

# The For-All: Grappling With the Real of the Group

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**Abstract:** In this essay I propose to explore the status of the not-all in politics and psychoanalysis by analyzing and bringing into question the seemingly self-evident relationship of the mutual exclusion between politics and psychoanalysis. I would argue that in order to expose an affinity in dealing with the not-all in politics and psychoanalysis, it is necessary to move beyond the traditionally hostile polarities of the singular and the universal and to reverse the usual perspective according to which there is no passage between the domain of the singular and the domain of the universal. I then move on to considering the relationship between psychoanalysis and politics from the point of view of the collectivity for-all constituted through a complex practice of disidentification and the production of the ‘whatever’ singularities.

**Keywords:** Freud, Lacan, psychoanalysis, politics, not-all, for-all

All politics seeks to deal with a real, an impossibility proper to politics, upon which it cannot but stumble, namely that of the collective. Modern politics, since at least the French Revolution, has sought to treat this real, i.e. the impossibility of the social bond that would hold together speaking beings that have nothing in common, under the guise of collectivity which would be for all. And yet from what we might consider to constitute the common ground of modern politics, a radical distinction can be established between two figures of the for-all. There are, indeed, two ways of thinking the for-all, two ways of constituting it. First, it can be theorized or produced with a view to the One. This would, at base, be a “normal” or a “typical” for-all, one grounded on a process of identifying or assuming a common trait: for there to be a group, it is necessary that its members are hooked up to the same identificatory trait.<sup>1</sup> This is a paradoxical “for-all” since the condition for its very constitution requires the exclusion of the exception, of some heterogeneity, that is presumed to lacking the common trait. But to this figure of the closed, consistent for-all, in which for-all means to be reduced to the One, we may oppose another: that of an open, non-totalizable, a not-all for-all, a for-all that emerges when the multitude of speaking-beings is considered from the point of view of that which is non-identifiable in them.

How, then, ought we to grasp this inherent split, this constitutive division of the field of politics? It is not enough to declare that the first approach—that of the politics of identification—using of all the imaginary

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, what is collective in this regard is the relation to the exception. We find the very matrix of this problem in Freud’s famous essay on group psychology. For Freud, a community of equals is “a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego.” In other words, the tie binding each isolated individual to the leader generates the ties binding the individuals in the group to each other. They identify with one another through an equally shared love for a single object. Freud 1924, p. 80.

and symbolic apparatuses—covers up the real of the group, since in the place of the latter it summons up an “all the same.” For what is at stake is not just a question of denouncing a false for-all. What is at stake, rather, is the staging of a for-all that comes into being through a process that goes against the grain of identification, a for-all that is constituted through a practice of disidentifications. The thorny question that needs to be grappled with consists in ascertaining what is entailed by such a politics—by a politics which is neither organized around a resemblance nor a differentiating trait, but which is nevertheless capable of producing a for-all.

Our guide here will be one of Lacan’s rather enigmatic remarks. As he put it, “desire, boredom, confinement, revolt, prayer, wakefulness [...], and panic are evidence of the dimension of this Elsewhere [...] as permanent principles of collective organizations, without which it does not seem human life can maintain itself for long.”<sup>2</sup> Now, if it is true that each of these affects that Lacan adduces as evidence of the glue that keeps the for-all together only ever appear in the moment of their disintegration, the moment of the disaggregation of the collective in which the latter—retroactively, to be sure—appears as impossible, then the politics of disidentification can, as a consequence, only ever find its place in a deficiency; in a dis-completion of the for-all such as it is produced by the politics of identification. A politics of disidentification would, moreover, designate this deficiency or dis-completion as the place of the very real from which it receives its condition.

All politics, however, and especially the politics of disidentification—there are, incidentally, plenty of other names we could use for this irruption, this fracture introduced into a series of various modalities for sharing and managing of goods and social relations: politics of the real, of pure singularity, of emancipation, etc.—is only ever worth its name to the degree that the for-all it strives for can be put to work in a workable, realistic manner. If the latter is only put forward as a utopian proposition, such politics will be immediately disqualified as being, to use Lacan’s term, nothing but a “narcissism of the lost cause.”

Realism constitutes furthermore the perspective from which we can think through the relationship between psychoanalysis and politics because such a perspective will allow us to rethink the intertwining of the categories of politics and those of psychoanalysis, an intertwining that ultimately allows them to define the for-all as an instance of the real in the order of the not-all. We may of course wonder about the justification, or the consequences, involved in transposing the for-all in the order of the real; and it is indeed for this reason that I will begin by evoking some of the difficulties encountered once psychoanalysis and politics attempt to think the for-all with a view to the not-all. Hence, in order to follow the

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<sup>2</sup> Lacan 2006a, pp. 457-458.

logic of the not-all, I will take the following three guiding threads through the question of the status of the group: that of the paradoxes of the not-all; that of the real; and, finally, that of transmission.

### **The Polar Bear and the Whale: Bringing about an Encounter**<sup>3</sup>

Let us start by simply asking the following question: how are psychoanalysis and politics different and how, or to what degree, despite these differences, are they comparable? According to the received idea, there seems to be no common ground permitting their encounter. In this view, psychoanalysis is presumed to be defending the rights of the singular, of that precisely which resists the universal. Indeed, psychoanalysis is by definition the domain of the “not for all”. As such, psychoanalysis cannot, without losing its competence, force the boundaries of confidentiality imposed by its practice to wander into a domain in which, on the contrary, something is valid only insofar as it applies to all. From this view, psychoanalysis has no competence in the domain destined “for all”. Politics, by contrast, designed as the order of the collective, deals with the masses, with the multiple. In so far as politics is preoccupied with the question of that which is valid for all, can only turn a blind eye to the singular: the proper object of psychoanalysis. For politics, in which there seems to be no place for the singular, it would be an illegitimate step to make the opposite move: from the “for all” to that of the “only for one”. Indeed, if we follow the received idea, what makes their encounter impossible is a double interdiction of the passage from the register of the singular to that of the multiple. Whence the question: Under what conditions is it justifiable to bring together politics and psychoanalysis? How, on what basis, are we to establish a link between the field of the for-all and that of the singular—between these two fields that, at first glance, appear as mutually exclusive of one another.

Although it may seem that all attempts at bringing together psychoanalysis and politics would be vain, indeed ought to be abandoned, we are unavoidably led back to this very question precisely because the rejection, if not indeed the exclusion, of the perspective of the collective is a postulate nowhere to be found in either Freud or Lacan. Quite to the contrary, in the very first sentence of “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego,” Freud will call into question the opposition between individual and social psychology. He founds his entire theoretical approach on the observation that: “someone else is invariably involved as a model, as an object, as a helper, as an opponent.”<sup>4</sup> “Individual Psychology,” he notes further, “is at the same time Social Psychology

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<sup>3</sup> “The whale and the polar bear, it has been said, cannot wage war on each other, for since each is confined to his own element they cannot meet...” Freud, 1932-1936, p. 410.

<sup>4</sup> Freud 1924, p. 2.

as well.”<sup>5</sup> As for Lacan, he would conclude that “the collective is nothing but the subject of the individual,”<sup>6</sup> not only because the individual could not exist without the collective, but also because the subject is itself “transindividual.” As he underscores, it is impossible to extricate the individual from the enmeshment of social relations—that is to say, from the Other—in which its formation and emergence is inscribed.

And this passage from the One to the Multiple that is opened up by psychoanalysis could help us go around the received idea we started out from and examine under what circumstances the relation between these two domains, that of the “for all” and that of the “irreducible singularity”, can be established. To do so we propose to consider—from an inverted perspective—whether or not, and up to what point, the effect of instantiating a for-all in the field of politics isn’t to ratify that which, at first glance, seems to preclude the question of universality: namely, pure singularities, or whatever singularities.<sup>7</sup> Conversely, it will be in the way that psychoanalysis treats that which can only be said to one alone, that we will need to locate the possibility of a transmission to all.

