philosophy.

But if each one is marked by the real of language and if Lacan baptises this real with the neologism *lalangue*, in one word, to say that each one speaks his own *lalangue*, I was for my part, marked by a style of language which resonated in my ears as carrying a whole truth, which in the face of, I believed that there was, paradoxically, nothing more to say. [i] Firstly rebellious, oftentimes hurt, subsequently I chose to be silent. I believed that the Other I was dealing with knew it all, since it authorised itself to this daily interpretative enthusiasm. And insofar as there was this prior knowledge, which was presented as knowledge about me, about my unconscious acts, it had an impact on my way of enjoying and also on my relation to knowledge itself. The misunderstanding was undoubtedly there! But in saying that, damn it! [*malédiction*] I became a little too over-invested. I was too given to this supposed all-knowledge of the Other, which I loved, and to which I therefore gave this latitude, this power. *A verbal pathology of saying it all*, had reduced me, in fact, to a guilty silence which occurs when one gives up one’s desire to speak, and thus feels at fault. This continued until the moment when I took the floor again, on my own account, by engaging in an analysis; it lasted almost twenty years, and I became an analyst.

I was released from what had become a real instance of the superego, which was reduced at the end of my analysis to an empty value and so I arrived

at this pass which made me an *AE*, an Analyst of the School. Supposed to testify to problems crucial to psychoanalysis, I circumscribed the point at which I had arrived. A point of an impossible to say beyond what could be said, and which used to leave me speechless [without voice].

I had left this *fourth family complex*, a sort of *complex of saying-all*, to which I had given all this power, not knowing how to escape from it, except by running away.

The trauma, here, came from the *saying it all* realised in an eruption of meaning which contained an impossibility, there was no word which did not wound. This is a way of saying that does not take into account the eminently Lacanian principle of *not-all*, the essential thesis that Lacan will support up until his last breath and with which he concludes his final seminar in Caracas, in 1980, when he ends his intervention on this sentence which is so moving to me: “Of course, I don’t tell you all, this is my merit.”

*[ii]*

In his great inaugural text *Function and Field of Speech and Language* written twenty years before *Television*, Lacan arrives at the point of saying that the subject is an effect of speech, in essence the speech of the parents. To be an effect of speech, presupposes that we are spoken before we speak. This however does not obviate the fact that in what

happens to us beyond all our signifying determinations, including those to which I have just referred; psychoanalysis proposes that each one plays his part: “one is always responsible for one’s position as a subject” [iii], Lacan argued for this statement which he qualified as “terrorist”. But one day I decided that I preferred this *terrorism* — that of the responsibility for my fantasmatic position — to that which indeed had held me captive.

We are responsible, by way of example, for the manner in which we appropriate the signifiers of the Other, of that language we denote as “maternal” [mother-tongue], those of the S?, and for the way we make it our own as well as for what we add to it.

So I made it my own, this principle according to which there is a specific deployment of the subject, a libidinal deployment we might say, that is decisive in the face of the knowledge of the Other and the discourse of the Other, and which reduces the latter to a bemused trickle. There is a singular mode of response to the demand and desire of the Other within which we find ourselves ensnared, it is called the subjective position, and that changes many things!

“[...] the object is there active, and the subject subverted [...]”, is what Lacan said in his *Roman Conferences [iv]*, when he evokes the act of becoming an analyst.

Even the personal accounts have to do with humiliation/pride/guilt and a toroidal relation to the Other.

I subsequently discovered in analysis that one feels guilty for having conceded a subjective position which would liberate one from the fantasy, and for allowing the Other to account for a truth that does not exist.

This is what can be reached through the analytic experience, an ethical experience of speech, beyond the fantasmatic position.

