

THE LABYRINTHS OF LOVE

by Jacques-Alain Miller

Love in psychoanalysis is called transference.

The very concept of love, what makes it problematic in psychoanalysis, is dominated by the concept and problematic of transference, and it does this in such a way that love seems to be nothing but a displacement, a mistake. I love someone because I love someone else. That is why love in analysis is stamped with a certain inauthenticity. It can even seem that psychoanalysis devalues love, that it effects a degradation of love life. Being in love is to lose oneself in a labyrinth. Love is labyrinthine. In the paths of love one does not find one's way, one does not find oneself.

Nevertheless, psychoanalysis takes the path of love. There is no analysis without transference. Take the technical advice given by post-Freudian analysts that the analyst withholds interpretation until the establishment of transference.

The very practice of the analyst legitimises and exploits the automatic character of love. Transference love regularly emerges in the psychoanalytic situation. The new element that psychoanalysis brings to the problematic of love is precisely this notion of the automatic character of love. To be loved it is enough to be an analyst.

In love there is an element of contingency. Love depends on chance encounters. There is a *tyche* in love, to use Aristotle's term, a 'chance encounter'. But psychoanalysis legitimises a necessary element in love which is the opposite of chance: the automaton of love. The great discoveries of psychoanalysis in regard to love are of this order. Analysis allows a subject to frame what made him fall in love or what made him desire. Freud called it the 'condition of love'. (*Liebes Bedingung*).

Freud's studies on the psychology of love centre on the particular determination, almost akin to a mathematical formula, of the condition of love in certain subjects. For example, a man, might only be able to desire someone else's wife. This requirement can take different forms: such as only being able to desire a faithfully married woman or, again, only an unfaithful woman with a tendency to form a liaison with 'all x' who are men. Hence the effects of jealousy from which the subject suffers but which analysis reveals as part of the very charm of the woman, as determined by the unconscious status of her charm.

Liebe is a term which covers both love and desire, although one sees on occasion the conditions of love and those of desire separating. Thus, Freud isolates a type of man who cannot love where he desires and who cannot desire where he loves. Under the same rubric of conditions for love there is room for the analysis of love at first sight in an instant a subject encounters his condition for love as if suddenly contingency joined up with necessity. If Werther fell madly in love with Charlotte, it was because he saw her in the moment she was feeding a constellation of small children and fulfilling the role of feeding mother. Here, a contingent encounter realises the necessary conditions for the subject's falling in love.

The Syllogism of Love

I shall propose to you a general formula for the automaton of love in the form of a syllogism. It will be the syllogism of love in psychoanalysis.

We start from the Freudian hypothesis that for a subject there is a fundamental loveable object, that love is transference, that every ulterior object of love is a displacement from the fundamental object. We write a for the fundamental loveable object. Its quality of being loveable is designated by the predicate A . Aa means that the object a has the property of being loveable. If the subject encounters an object x which resembles a , that is ($x = a$), then the object x is considered as loveable, Ax .

What does psychoanalytic elaboration bear on? It bears on the resemblance between the object a and any object x , or on the significant traits of the resemblance. This does not stop at the notion that a gentleman might fall in love with a woman whose face resembled that of his mother. But a first level of elaboration underlines the imaginary traits of the resemblance. These sensible traits can go from a general resemblance to an extremely localised one, from objective traits to those which are only visible to the subject himself.

There is another kind of trait which belongs to the symbolic order of resemblances founded directly on language. For example, there is an entire register of the psychoanalytical onomastic where one validates in the choice of object the value of the name. There is a more complex order of reference that Freud raises in his article 'On Fetishism' in which an error in translation between German and English, between *glanz* and glance, sets in motion for the subject a signifying play on an essential trait that he is seeking to refind in his objects of love, the 'shine on the nose'. No doubt it makes love a little ridiculous.

I will raise a third order of resemblance which is, if you will, more abstract: it concerns the relation of the love object with something else. It can happen that the subject falls in love with an object x on condition that he has the same relation with it that he has with the fundamental object, or, another possibility, if the object x has the same relation, with him.

Freud discovered that a is either the ego itself or it belongs to the set that we can call the family: father, mother, brothers, sisters, extending to ancestors, to collaterals, to all those who enter into the sphere of the family. An enormous part of analytic interpretation on the facts of love consists in bringing to light different identities of a . It reveals, for example, a subject in love with an object x on condition that it resembles him: narcissistic object-choice. Or, the subject falls in love with an x which has to him the same relation that his mother or his father or some member of the family had to him. In the theory of masculine, homosexual, object-choice, for example, one validates in the object a resemblance with the subject's own image, but also the fact that the object has with the subject the same relation that the subject had with his mother.