Our guide in this pivoting of perspective, will be Lacan. We will refer, more specifically, to his *Television*, in which he presents the task of psychoanalysis in a universe governed by the capitalist discourse. For indeed as Lacan argues, a way out of capitalism is an end peculiar to psychoanalysis: “The more saints, the more laughter; that’s my principle;” adding further, “to wit, the way out of capitalist discourse, which will not constitute progress, if it happens only for some.”<sup>8</sup> However, it is important to consider how psychoanalysis can emerge as a way out of the capitalist discourse. It is true that Lacan harboured some ambitions concerning the “duty incumbent upon [psychoanalysis] in our world.”<sup>9</sup> Still, the question is how psychoanalysis can constitute a way out of this discourse which, constantly being pushed further by the imperatives of growth and profitability, neither recognizes any limit, nor admits any territory that might escape its ever-expanding sway. What kind of solution, then, can psychoanalysis offer ?

At first glance, it might appear that the solution put forth by Lacan is valid only for psychoanalysis—that it is restricted, in sum, to the

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5 Ibid.

6 Lacan 2006b, p. 175.

7 The author borrows this term from Giorgio Agamben, for whom “[t]he *Whatever* in question here relates to singularity not in its indifference with respect to a common property [...], but only in its being such as it is,” in Agamben 1991, p. 1. That is to say, a singularity can be termed whatever in so far as the term “whatever singularity” implies all of its predicates, but such that no single one of them constitutes its difference.

8 Lacan 1990a, p. 16.

9 Lacan, 1990b, p. 97.

enclosures of the analyst’s office. This would simply be another way of saying that, in an era in which we are overwhelmed by the effects of the “extensive, and therefore insatiable, production of lack-of-enjoyment”—a production characterized by its “incapacity to procure an enjoyment that could allow it to slow down”—<sup>10</sup> it is incumbent upon psychoanalysis, and upon psychoanalysis alone, to occupy the position of a protective enclave in which the subject can be allowed to safely preserve its singularity. And this from within the confines of the very capitalism whose unrelenting powers of negation are so manifestly and calamitously played out everywhere on scales at once individual and collective. Such would be an elitist interpretation of the psychoanalytic solution,<sup>11</sup> one that seeks to situate psychoanalysis on the side of a defensive segregation along the lines of Lacan’s warning that “our future of common markets will balance itself out in an increasingly brutal extension of processes of segregation.”<sup>12</sup>

Of course, there has always been an aspect of psychoanalysis that entailed the creation of a refuge, a shelter—a protective dimension that has been indispensable not just for its practice, but for its theoretical elaboration as well. And yet, the specific phrase Lacan uses—namely that the way out of capitalism “will not constitute progress if it happens only for some”—ought to make us wary of this so-called elitist, not to say the “segregative” interpretation. The emphasis placed on the negation of the particular seems to me, rather, to introduce the possibility of a “democratic” reading; and this in the form of an “all analysts,” or at the very least, in the guise of an appeal to those seeking a cure to contemporary civilization’s discontents to go through the trial of the psychoanalytic experience. In other words, for Lacan, if this way out is really going to prove to be the way out of capitalism, it cannot be reserved for the happy few, for a “club of the (s)elect,” to borrow Éric Laurent’s turn of phrase: that is for “a sort of elite that, having undergone the experience of analysis, would be able to gaze upon the accumulated wreckage of capitalism and cynically laugh it all off.”<sup>13</sup>

If we take as our point of departure this caveat against any interpretation of the way out in terms of an initiatory ritual, can we conclude that the way out that Lacan evokes is—while remaining the way

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10 Lacan 2001a, p. 435.

11 And a certain form of elitism is not entirely foreign to psychoanalysis, as Freud’s example itself attests. When, for instance, it is a question of describing the position of the analysis in his *Introductory Lectures On Psychoanalysis*, Freud claims that “anyone who has succeeded in educating himself to truth about himself is permanently defended against the danger of immorality, even though his standard of morality may differ in some respect from that which is customary in society.” Freud, 1932-1936, p. 410.

12 Lacan 2001b, p. 257.

13 Laurent 1997, p. 111.

out accommodated to the not-all, that is to say, a way out that is enacted on a one by one basis—immediately universalizable, intended for all? That it is *for all*? And if, furthermore, it is the case that psychoanalysis, as Lacan seems to suggest, strives for an opening onto the for all; if, in other words, psychoanalysis allows for a breaking-out, a forcing of the confines of the private or the confidential, what is the scope of this break? What is its political impact?

We have every reason to linger over this question because it holds out the possibility of a passage from the singularity of subjective experience to a certain form of universalization. Such a passage, of course, is not explicitly thematized by Lacan. And yet, while starting from the postulate that the psychoanalytic experience is irremediably foreign to any attempt at universalization, the above-mentioned formula nevertheless holds out the promise of an opening-out onto universalization, thus providing a solution, a way out of the fragmentation, if not the collapse, of the category of the universal that we witness today. What's more, Lacan himself seem to anticipate this opening. In the care with which he underscores the effects of civilization's discontents on contemporary subjectivity he universalizes, as it were, the solution of psychoanalysis—psychoanalysis as solution—by bringing into its purview the political question of the exit from capitalism. In this regard, the great value of Lacan's formula is to provide a kind of short-cut, an abbreviated form of what we are attempting to unpack here: namely, a knotting of the singular and the for-all in the order of the not-all.

It bears pointing out that, in thinking through the two figures of the universal—the all and the not-all—, Lacan never situates the term “for all” on the side of the not-all. Quite to the contrary, he tends to deploy the term “for all” as a synonym of the All, of the closed set constituted through the exclusion of an exception, whereas, for Lacan, the not-all signals the limitless and the inconsistent in which it is hopelessly impossible to construct an All without also generating antinomies and inequalities. It is therefore imperative to show how the for-all—such as we are striving to elaborate here—is nevertheless located at the very core of Lacan's thought on the universal. This for-all, however, is something yet to be constructed, yet to be invented in order to be made compatible with the Lacanian notion of the not-all, which in turn implies opening up the category of the not-all so as to accommodate the for-all. Everything turns here around the meaning we attribute to the statement: “it [does not happen] only for some.” For at stake in this question is knowing whether “not only for some” excludes or not “for all”. It should be noted, however, that I take that statement as indicating “some, without excluding all,” which doubtless constitutes something of a deviation from the more canonically Lacanian reading of it as “some but not all”. My claim is that the expression “not only for some” points in the direction of the “for all”. To be sure, this is a very peculiar “for all” since, in the not-all, that is, in

an infinite universe in which this “for-all” is situated, it is impossible to state the universality of the predicate.

In order to justify the linkage of the for-all and the not-all that I am positing it suffices to tease out the double paradox at the heart of Lacan's proposed solution. On the one hand, such a solution is a paradoxical one since we are dealing here with an interior way out, as it were, a paradoxical way out which implies no transgression, no forcing of a barrier, since there is no barrier separating the outside and the inside.<sup>14</sup> This is because psychoanalysis, according to Lacan, is confronted with a paradoxical task: to find a way out of a discourse which is considered to be limitless, “eternal”, a discourse which precisely knows of no way out. It could, then, be said that, for Lacan, only psychoanalysis is capable to invent, to force even, in the situation of an impasse, a radically new solution: that of an immanent way out. On the other hand, this solution aims at a for-all to be constituted from irreducibly singular experience, in an experience which, quite like the ritual of initiation, demands a certain conditioning on the part of the subject and is thus, precisely, *not* for all.