Also I was particularly aware of the emergence of Lacan on the scene, in his *Television*, when he articulates this extraordinary proposition which has served as a compass for me: “I always speak the truth. Not the whole truth, because there is no way to say it all. Saying it all is literally impossible: words fail. Yet it is through this very impossibility that the truth holds on to the real.” (Margin note by JAM: S(A/)[v]

**This introduction is formulated in multiple ways throughout his intervention, up until the one which has since been emphasised: the *well-spoken* [*le bien-dire*]**

Irrelevant English homophony for le bien-dire: (le) BNDr or B&D, “Being and Death.” How Heideggerian.

There is that which can be said and there is that which cannot be said, but can be written. There are words and there is the letter. For me, in *Television*, which is an oral intervention, Lacan emphasises that which is written.

It is a paradox which mediates the effects of speech and provides a relief from the Other, that which promotes the One rather than the Other, and

which puts into tension, in a manner of sorts, Freud and Lacan: “The greediness by which he characterizes the superego is structural, not an effect of civilization, but discontent (symptom) in civilization”.[vi] In a way, what Lacan states is that one does not need the Other in order to construct symptoms, it is the impact of language on the body, which in effect leaves the marks.

Psychoanalysis liberated meaning from the captivity of repression where power had made an alliance with religion; religious meaning being always obscurantist. But, as J.-A. Miller expresses in his presentation towards the forthcoming *Congress of the WAP on the Real*[vii], it is capitalism in its alliance with science -through the promotion of a globalisation and a relation to material goods and gadgets which has taken precedence over the social bond-, that has caused a denaturalisation of the symbolic order and of the real of nature. TV seems to convey this new watchword: everything can be said, and heard, by all, without limits, all can be shown and seen without a veil.

Lacan was opposed to this trend, which he sometimes called a delusion. Without however promoting the function of the father — which he reduced to a semblant — and without an appeal to, or nostalgia for, the old order, he posits that there is a limit. By the use of his **Gödelian** matheme,  $S(\mathbb{A})$ ,

which formulates the inconsistency and incompleteness of the Other, he affirms that it is not possible to say-it-all: it is an impossibility, an impossibility with which he invents the Real as well as the *not-all*.

And so he baptises with the name *lalangue*, in one word, the Real of language-in-itself, which contains a limit; its own impossibility.

Thus he opposes, to the *saying it all* of his epoch, a style which — due to its own complexity — acts as a stopping point of this interpretative madness, introducing a different consideration with regard to the saying [*le dire*] from where he extracts the analyst's desire and the end of analysis itself: **that of the well-spoken of analysis.**

This is the period when he gives his Seminars on logic and in particular the Seminar *Encore* where, through his formulas of sexualisation, he attempts to write that which, of the sexual relation, cannot be written[viii].

And so, in this context, one can consider the *well-spoken* as falling within the logical category of contingency, of that which ceases not to be written, while *to-say-it-all* would fall within that of the necessary, that which does not cease to be written.

The *well-spoken* of an analysis can be grasped in the form of the Lacanian truth, which Lacan will

*Analysis is, therefore, the Hamiltonian, with a "Escher formation" as its locale: the slip of the tongue or bungled explanation.*

**Hamiltonian = global**  
**Escher formation = local**

Everything said “literally” is half of what is being said as well as what can be said, i. e. what is added to what is said by the Unconscious, constituting “the Hamiltonian” (a complete inventory of the “circuit” of speech).

the labyrinth is the half-said; the labyrinth (versus the temple) is especially the half-said, in that the temple is “inscribed.”

The S1 is a kind of template, the ‘A’ Autre of the discourse, which has force but is incontinent and effective because it

What is **the slope of meaning**? the **slope of the sign**? ... is this the / of S/s? Is then the slope identical to the cut? The curve of the interior 8?

Of this break, Lacan gave the following formula: desire comes from the Other, jouissance is on the side of the Thing. Desire holds to language and calls out to the Other. The Thing is not the chatty Freudian truth, but the real to which we give meaning. Beyond his first teaching, Lacan came to this: that the first real over which the donation of meaning is practiced is jouissance. This slope of the Thing, where jouissance is inscribed, is the symptom, namely, that which remains when analysis ends in Freud’s sense. It is also what remains in Lacan’s pass, that is, after the denouement of meaning.

index precisely as being *not-all*. This signifies that not everything can be said since there is no *all* in the order of truth, there is in fact, not any truth that is all true. Like a solid element, this *varité*, which is consonant with the variety [*variété*] of truth [*vérité*], has indeed many faces.