Different formulas are in play in analytic literature. They inform the daily practice of deciphering underlying images, symbolic articulations, logical relations, which dominate the subject's love. These have a number of consequences which affect the very definition of love.

Firstly, love is metonymic. There is a connection between the fundamental object and the object x , the object x borrowing certain traits from the fundamental object.

Secondly, love is a repetition; hence the essential place of the latency period, a cut which separates the primordial love from the repeated love.

Thirdly, love translates a psychic inertia: In new forms, in the 'surprise of love', as Marivaux said, love bears witness to the fact that the subject is stuck in a choice which is always the same, translating a constant in the way the subject constitutes the subject he has invested.

Up to this point, nothing prevents us from referring the dimensions of love to the imaginary formula $a - a'$ which is an abbreviation of the Lacanian mirror-stage. There is symmetry, equivalence and metonymy of the two terms.

Dissymmetry

Another heading in the theory of love validates dissymmetry in the facts of love.

To broach the question by means of a short-cut, let us distinguish between loving and being loved. Let's study what 'I love' means, namely, the relation xRy , dissymmetric relation which is a translation of x loves y . The first value that one can give to 'I love' is 'I lack'. I mark the beloved with the sign (+), the lover with the sign (-). In fact, it introduces castration into the theory of love.

The psychoanalytic theory of love is on one hand about the automaton of love, secondly, it implicates castration in love. Castration is on the side of the lover and correlatively the phallus is on the side of the beloved.

Let us write the lover with an A and the signification of the phallus as $-\phi$. He who loves is castrated. That is why native wisdom reserves love for women.

A relation in which neither partner would lack is not at all unthinkable. It is realised in masculine homosexuality. Homosexuality is constituted in quite a different way in the case of women than it is in the case of men. In the case of woman, it is constituted in the register of love; in the case of the man in the register of desire, and is completely separated from love.

Why distinguish love and desire here, which are confused in *Liebe*? Because there is the following paradox: to love the other constitutes the other as phallus, but wanting to be loved by the other, that is, wanting the beloved to be the lover, castrates the other.

Lacan analysed the woman's love life in the following way: she constitutes a man as phallus whilst castrating him secretly. He believed he could indicate that in the case of the man these two functions are separated or have a tendency to be separate: on the one hand, the woman who is loved, on the other, the woman who is desired in that she creates an effect of phallic signification.

Freud brought a supplementary element when, in his book Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, he described the pure state of love placing the accent on the submission of the subject who loves to the one he loves. The plus is not the phallus, but what he calls the ego ideal which is found again in the forms of S_1 , the master-signifier of Lacan.

In the relation of the lover to the beloved the essential question is to get the lack in the loved one to emerge. It's the very formula of hysteria. What supports the

operation? Quite simply, the demand for love. The demand for love in so far as the demand to be loved is the demand that the Other reveal its lack.

Implicating castration in the theory of love gives birth to diverse dissymmetric constructions like the Freudian distinction between narcissistic love and anaclitic love. Narcissistic love is about love of the same whilst anaclitic love is about love of the Other. If narcissistic love is placed on the imaginary axis, anaclitic love is placed on the symbolic axis where the affair of castration is played out.

In this way, the difference between love and drive is clarified. Why did Freud invent the term drive? Because there is with the subject a type of demand which has nothing to do with the demand for love. It is a demand which does not speak, which is no less persistent, a demand which does not target the Other, which does not target the lack in the Other, which has on the contrary, the requirement of a presence as an absolute condition.

One has an example in the perversion of fetishism. It is not a question of knowing whether the woman lacks, consents to lack, with a high-heeled shoe. There is no reason to think that it creates a lack for her. The presence of the object is a requirement of the subject so that he may *jouir*. This subject couldn't care less for the reticence of his object.

What makes the labyrinth is the implication of three levels. The object must have the signification of the phallus in so far as to love is to desire. It must also have the value of A in so far as to love is a demand to be loved. It must also have the value *a* in so far as to love is to want to *jouir*. The object has to be situated at the same time in desire, in demand and in the drive. The labyrinths of love life are facts about the articulation of these three levels, sometimes united, sometimes separated, here permanent, there transitory, sometimes pure, sometimes mixed. This is how one obtains the infinite variety which is encountered in love life.

Translated by Marie-Laure Davenport.

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