The crucial question here is of course that of knowing how, from *within* the not-all, a void is hollowed out, an empty space that can only be occupied by summoning all. From there, it is a question of examining the way in which the properly psychoanalytic practice that proceeds on the basis of a “one by one”, relates to the way-out which is available to all, encompassing, ultimately, all of humanity. And this latter question is an eminently political one. One could of course examine the politics of psychoanalysis by limiting this interrogation to the issues of the psychoanalytic institutions and organizations, I believe, for my part, that a more fruitful approach might consist in interrogating the political dimension of psychoanalysis itself, such as can be derived from its practice proceeding on the one-by-one basis, with the ultimate goal of re-examining from the perspective of psychoanalysis, the question of politics as such.

What can psychoanalysis teach us about politics proper? In what way can Lacan's teaching on his School—its deadlocks and failures, its dissolution and reconstruction—serve as a point of reference for our inquiries into political collectives and, more broadly, into the knot binding politics to psychoanalysis?

#### “The unconscious is politics”<sup>15</sup>

The merit of the Lacanian assumption that the “unconscious is politics” consists in signifying that the relation to the unconscious is constitutive of the social link precisely to the extent that it generates, at the same

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<sup>14</sup>To my mind, this is how we must read Badiou's claim that “only what is in immanent exception is universal”, Badiou 2003, p.111.

<sup>15</sup> Lacan 1966-1967, the lesson of 10 May 1967.



time, the latter's deadlock. It should be noted, however, that, for Freud, the relationship between psychoanalysis and politics is to be located in the passage from analysis of the subject to that of the collective, and it takes identification as the operator of this passage from the one to the collective. The Freudian approach thus revealed the pivotal role of castration and of the exception in the emergence of the collective (and not just any collective: what is at stake here is the production of the collective "for all"). Equality designates, in this case, a form of collectivity in which renunciation of jouissance is the universal law: not a single one escapes it! With the exception, of course, of the obscene enjoying Father who says no to castration. This for-all, which Freud elaborates through the myth of the primal father snatching all jouissance through the exclusive possession of all of the women, is thus predicated upon the paradoxical conjecture that the order of the for-all is only ever valid for those who consider jouissance to be a property and fear its loss. Whence the question of ascertaining whether or not those who have nothing to lose can be part of the for-all. In a word, Freud is already working both with identification as that which aims towards the group's unification and with the real that divides the group from within, pointing thus towards the not-all.

Whereas in "Group Psychology" Freud began by introducing the question of the collective as a problem of identification, he eventually tackles the question of the collective from the perspective of that which resists identification—a remainder of the real that does not find its place in the symbolic and which, for that very reason, constitutes the mainspring of rebellion.<sup>16</sup> And it is particularly remarkable—though we have to wait for Lacan to work out certain implications at the level of structure—that for Freud it is women who embody this node of the real resisting identification; a resisting remnant that prevents us from spelling out the All at the level of mankind.

To continue further in this vein, if every manifestation of such a residue manages to detotalize or rupture the unity of the All, it would be possible to consider the people, the proletariat, clandestine immigrants, refugees, and, why not?, women as so many figures of those who "have nothing to lose" whose very presence introduces cleavages in the order of the distribution of goods and social roles. And, as Jacques Rancière has so persuasively shown, the act of speaking out (*la prise de parole*) by those who have no place in a given social and symbolic order can bring about not only a collapse of that order but also the emergence of a non-segregative for-all, a peculiar not-all for-all.

Thus already Freud, although implicitly, managed to distinguish between two logics of the universal: on the one hand, there is a logic of

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 16 Need we remind the reader that when Jean-François Lyotard conceptualizes resistance in terms of a real, the intractable, as he calls it, resisting the established social-symbolic order, he is simply following this path first cut by Freud?

the All that is segregative to the extent that its very constitution follows from the exception or exclusion of all those who do not share the required property or attribute. On the other hand, there is the logic of the not-all which is non-segregative by dint of the very impossibility to ascertain the existence of any exception whatsoever. Yet this not-all whose emergence is so subtly heralded, like a muffled clamor still located far off in the distance, in the *Massenpsychologie*, brutally erupts in *Civilization and its Discontents*. One might say that the emergence of the not-all alerts Freud to the impasses of the for-all at the level of humanity taken as a whole. Indeed, picking back up a thread of analysis pursued in the "Group Psychology" essay, he attempts to demonstrate implicitly in *Civilization and its Discontents* that humanity is not something that can be defined according to a positive trait attributed to man, but rather only according to a rejection; by an exclusion dissimulated in the guise of a supposed knowledge: "a man knows what is not a man."<sup>17</sup> It is for this reason that Lacan denounces barbarism of all human assimilation refers in his essay on "Logical Time..." to "human assimilation [...] as assimilative of barbarism"<sup>18</sup>—that is to say, as the lurid manifestation of the Other's persecution.

That's one way of rendering Freud's claim that when it comes to his fellow man, and no less with his fellow woman, man maintains the same relationship of hatred that he has with himself. That, in other words, lacking a positive attribute or trait which would definitively pin down man's humanity, the human collective remains a not-all, open-ended. Whence a sentiment of malaise, as well as, inevitably, the temptation of dealing with this discontent in one of two ways: either through the persecution of one's fellow-man;<sup>19</sup> or through the assimilation of barbarity, by following the precept of loving one's neighbor as oneself. Still, the paradoxical effect of this drive to encompass all the possible figures of the Other within humanity, even those of the enemy or the "savage," is that of a detotalization, a *not-alling (pas-toutisation)*, of humanity. Thus humanity, to follow Freud, emerges as a figure of the inconsistent not-all. Not-all to the degree that there is no outside or exception in reference to which humanity could be totalized, designated as an "All". This point of exception from which an All, a totality, could be asserted is, precisely,

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 17 It is because I am deprived of knowing exactly which qualities a human being is supposed to possess, while attributing, at the same time, this knowledge to others, that I hasten to confirm my belonging to humankind, to affirm that I am "a man for fear of being convinced by men that I am not a man." Lacan 2006b, p. 174.

18 Ibid.

19 It bears pointing up that, as early as *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud highlighted the constitutive role played in collective identification by the relation to the enemy, to the neighbor, in a word, to the Other: "it is unmistakable," he claims, "that in this whole connection men give evidence of a readiness for hatred, an aggressiveness, the source of which is unknown, and to which one is tempted to ascribe an elementary character." Freud, 1924, p. 56.

impossible where humanity is concerned. No member of humanity, at this level, can recognize in any single other, man or woman, an exception that would constitute the latter as a totality.

And yet, the exception is not purely and simply denied. It would be better to say that, at the level of the whole of humanity, the exception makes a hole. For, precisely because we are never sure of dealing with an “All”, at any moment we might also encounter someone who says no to humanity. Hence, there can be an endless examination of men and women, one by one, concerning their “human” property, yet at any moment can it be ascertained that the whole of humans is closed, that it constitutes an All. And this is where contingency comes into play. Given that the exception is only ever encountered at the level of the not-all in an unpredictable, aleatory form, it is safe to conclude that the logic of the not-all is no less undecidable regarding the for-all.

Hence, what we are dealing with here is a certain realism of the not-all. Precisely because it allows for no set law, the not-all imposes a kind of “knowing how to make do with (*savoir y faire avec*)”.<sup>20</sup> A certain “realism” can be detected in Freud, a realism that entails a way of getting-by or making do with that which is: this is especially the case, for instance, when it is a question of knowing how the givens of existence (that is to say, the presence or absence in a body of masculine attributes) are subjectivized for each speaking being. Lacan will not hesitate to use the term “realism” either. The signification that he attributes to this word, however, is not quite the same as with Freud: he takes up the Freudian term while operating a displacement, or a reversal of meaning, at the same time. But what exactly are we to make of Lacan’s realism?