There lies the secret of psychoanalysis: although one must deal with it, the truth can only ever be partly said, one can only but *half-say* it.

**Thus the well-said is akin to the half-said in that it functions in opposition to saying-everything [saying-it-all], and to the eruption of the drive that it triggers.**

“It is through this very impossibility that the truth holds on to the Real” [ix]

The matheme of the analytic discourse inscribes a separation between meaning [*sense*], between S1, the master signifier and S2, knowledge in the place of truth, which is reduced to non-sense [*non-sense*].

In opposing **the slope of meaning** and the slope of the sign, Lacan introduces writing and emphasises that which, of what is written, is reduced, with a single stroke of the paintbrush, to a trait. He qualifies this, at the end of his teaching, using the signifier *all-alone*, to designate a unique trait of jouissance, proper to each one, “which no longer carries any meaning” [1]0 and is the remainder which is leftover when an analysis is conducted to its end.



SIGNIFICATION OF THE PHALLUS 349 laws of language which structure the unconscious expression of desire. Rather than "if only," the French meme allows for "even in the form of effects of retreat," that is, even in deviations of technique. As before, "the two aspects" (*les deux versants*) are rendered as "slopes" down which a previous signifier slips to become the signified. A misprint omits "that it is impossible" (*italics added*). The sense is that speech presupposes the symbolic order, largely unconscious (*Other*), as the foundation of the signifying subject. [from [nosubject.com](http://nosubject.com) "The meaning of the phallus"]

Thus Lacan reduces the dimension, (the *dit-mension*, the mansion [house] of the said) [x], to that of the One: in the speaking-being's world, there is (something of the) One.

Unknotting through words that which was knotted by words, the knot of signifiers in which the symptom consists, is to reduce it to the One of the trait.

To knot and to unknot the signifying material, to act on the signifier to reduce its heterogeneous meaning which does nothing in any case but feed the cipher of meaning, is in effect to *alleviate the subject from the weight of meaning*.

If, as J.-A. Miller states, there are events of speech that have left marks on the body, symptoms, and if the incidences of language on the body of the speaking-being fall within the contingency of a statement [*un dit*], then an analysis helps to decipher the symptoms left on the body by speech. [xi] Being in analysis, becoming an analyst involves — as J.-A. Miller points out — knowing how to read a symptom. And if what is at stake is a reading, then it is so because it is first about a writing.

PUNS  
(p'uns)  
un-said.  
1 — said.  
1-d  
Bad French

The principle which is the basis of analytic discourse is situated on the side of the comic: it is that there is no sexual relation. By contrast the basis of psychotherapy is common-sense, which is disseminated to make the sexual relation exist; this

Despair is considered a sin in the Catholic Church because it is seen as a rejection of God's help and love. Despair is defined as a loss of hope and a belief that things will never get better. The Church teaches that faith in God and trust in his divine plan is essential for a fulfilling life. To despair is to turn away from God, to believe that his love and grace are insufficient, and to give up on life and its possibilities. This rejection of God's love and provision is considered a sin, as it goes against the principles of the Catholic faith.

The belief that despair is a sin in the Catholic Church is rooted in several biblical passages.

One of the main biblical sources is the Book of Job, in which Job's friends falsely accuse him of sinning and causing his suffering. Job responds by affirming his faith in God and rejecting despair, saying, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15).

Another source is the letter of St. Paul to the Romans, in which he says, "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). This passage emphasizes the idea that God is always present and working for the good of those who trust in him, and that it is a sin to give up hope and despair.

In the New Testament, Jesus himself teaches that faith and hope in God are essential, saying, "Do not be afraid, only believe" (Mark 5:36). He also instructs his disciples to have faith and not to be discouraged, even in the face of difficulty (Matthew 17:20, 21:21).