### “A group is real”

Let us begin our discussion of the not-all’s realism, by taking up Lacan’s proposition concerning the collective as belonging to the order of the real. Although this proposition is not directly concerned with the field of politics, it all the same brings us back to politics by simple virtue of the way it detects and locates the workings of the real in the psychoanalytic experience at collective and subjective levels. “The analyst claims to be the guardian of collective reality,” notes Lacan, adding further, “without even having any competence to do so.”<sup>21</sup>

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20 Translator’s note: the expression used here, *un savoir y faire avec*, conveys or contains several senses at once, not excluding some which are present, allusively, at the level of the work of the signifiers used. “*Savoir y faire avec*” designates the idea of having a knack for something, a kind of *savoir-faire*, but the final part of the locution evokes the famous French “système-D”, *le faire avec* as a way of getting by, making do in the face of unfavorable circumstances. (Finally, in the context of the author’s discussion of the for-all and the not-all, the intransitive “avec” at the end of the expression here cannot but conjure up something of the objectless “with-ness” of being.)

21 “L’analyste se fait le gardien de la réalité collective sans en avoir même la compétence.” Lacan 2001c, p. 359.

What this claim foregrounds is the untenable position in which the analyst finds him/herself. Like everyone else, the analyst gets tangled up in the real because his/her choice of being comes at the price of an “I do not think” (*un je ne pense pas*).<sup>22</sup> Yet this alienation that affects each speaking being is intensified in the case of the analyst who, unlike everyone else, knows it. And this knowledge, what’s more, is of a special kind for, like all knowledge, it loses its relevance if it only finds its support in one alone (*s’il se soutient d’un seul*). Lacan himself affirms as much, insisting that the analyst’s knowledge “is not bearable (*portable*) because no knowledge can be borne out by one alone.” In short, an autistic knowledge, a knowledge that is inaccessible to others is not a knowledge at all. Thus, while acknowledging that no knowledge can exist without a collectivity to uphold it, Lacan proceeds to add a further, surprising twist by way of conclusion. “Whence [the analyst’s] association with those who only take part in this knowledge with him by not being able to exchange it. Psychoanalysts are specialists (*savants*) of a knowledge (*savoir*) with which they cannot sustain themselves.”<sup>23</sup>

On the one hand, then, the knowledge about the real seems to condemn the analyst to remain prisoner of the analytic solipsism. But, on the other hand, this knowledge, which cannot be shared, cannot be transmitted from one to the other, also affects, or perhaps infects, the group to the degree that this knowledge renders the latter impossible. On this score, being “realistic” simply means accepting, in Lacan’s formulation, that “a group is real” (*un groupe, c’est réel*), which amounts to affirming that it is impossible. The analyst may indeed be a guardian—not, to be sure, of a particular knowledge or doctrine, but—of a collective reality; at no point, however, is s/he the yardstick by which that collective reality is measured. In other words, if psychoanalysis produces a new theory of the subject, it does not produce a community. It does produce, however, a collectivity capable of incorporating the real that its experience brings about. The collectivity that thus emerges, as Lacan notes, is far from being “cleansed of group imperatives” and is thus founded on an impossibility, because psychoanalysts cannot maintain themselves with a knowledge of which they are meant to be the sole keepers. How, then, might this group, which is ever exposed to its own dissolution, be maintained? Would not such a collectivity always already have been doomed to dispersal?

In addition, or alongside, the clarification pertaining to the status of the group real that I want to outline here, there is another, more important problem that calls for greater scrutiny. Namely: if we are to take seriously

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22 Ibid., p. 358.

23 *C’est ce savoir qui n’est pas portable, de ce que nul savoir ne puisse se porter d’un seul. D’où son association à ceux qui ne partagent avec lui ce savoir qu’à ne pas pouvoir l’échanger. Les psychanalystes sont les savants d’un savoir dont ils ne peuvent s’entretenir.* Ibid.

Lacan's argument about the real of the group, and more specifically, about its impossibility, what are its implications for the possibility of the for-all? What's more, if psychoanalysis truly does hold the key to the deadlocks in which all politics striving for the universal, for the All, finds itself enclosed, is it possible for as much to affirm that psychoanalysis universalizes this impasse? Let us first ask how psychoanalysis intertwines with politics, from what angle. Paradoxically, as it may appear at first glance, it does so from the angle of "the impossibility of the group.

Some important points concerning the political scope of the real of the group has been added to this discussion by Jean-Claude Milner and Alain Badiou. Consider, for instance, the former's landmark *Indistinct Names*, in which Milner foregrounds the deadlocks that politics finds itself trapped as soon as it attempts to establish the for-all in the register of the infinite. Milner thus distinguishes between three types of classes or group assemblage, three modes of assembly<sup>24</sup>: imaginary class, which is founded on a putatively pre-existing property; symbolic class, which flows directly from the performativity of the signifier itself (thus, subjects are interpellated by and respond to the same name); and real class, the sole type of assembly which is compatible with the not-all and which is distinct from the others in that it is grounded neither in a signifier, nor in an attribute or property, but aims at that which is irreducibly singular in each of its members. Such real or "paradoxical classes", as Milner termed them, are forms of collectivity in which its members are joined or held together by that which disjoins them, namely, their idiosyncratic mode of enjoyment. Real classes, then, constitute inconsistent assemblies, paradoxically destined from the beginning for dissolution, for dispersion.

Likewise, in *Conditions*, Alain Badiou takes stock of the fundamental impossibility of a for-all collectivity that would be, at the same time, not-all, that is to say, the impossibility of there being in our world a generic, non-bounded collective composed of singularities without differential traits which would allow them to be hierarchically organized. Indeed, rather than asserting the for-all composed of singularities "in the non-descript nature and the egalitarian anonymity of [their] presentation as such,"<sup>25</sup> Badiou notes that contemporaneous collectives—even those which lay claim to universality—tend to be persecutory and segregative in nature. Ground in some supposedly pre-existing predicate, they exclude all those who do not share the required property.

This Lacanian argument thus re-affirmed, we may draw the following, at first glance mutually exclusive, conclusions: first, if the group

24 Milner 1983, pp. 116-123.

In French, the noun *rassemblement* denotes somewhat generically any assembly, but it also invariably carries a distinctly *political* connotation—it marks a coming-together of a multiple in a common share or idea (a crowd demonstrating in the streets, a political party, etc.) [Translator's note.]

25 Badiou 2008, p. 174.

belongs to the order of the real—if in effect no egalitarian collective can be constituted without recourse either to the exception or to the exclusion (which would confirm the impossibility of its totalization as well as the structural nature of the not-all)—, then all politics that proclaims itself as universally valid can only either be illusory or totalitarian. Let's call this first conclusion the cynical interpretation of the "realism" of politics. The second conclusion would be the inversion the first one. To wit: if the group belongs to the order of the real, then it can only be thought, practiced, experienced and experimented as a species of the for-all, albeit in the guise of a "not-all-ified" for-all (*un pour tous 'pastoutisé'*) that calls into question every predication, every common trait supposedly pre-existing the group's constitution.

Derived as it is from the proposition that "the group is real," this second conclusion is anything but misguided. Rather, it presents a principle for thinking the collective, a way of practicing a form of collectivity that is compatible with the not-all. The very principle, in fact, of the politics of the real. This principle, furthermore, demands the articulation of the proposition, "the analyst becomes the guardian of collective reality" to a proposition which, precisely, would appear to put into question the idea of collective reality in its affirmation that "the group is real", and thus impossible. While this articulation can be interrogated from a number of perspectives, what is of particular interest for the present discussion are its implications for politics. For questioning it from this angle may allow us to address the problem at the core of the present analysis: namely, how might psychoanalysis allow us to redefine the politics of the real?

Before we answer this question, we will have to first grapple with a problem raised by an apparent contradiction between Lacan's proposition about the real of the group and the proposition put forth in *Television*—a proposition which would appear lead to the opposite conclusion to the degree that psychoanalysis is put forward there as a way out of capitalism open to each and every one, in short, to "All", whether analysts or not; a way out for all, even if the for-all towards which psychoanalysis strives cannot be brought into being "as a group" but, rather, on the basis of a "one by one". A shift in Lacan's reflections on politics in general and, more specifically, on the functioning of a psychoanalytical institution whose principal task would be the transmission of a radically singular experience such as can only be encountered in an analysis, is marked by a paradoxical thesis according to which: a group is the real, that is, according to Lacan's vocabulary, a radical impossibility. If Lacan's proposition on the impossible of the group is of consequence for us—and we will come back to this point in order to draw out some of its consequences for the politics of the real—it is to the precise degree that, when he founds his school, *Ecole de la Cause*, School of the Cause, on the group real, on the impossibility of the group, Lacan simultaneously enacts

a form of “knowing how to make do with” (*un savoir y faire avec*) the impossibility of the group. Thus, if we propose to consider Lacan’s thesis about the real of the group seriously, this is precisely because Lacan, while insisting on the impossibility of the group, by founding his School, nevertheless succeeded in demonstrating that there is a way of dealing with this impossibility.

Our assumption here is that psychoanalysis can only be of interest to philosophy and to politics to the degree that it has been able to span a fragile bridge between its fidelity to singularity, which is to say, to radical contingency, and an opening onto universality that is born out by its ambition of transmitting what it has to say to everyone, which is to say, to All. And so it is here, too, that we can pick back up the thread of the argument that Lacan pursues in *Television*, namely that it wouldn’t be worth losing an hour of anyone’s time on psychoanalysis if everyone, each and every one, is not concerned by what it has to say.

What is it, then, in psychoanalysis that could take on the sense of a “for all”? It obviously has to be pointed out that, even if the subject of the unconscious is universal, the way in which each of us is caught up in the unconscious is, for its part, absolutely singular. Lacan gives us a sense of this in his “Founding Act,” from 1964: “a praxis of theory is required, without which the order of affinities delineated by the sciences we call conjectural will remain at the mercy of that political drift which rises by dint of the illusion of universal conditioning.”<sup>26</sup>

But in putting us on guard against “the illusion of universal conditioning” that science produces in the master’s discourse that treats each and everyone without taking into account that which differentiates them, Lacan thus seems to refer us back to the received idea according to which there is a fundamental opposition between whatever pertains to the domain of the “for all” and that of psychoanalysis that stands in the way of the “for all” precisely because psychoanalysis is sustained by a resistance to the sway of the universal that is materialized in the particularity of the subject’s mode of enjoyment. Except that, with Lacan, the singular is not, as one might imagine, brought to the fore in order to exalt it, but rather to denounce its complicity with the “totalitarian” sway of “universal conditioning.” For the illusion of mastery provokes a kind of mirror-image illusion in the neurotic subject struggling to not be like others, to preserve its exceptionalness.

Hence, to repeat once more, what kind of horizon for the “for all” is opened up by the psychoanalytic experience? Obviously, the “for all” of psychoanalysis, in as much as psychoanalysis inaugurates one—which is hardly a foregone conclusion—, needs to be distinguished from that which is instantiated by science, in mathematics for instance. If mathematics is structurally addressed to All; that is, if,

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26 Lacan 1990b, p. 99.

as one generally assumes, it is for-all, this is because mathematics is inextricably intertwined with demonstration. The for-all established by mathematics refers to anyone as long as they are capable of carrying out a demonstration, of repeating it. Such is the lesson we can take from Plato’s *Meno*: anyone—even a slave boy—is capable of reproducing a geometrical proof, provided that they have the will to do so. No prior, initiatory experience is required. All that is necessary is an axiom—once the axiom is given, it functions automatically, in a totally impersonal, desubjectivized, if not indeed acephalous, manner. This doubtless also explains the curious indifference of the mathematical for-all when it comes to the number of those capable of reproducing a demonstration. Indeed, even if the for-all presumed to animate mathematics ends up being reduced to the handful of those—or even the single individual—able to check the demonstration, to verify the proof, this would not invalidate the mathematical for-all in the slightest, given that this “at least (some) one” is enough to enact the for-all of which this “at least (some)one” is in some sense the place-holder.

By contrast, the for-all poses a problem for psychoanalysis to the extent that, unlike in the case of mathematics, this dimension of the for-all is not a priori assumed to be operative for psychoanalysis. And this, for two reasons: first, the instance set to work in psychoanalysis is not the matheme or the axiom. It is the subject taken in its singularity. Which is where the following question comes in: when it is a question of that which is most specifically singular to the subject, how can we know what can or cannot be transmitted to others in the psychoanalytic experience? And, indeed, the knowledge that the subject is supposed to achieve in analysis is not, strictly speaking, transferable. And this is the case not merely because the analysand’s knowledge is only relevant to her/himself, but above all because it is a form of knowledge that—being incomplete, open-ended, presumably something yet to-come, obtained in the future—appears as a set of theorems lacking exactly that thing which would allow them to be verified: namely, an axiom. Second, the for-all poses a problem because the aim of psychoanalysis is to provide an axiom for that which determines the subject in its absolute particularity. Taking as its premise the subject as a singular, non-universalizable response of the real, the goal of psychoanalysis is to produce a formula that is valid for this subject in particular, and thus for no one else, but which must be verifiable nevertheless.

Lacan’s is categorical on this point: in order for the particular to gain access to the truth, this access needs to be grounded in a discourse such “that (although [psychoanalytic discourse] may proceed merely from the one to the one—that is, from the particular) something new can be conceived and is able to be transmitted as incontestably by this



discourse as is the numerical matheme."<sup>27</sup> Thus, in psychoanalysis, the only way to reconcile the for-all with the singularity of the experience of analysis is by carrying out a process of verification for that singularity. What would the scope of such a process of verification be in the field of psychoanalysis, its ramifications? Such is the line of questioning Lacan himself will raise: "If it's verified, can it be taught to everyone, that is to say, is it scientific, since it's on the basis of this postulate that science developed?"<sup>28</sup> Psychoanalysis is, consequently, not distinct from mathematics because of a lack of demonstrability. It is not for lack of having implemented procedures for validation that psychoanalysis struggles to verify the results of what has been achieved in the course of analysis. Rather, it struggles to do so because its protocols of demonstration appear as deficient when compared to the rigorous requirements governing scientific transmissibility. Hence, what is at stake is not demonstration or verification as such, but the validity of a demonstration undertaken in a context that is not that of mathematics.

And here we might establish a distinction between psychoanalysis and mathematics: if mathematics remains indifferent both to *what* is transmitted and to *how* it is transmitted, the same cannot be said for psychoanalysis where the question not only of what can or cannot be transmitted is of the utmost importance, but so too are the mode of transmission and the addressee. An approach by matheme alone is thus insufficient since neither topology nor mathemes, even if they constitute means of integral transmission, ensure anything. Worse still, mathemes do not immunize psychoanalysis against obscurantism. Deprived of all signification, incapable of controlling the effects of meaning they generate, and nevertheless requiring a certain know-how in order to be manipulated, mathemes lead all too easily to the bewildering drift of initiatory mystification as the fate of the Pythagoreans amply suggests. It follows that for psychoanalysis the problem of transmissibility does not reside in the mode of transmission by matheme; the problem has to do, rather, with that which resists the matheme and, thus, with that which allows for new refutations.

For unlike scientific knowledge—that is to say, a knowledge in the real that is supposed to be demonstrable by matheme—, psychoanalytic knowledge is concerned with a real—namely, the non-existence of the sexual relation—which, according to Lacan, is ultimately impossible to demonstrate: "this relation is impossible to write" and "it is for this reason that it is not affirmable but moreover not refutable: as truth."<sup>29</sup> Psychoanalytic knowledge, in sum, touches on a real that remains, strictly

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27 Lacan 1990a, p. 39.