These and other biblical passages demonstrate the importance of faith and hope in God, and show that despair is considered a sin because it is a rejection of God's love and provision.

Lacan describes as suggestion, denouncing it as leading us to the worst [*au pire*], the tragic, that which fascinates us, that which may well be, precisely, the *to-say-it-all*. This is meaning, which we enjoy [*jouir*] and from which symptoms are born.

The future of psychoanalysis and its progression, as indexed by the principle of "the Pass", consists thus in opening that which had been closed and locked within the analytic field, to all those who can testify with regard to their particular analytic path and of its logical end.

"The more Saints, the more laughter"  
[xii]: this is the way out of capitalist discourse.

Thus, defining analytic discourse "as a social bond determined by the practice of an analysis", which derives its value from being placed at the level of the most fundamental among the bonds between speaking-beings[xiii], leads us on the path of an ethics of the Well-spoken which is not at all the same as the Aristotelian ethics of the Good.

"[...] we qualify sadness as depression [...] but it isn't a state of the soul it is **simply a moral failing**, as Dante and even Spinoza said: a sin, which means a moral weakness, which is, ultimately, located only in relation to thought, that is, in the duty to be well-spoken, to find ones way in dealing with the

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5145885/> Stijn Vanheule on laughter and capitalism. "The more saints, the more laughter; that's my principle, to wit, the way out of capitalist discourse—which will not constitute progress, if it happens only for some."

Jacques Lacan, "Being a Saint." *Television*, by Jacques Lacan and Joan Copjec, Norton, 1990, 13–17.

Could we consider that the humiliated subject is not just the subject of the Master's Discourse but the melancholic, who some analysts consider to be psychotic (i.e. without a paternal signifier)?

This would relate to the way that the origin of the "pseudo-aggression" of the humiliated subject Bergler defines as the narcissist who fantasizes about being insulted is indulging in the autoeroticism of the pre-subject and, indeed, going back to the pre-mirror stage, where the young child is without an unconscious (an Other, A) and, hence, "psychotic"?

We can click back and forth between the "psychotic" pre-subject and the neurotic subject who begins his/her generic neurosis at the point of the cut of the mirror.

BECAUSE WE MISRECOGNIZE OUR MIRROR IMAGE (we use fantasy to imagine that it's what others see), we stray from the *cathectus line* to acknowledge the Other, hence the "moral" aspect of the mirror stage, and it is this Other we imagine answering to at the end of the trials "between the two deaths." Despair is the opposite of the laughter required to be well-spoken — the relation of language to the JOKE, the joke *structure*, which is the same as the structure of parapraxis (metaphor).

S/S'•S'/x leads to the unary trait over the punch-line laughter (1/s").

We are held in place (fascination) by our mirror image because of being pinned down by the Autre, who grounds our fantasy that this image is what others see. The fact that it isn't is the residue or product of this mistake (*a* the little other). Thus cathectus is the phenomenon of alignment with our mirror image (which blocks the vanishing point of our local perspective), which PARALYZES us with the fantasy that this is what others see, our public face. This FACE is the basis of our pride and thus vulnerability to humiliation (Bergler). This is also the structure of the joke, where suppression is this paralysis, and the joke is the metonymical signifying chain, S'...S', which holds us in place by the 'x' until we get the punch line and laugh (1/s"). Laughter at one joke is laughter at all jokes. The joke is a unary trait. Comedy is the unary trait made into an institution.

unconscious" [xiv]: one is guilty of ill-saying [*mal dire*].

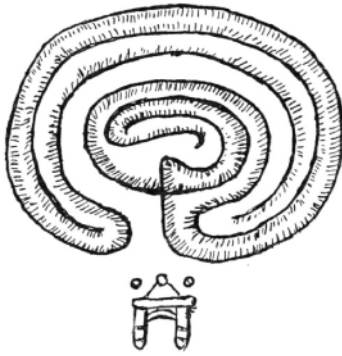
It is from this duty to find one's way in dealing with the unconscious that the analyst is authorised in his position as analyst. "***There is no ethic beside that of the Well-spoken...***"

(Margin note by Jacques-Alain Miller[xv]).