28 Ibid., p. 38.

29 Lacan 2001d, p. 310.

speaking, outside of the domain of demonstration. Neither verifiable, nor falsifiable. And yet, in gaining access to this impossible, unnameable real, as Lacan puts it, the knowledge of the psychoanalyst must be able to determine it every bit as much as the scientist's knowledge demonstrates the real.

On the one hand, then, there is no such thing as a passage from the singular to the for-all, in psychoanalytic experience. On the other hand, however, Lacan clearly endows psychoanalysis with the task of proving equal to science. Although he neither lends support to the idea that psychoanalysis, *qua* scientific invention, could be entirely transmissible via matheme, nor does he contend that psychoanalysis is true because it happens to be mathematizable,<sup>30</sup> the knowledge that he expects from psychoanalysis has to be modeled on scientific knowledge: just like science, the aim of psychoanalysis is to produce a knowledge that would allow it to modify the real. In both cases, knowledge of the real consists less in discovering what is out there, what exists, than in creating something new, something that has not previously existed. The new object, this object that did not exist prior to the intervention of psychoanalysis, is a new state of the subject: that of the psychoanalyst. At stake is a verification that the act of bearing witness—that is, bearing witness to the transformation of the subject, to the particular way in which it adds itself to the real—constitutes a new knowledge, one not guaranteed by any Other, but one which is nevertheless transmissible to all.

The question thus arises: what is it in the experience of analysis that is capable of being transmitted to all? Yet the question that preoccupies Lacan is more fundamental, and has to do with knowing how to communicate to others that which is taken for the subject's absolute particularity—namely, the way it enjoys (*son mode de jouir*). To this latter question, which ultimately determines the scope and limit of the transmissibility of what psychoanalysis can teach us, Lacan not unambiguously replies that psychoanalysis, or rather his "teaching of psychoanalysis can be transmitted from one subject to another only by way of a transference of work."<sup>31</sup> In other words, because there is no instance to guarantee the validity of psychoanalytic knowledge, it is imperative that, as a counterpart to the foundational principle that "no one authorizes the analyst but himself," there be verification in terms of collective work. There is thus a dimension to psychoanalysis that necessary entails going beyond the frame of confidentiality or

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30The same argument can be found in Lacan's "Note italienne," where he affirms that "[b]elieving that sciences is true on the pretext that it is (mathematically) transmissible is a truly delusional idea that is disproved at every step by casting a first formulation back to a by-gone times. Because of this there is no notable progress is ever made for want of knowing the consequences. There is only the discovery of a knowledge in the real." Ibid., p. 309. [Translation modified] See also, <http://www.lacani-ireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Italian-note-1973.pdf>. Consulted 04/06/2019/.

31 Lacan, 1990b, p. 103. [Translation modified]

privacy. Furthermore, in order for this knowledge to be operative in the psychoanalytic community, it must not be transmitted solely to an other, but to absolutely anyone. To all, in a word.<sup>32</sup>

So how is a universal scope of address to be ensured to a discourse which operates solely on a one-by-one basis, a discourse that proceeds from the particular rather than the universal? What kind of displacement takes place in the passage from the One to All? As J.A. Miller has shown in his seminar on *The Analysts' Banquet*, the passage in question here is itself overdetermined by the inversion of the work of transference into the transference of work. This inversion brings into light the fact that what is prone to being transmitted to all is a knowledge that takes the form of work. It is only in accepting the lack of guarantee in which their work is inscribed—that is to say, in proving themselves—that the subjects involved in the psychoanalytic experience are capable of producing a knowledge that—despite being unique in its novelty—is not ineffable, for that matter, but entirely transmissible. Paradoxically, the experience which—because of its utmost particularity—condemns the subject to its radical solitude, is not for as much a solitary experience precisely because what allows us to account for it is the pass—that is, a procedure designed to regulate the passage from the particular to the collective. A passage from the particular to the collective, furthermore, that wagers on the possible transmission of a new knowledge destined to model itself upon science. It is at precisely that moment of passage that we may introduce within psychoanalysis a distinction between initiatory transmission of the type that is addressed to those who take part in a shared experience, and a type of transmission that address all “those, be they psychoanalysts or not, who take an interest in psychoanalysis in the act.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, for there to be a chance for the for-all in psychoanalysis, the latter has to create an apparatus allowing a passage of the outside into the very interiority of the inside. We are now in a better position to grasp Lacan’s argument that psychoanalysis represents the way-out of a capitalism posited as limitless, indeed as not-all. Or, to be even more specific, psychoanalysis is a way-out precisely there where there is no outside. It is an inner way-out, as it were, one that, by dint of the fact that it doesn’t rely on the givens, can only be put to work through the creation of an empty space destined to be inhabited by nothing but a work. Lacan’s solution to the impasse of collectivity consists in opening his School “to everybody”, which is to say “to anybody”. Setting out from the assumption that there is absolutely nothing to define the analyst, no pre-given predicate or property on which his identification could be

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<sup>32</sup> Lacan accorded a great deal of importance to the presence in his school of those who had never undergone analysis, in essence to ascertain whether or not the discourse of psychoanalysis was transmissible to any-and-everyone, to all, or if it was simply a discourse reserved for initiates.

<sup>33</sup> Lacan, 1990b, p. 106.

grounded, the only viable solution is one that takes into account precisely this impossibility of determining a predicate that would be proper to the (Lacanian) analyst. The solution is then none other than to call on all those who are willing to work in the Freudian field. By inviting to his school anybody, without any qualification, Lacan created an open, empty space destined to be inhabited only by a special kind of work, the work of the “determined workers”<sup>34</sup>, be it analysis or not, as he puts it. If it is indeed possible to take the school such as Lacan conceives it as a model of the for-all at the level of the not-all, taken now as a for-all in the sense of a “open-to-each-and-everyone,” this is because Lacan proposes to reach this goal through the creation of the kind of opening, of an empty space, in which the inside encounters the outside, in short, through disidentification. For what is at stake with the Lacanian for-all is the trait that determines identity, the mark of belonging of a member to a group. And this mark of belonging can only be called into question if the non-member—hence, the uncountable one—is included in the group; it can only be questioned if the non-member is not exterior to the member. To that end, the collectivity of the for-all is the site created specifically to allow for the encounter of the member with the non-member.

Lacan thus envisages a space in which no trait carries the attributes of a specific or specifying property; a group constituted without identifying itself with a normative trait. And this is the case less because psychoanalysis is supposed to be everyone’s concern—which is far from self-evident—than to allow the analyst to encounter the non-analyst, that is to say his/her other; or, better yet, to allow the analyst to encounter him/herself as his/her own other: as other to him/herself. To gloss Lacan: the non-analyst serves here as a relay so that the analyst becomes that Other to him/herself as s/he is to the non-analyst.<sup>35</sup> This is no casual gloss on Lacan because what’s at stake in the predicate “being (an) analyst” is the asymmetry of A and non-A itself. Put otherwise, it is because the subject undergoes a change—because it finds itself called into question—in the experience of the School, that it loses itself to the precise degree that it believes to have achieved its self-possession, or to know itself (*il croit s’avoir ou savoir*).

What is at stake here is a form of collectivity entirely different from that of community, which is grounded in the logic of the All and of the One. In a community, one is supposed to know who is whom. (To borrow Lacan’s turn of phrase: a man, and only a real man, is supposed to know who is not a man.) In the collective of the for-all, however, a collective founded on the principle that the non-A is not someone other than A, one never knows with whom one is dealing. Thus, the for-all as collective is

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 100.

<sup>35</sup> “A man,” says Lacan, “serves here as a relay so that a woman becomes this Other to herself, as she is to him.” Lacan 2006c, p. 616.

meaningless unless it forms the site where one has to desire what one is as not being that. What characterises this collective for-all is not that it finally locates the whole's unifying trait, even if that trait is, as Bataille suggested, the community of those without community. It consists, on the contrary, in transforming the very attempt to make the difference between member and non-member, inside and outside, into an exploration to be carried out within the very group in which one appears, an exploration that presupposes an irreducible non-knowing concerning the criteria for belonging to the group. It is, in sum, only on the basis of an authentic "not knowing" that one can come to grips with the for-all.

In this light, the space of the for-all that Lacan calls "School" can be thought of as the space in which the "communitarian," segregative for-all is transformed into a non-segregative for-all. More to the point, the School is created to demonstrate the intertwining of two logics at work in the for-all: that of a incomplete, yet consistent for-all which because it is constituted through the exclusion of an exception, and a different for-all, an inconsistent for-all which can, paradoxically, be obtained not through the exclusion of the exception, but through its inclusion. By the very fact of subtracting the exception from an assembly it is rendered boundless, non-totalizable. It is a for-all which takes as its foundational principle that "there aren't any who don't" (*y'en a pas qui ne pas*)—a principle, in other words, that makes every exception which would allow us to measure, ascertain the All an impossible, undecidable one. There is no exception, indeed, when it comes to the not-all-ified for-all (*le pour tous pas-toutisé*). The exception that would make it possible to take the measure of the not-all, the exception-measure, remains radically undecidable, erratic. And this errant, erratic exception is what makes the consistent for-all inconsistent. Because it has no place that would be assigned to it in advance, unlike in so-called "normal" communities, the exception is displaced: one might say that it is everywhere and nowhere at once. Which is to say both that there is no exception and that each-and-everyone is exceptional. The only way to escape the segregative "for-all" is then through the generalization of exception. To the consistent, segregative for-all is thus opposed the inconsistent for-all, a collective from which the measure, the limit, the exception have been withdrawn, a truly open, inclusive, in a word: "for all" collectivity, yet which, precisely because all exception is postulated as being undecidable, indeterminable, imposes verification. Hence, if we are compelled to verify, this is because, precisely, one can never know with whom or what one is dealing.

This also explains why, at this stage, it is work that decides the belonging to the Lacanian for-all. Lacan thus launches a call to work that would allow each subject willing to participate in the collective work in the Freudian field to come out of the anonymity of the crowd and ask, in their own name, to be admitted to the School. Here, we are in the register of the one-by-one maintained by the logic of the not-all, or, that logic

which, in the absence of the analyst's signifier, requires everyone to verify that their work corresponds to that of the "determined worker" while at the same time accepting lack of the Other's guarantee. The necessity of verification signals that this work cannot be standardized. The work to be done is by definition indeterminable since it cannot take place unless there is a transference to a cause at hand. The expression "determined worker" emphasizes the importance of the fidelity to a cause, the willingness of everyone involved to risk him/herself in the pursuit of what is ultimately unknowable. All that the work to be done by everyone requires, and that despite the fact that neither its quality nor quantity can be prescribed, is a new relation to the cause. What is expected to be shown, more specifically, is the putting to work of the subject split by the cause—that is, by the psychoanalytic cause. The work at stake, here, is thus a work that cannot be carried out without a transference to psychoanalysis. And this is the case because the work that each is called upon to provide is not just any work, as Lacan suggests in his "Founding Act," but a "labor which, in the field opened up by Freud, restores the cutting edge of his discovery—a labor which returns the original praxis he instituted under the name of psychoanalysis to the duty incumbent upon it in our world."<sup>36</sup>

It is precisely in this sense that in Lacan's School it is impossible to distinguish good, determined workers from idlers. The work that each has to provide, requires proof nevertheless. This is why it is with regard to the non-members of the group, what's more, that the presumed member needs to prove him/herself. Therein lies the reason for which such collectivity is profoundly non-segregative. It is non-segregative to the degree that the presence of an element allegedly heterogenous to the group—non-analysts, in this case—is not only tolerated, but well and truly required if the predicate "to be an analyst" is to be brought into question.<sup>37</sup> Here, we come at last to the political dimension of the duty that Lacan evokes. The project of work, the labor, to which Lacan summons analysts or those who are not, aspiring applicants or not, is one of building an institution that takes into account both the collapse of identifications established by the social order as well as those constructed in the course of analysis itself. Indeed, Lacan's goal was to demonstrate that the real which is at stake in the experience of analysis is what allows an assembly of singularities to be held together—not due to some master signifier but due to a transference to psychoanalysis, to the cause of psychoanalysis.

The goal of the School as Lacan defined it, however, was not limited to breaking psychoanalysis out of the chains of identification. It was also

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36 Lacan 1990b, p. 97.

37 Lacan 2001e, pp. 270, 272.

to make possible a passage there where only the impasse of the group is encountered. If, as Lacan remarks, it is the case that there is a “real at stake in the very formation of the psychoanalysis,” and if the School is founded on this real, it is to allow each and everyone to elaborate a novel relationship to the psychoanalytic cause, a relation proper only to him/her, radically original, such that each and everyone, one by one, “is forced to reinvent psychoanalysis.”<sup>38</sup> And it is this unexpected, unpredictable reinvention that psychoanalytic group is called upon to verify.

One can clearly see the political stakes subtending the claim that there are two logics to the universal. Of course, it is not a question here of choosing between the two logics, or of choosing the right one. What is at issue, rather, is to set to work the logic of the not-all there where the segregative logic is operational, there where the law of exclusion—visibly or invisibly—prevails. For, even if the two logics of the universal are always operative whenever we are in the field of the collective, thus affecting every collective being, the for-all which is at stake here—the for-all compatible with the not-all—is not a given that one happens upon or discovers. It is the outcome or result, rather, of a process of disidentification that produces whatever or generic singularities—singularities without predicate or attribute, detached from all bonds of belonging.

Hence, if the for-all *qua* boundless, open, assembly is by definition non-segregative, it is so because it takes root in the impossibility of reducing singularity to an identification with the master signifier, to the declaration “You are this,” for example. This impossibility of representation justifies our gesture of defining the singularity as one of the modes of the hole. Puncturing a hole in every count, not letting oneself be counted or represented, simply means confirming the presence of something that cannot be accounted for, described. Not, of course, because singularities are not endowed with specific properties, but because none of those properties constitutes a difference that would matter, that would count. As such, the collectivity of the for-all is absolutely unrepresentable. It follows from this that a for-all is above all a for-all for those who are able to proclaim one. For all those who are authorized only by themselves. Thus, a for-all can only be founded in a declarative act: “We, the...”

Like any act, what’s more, a declaration takes place without Other or subject. Without Other because every act begins with the disruption of the law, the suspension of every guarantee. Thus, where one expects to find the founding law of the act, one encounters only a hole. Without subject because, contrary to what one might imagine, the act does not presuppose the presence of any subject whatsoever. To the contrary, one of the primary consequences of the act is to bring into being a new

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38 Lacan 2001d, p. 261.

figure of the subject. In view of this it can then be stated that there is no subject prior to the act’s taking place. Better yet: the subject is only ever staged in the aftermath of the act, as the instance called upon to assume responsibility for the consequences that follow from the act.

If the act produces the subject, it also produces the instance tasked with validating the act or, rather, its consequences. In this way, we can say, along with Lacan, that the act “is what depends on what follows from it.”<sup>39</sup> And the most effective manner of verifying the status of an act is to draw out all its consequences following a strict logic. Once this logical machine has been set in motion, however, we might interrogate the desire that animates it, and that impels it to go as far as it will take it, to go all the way to the end. Yet, the very expression, “to go all the way to the end,” at once poses a limit—albeit a limit situated at an inaccessible point—and calls the latter into question. Stated a little differently, as soon as the evaluation of an act is carried out from the perspective of its consequences or becomes a matter logic, all that remains is the question of knowing “how far one can go *within* this limit.”<sup>40</sup>

This also explains why psychoanalysis questions the group as collectivity of work via the consequences of the act, through its verification. One might say that what is at stake there is a new figure of the Other, understood not as that agency which provides the measure or guarantee but indeed as the locus of articulation of the transference of work; the site where, taking into account the non-equality of each’s singular path, one nevertheless makes the wager on the ability of each determined worker to face that “how far I can go *within* this limit”. This is collective work, but also work that depends on individual discipline. In this respect, psychoanalysis equals science and politics, for in each of these three cases subjects have to prove themselves not to satisfy themselves, but to satisfy others.