"In contrast with sadness there is the Gay Science [*gay sçavoir*], which is a virtue [...]: not understanding, not a diving at the meaning, but a flying over it as low as possible without the meaning gumming up this virtue, thus enjoying [*jouir*] the deciphering [...]" [xvi]

The Lacanian virtue is thus not to know everything or to understand everything (Lacan himself cautions the analyst in this regard), but to **enjoy the deciphering**. What he equates to the Gay Science is that which J.-A. Miller notes in the margin: "no knowledge besides that of non-sense"... It is the knowledge of the enigma, the hieroglyph, the rebus, the coded message, of that which gives one a break from too much meaning...

Boredom, moroseness, bad mood, these then are affects which arise from **too much meaning and from not saying-well**. They are discordant. Lacan refers to them with the expression "a *touch of the real*", to say that *it does not deceive*;



Indian Labyrinth Figure from Eighteenth-century Spanish Manuscript. (After Cotton). W. H. Matthews, *Mazes and Labyrinths*, 1922. Project Gutenberg, 2014, Public Domain.

these affects have a ring of truth to them which concerns the subject's relation to speech and language.

So what to do? This is the question that J.-A. Miller poses. "To draw the ethics of the well-spoken" from analytic practice, this is the affair proper to the analytic discourse.

This is our affair.

[1]: *Laure Naveau*

[2]: Translator's note in English

*La langue, lalangue* and *langage* are all really only translatable into the English using the signifier 'language'. I translate *la langue* as language (in the common English usage of the word) and leave *lalangue* untranslated.

[3]: Jacques-Alain Miller

[4]: Translator's note in English

The expression here in the French does not translate readily into the English as it contains a homophony and play on words around *dit-mansion* and *dit-mansion* [dimension, **said-mansion**].



Otto van Veen (c.1556 – 6 May 1629) in his *Amoris divini emblemata* (1615). *Mons Delectus*, or "mountain of choices," combining labyrinth and temple in a single building that, like the Tower of Babel, cuts through the liquid layer of clouds. In the hero's (perverse) parallax, architecture relocates the external boundary to an inner division that is simultaneously moral and anagogic, hence the temple and labyrinth are the "essential contronym" of the second parallax.

### THE ILLUSTRATIONS

show that architecture's HAMILTONIAN is the monstrous dyad, the TEMPLE/LABYRINTH, which can never be inventoried "at one go," but, just as the invisible parts of the visible scene require temporality and motion, architecture is: "that which is by its nature a *mi-dire*, an Escher construct (dyad) that, by being half-said, is "well-said."

**LABYRINTH = succession; TEMPLE = simultaneity.**

## THE JOKE = FORM OF METAPHOR

the (METONYMICAL) story of the “hairy dog”

the joke as proposition, in the position as the metaphor:

$$\frac{S}{S'} \bullet \frac{S' \dots S'}{X}$$

suppression: paralysis of the joke's “victim listener”

the idea of unity of the joke: the structure that demands us to wait for the punch line; the ‘x’ is the universal position, the Hamiltonian, of the particular Escher formations of metonymies localizing the joke.

S(1/s”) is the delivery of the punch line

$$\frac{1}{S''}$$

the unary trait: all jokes, in laughter, are the same joke.

laughter as universalizing; there is “nothing left to be said”

The joke is the Hamiltonian combination of the proposition of the joke (“Did you hear the one about the priest, rabbi, and minister who walked into the bar ... ?”) and the delivery of the punch line. The first (left side of the metaphor formula) *localizes* the joke, the right side *universalizes* it, with the result of (convulsive) laughter, the *passage à l'acte*. Hence, the torus! *Soti* is the acrobat/fool who leaps from one side to the other.

<http://qoqqoon.com/trashitas/#fn1>