It is not, therefore, a question of simply privileging the act, which would find its homologue in the unclassifiable subjective attitude of the hysteric forever at odds with the accepted code of conduct. Rather, it is a question of putting to work a politics capable of linking that aspect of the “uncounted” which is hysterical to the “psychotic” rigor of the logical deduction of the consequences that any act of speaking (*prise de parole*) by such a subject—one which is non-situatable in the given social order—can have for the for-all of identification. That’s the first lesson that politics can draw from the way Lacan founded his School. And it is far from the last.

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39 Lacan 2001e, p. 261.

40 On this score, it is doubtless worth citing the whole of Lacan’s response to the Kantian question, ‘What can I know?’ “Nothing in any case doesn’t have the structure of language; whence it follows that [the question] how far I can go *within* this limit is a matter of logic.” Lacan 1990 a, p. 36. [Translation modified]



### Can There be a “Realistic” Politics of the Real?

If the question of the School commands so much attention from Lacan, this is because the School allows for a fundamental aspect of the real of the group to emerge into visibility. Rather than discarding the possibility of all forms of collectivity unless it grounds itself in the logics of exclusion or exception, affirming the impossible of the group constitutes the point of departure for any politics which, because it is situated in the register of the not-all, aims at the creation of a non-segregative for-all. We are dealing here with a politics that aims at the for-all while preserving singularity *qua* singularity— a “whatever” singularity as Agamben so accurately put, in order to signify that no property, predicate, or a bond of belonging ever exhausts the singularity’s “whatever” or generic being. What is at stake here is a peculiar for-all, that of workers, a for-all that entails a practice of disidentification at the level of the group whereby each and everyone in the group becomes whatever. It is not that one discovers that one has always been “whatever”. Rather, one becomes it. What takes place in the production of the for-all is a transformation of the subject that each one has to carry-out, on their own terms and for themselves.

Paradoxically, this emphasis on the singular presupposes a certain mode of subjective renunciation. The subject is called upon to renounce its subjective difference, including the indetermination that maintains it in its lack of being. This point is a crucial one: it is not enough for the subject to separate itself from the master signifier, from the identifications imposed on it by the existing order. A further effort is needed: namely, a withdrawal from whatever pushes the subject to seek out ever-newer identifications, from that quest which generates an illusion cherished by postmodernists who see in such a metonymic drift the expression of the subject’s freedom to choose, without any constraint, the identity that best suits it, or to discard the latter as soon as it becomes a nuisance.

Living proof of the not-all, at the moment of becoming whatever, indeterminate—in a process that Lacan calls subjective destitution—the subject cannot imagine itself being all alone, prisoner of its irreducible particularity. Rather, it finds itself “whatever”: on its own, but not alone. How, then, are we to understand this operation of the subject’s becoming whatever, generic, indeterminate, if the major stakes of such a procedure consist in suspending every particularity of the subjective position? If the analyst has stripped off from every identification, every attribute, to be finally reduced to a mere *quod*, sheer being-there, it is with an aim toward opening him/herself up to the uncharted singularities at the heart of every other, so that the singularity of anyone at all (*la singularité de quiconque*) can be addressed to the analyst in order to take the latter as cause of one’s desire.

Yet, how does the most singular aspect of a position—such as the analyst reveals it in the pass—end up erasing all the particularity of the subjective position? In psychoanalysis, it should be noted, the void that is the subject cannot be filled by the consistency of its singularity. It mustn’t be too filled with its own particularity, Lacan warns, since the point of psychoanalysis is rather to offer an empty space, a void, in which the subject can bear witness to its singular relation to the psychoanalytic cause. Every destitution, in other words, is put to work; each destitution is a form of putting to work which is required to ascertain the act in its aftermath.

The question of subjective destitution thus turns out to be critical for any collective that purports to be non-segregative. And this is because, at the level of the subject, the result of desubjectivation is, as Lacan notes, that “[the subject] is made to be rather and singularly strong,” before adding further that “subjective destitution brings about being rather than its loss” (*cela fait être plutôt que désêtre*).<sup>41</sup> How, to come to the question of the “realism” of any politics faithful to the real, are we to make this erasure into a response inscribed in the real?

For the politics of the real to be conceivable, practicable, in sum “realistic,” one has above all to examine closely, and experiment with, the ties binding the for-all to the real. One has to go to the end of this process in order to open up a horizon of new possibilities where, at present, one finds only the triumph of cynicism, acquiescence to the given, and the realism of the possible—or, stated more explicitly, that mode of realism which demands that we adapt ourselves to the regimen of possible and impossible that the existing social order imposes. To the extent that it sets up an open, non-segregative for-all, the politics of the real, by contrast, provides the occasion for politics to become realist once again by taking upon itself the function that is proper to it: that of being a collective exploration. As a question that implicates the group, the collective, the question of politics is posed today with as much urgency as it was in the past. And it is a question to which one cannot reply all alone: “There, I cannot invent,” as Lacan says in his 1973-74 seminar, “[...] for some reason, that a group is real.”<sup>42</sup>

If no human group can maintain itself without an elsewhere, we need to ask: what is this elsewhere towards which the for-all capable of taking on the real of the group aspires? For the elsewhere in question is not the Other, but rather that dimension of the irreducibly other, heterogeneous, to oneself to which the ordeal of the real points. And it is precisely in this sense that this ordeal opens up for the group the possibility of giving itself a cause other than itself.

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41 Lacan 2001d, p. 273.

42 <http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Book-21-Les-Non-Dupes-Errent-Part-3.pdf>. Consulted 03/12/19.

Which leaves us with the for-all, about which we can now conclude with the following proposition: there is a for-all only to the extent that it is grounded in a common cause; more precisely, in a cause that puts us to work. As for the result of this work, even if it has to be carried out on the basis of the subjectivation of (psychoanalytical and political) experience, this result does not depend on any particular subject. Quite to the contrary, it is that which can be inscribed in a “logifiable”, mathematizable, acephalous manner that allows it to become collectively calculable. This is the wager of the for-all *qua* experience of transmission. And it is in this that politics as break with established identifications could be said to enter into the real, not so much to take measure of it as to introduce into the real that which is, ultimately, measureless, incommensurable, a radical novelty: a paradoxical collectivity that is at one and the same time not-all, nontotalizable, and for all. Ultimately, the solution that the politics of the real proposes is a paradoxical immanent way out that consists in constituting a local, temporary, provisory “for-all” collectivity.

A for-all based on the real of the group is undoubtedly a kind of forcing: a forcing of speech, of saying, first, for because what constitutes a “for-all” collectivity is precisely the emergence of an allegedly mute, uncounted, invisible instance that starts to speak out, and, in so doing, asserts its presence: “We are here”. It is also a forcing of all social-symbolic order and its counting. It is not a question, on this score, of correcting the miscount of the existing order by including the excluded, those who were left outside or who didn’t count. What is at stake, rather, is an attempt at carrying out, in view of those counted and uncounted alike, an operation of transfinitization, an operation whose ultimate goal is the constitution of an open, non-segregative for-all. How many members will the for-all of the not-all count, you may ask? It doesn’t matter! For the “for all” is not about numbers. What matters is for it to remain, like Cantor’s alephs, impervious to addition or subtraction:

$$\aleph_0 + 1 = \aleph_0 \quad \aleph_0 - 1 = \aleph_0$$

Translated by Rob St.Clair

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