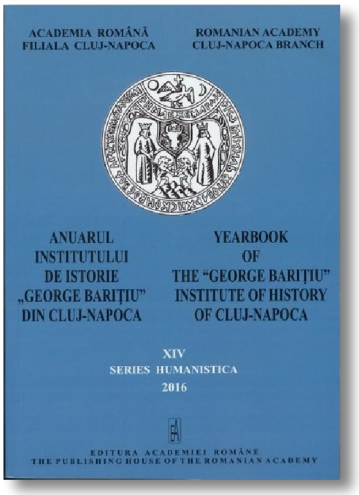

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LOGICAL TIME

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Abstract. *Lacanian analysis gives three dimensions of time: the instant of the gaze, the time for comprehending or understanding, and the moment to conclude. These three dimensions of time were developed by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan in the structure of a logical sophism called the prisoners' dilemma. Thus, for the human subject, time cannot be narrowed to the flowing continuity of the past, present and future because there is an essential and constitutive lack of adequacy between the time of discourse and grammar and the specific time of the psychoanalytic experience. Freudian unconscious functions in a synchronic way, but its singular diachronic opening is given by the emergence of the real in an event. The sophism has two suspensive scansions, as the urgency of concluding is not without a time of delay. Thus, logical time is no longer a sophism, but a pure logic of action. In fact, each of the three prisoners of the dilemma is at stake under the two others' view Lacan turns to this sophism when he speaks about the end of analysis: when the subject is no longer suspended at the time of the Other, but finds himself within the time that remains, as in Agamben's words about messianic time. The end of analysis confronts the subject with such a time and this is why, in Lacan, there is correspondence between clinical practice and topology.*

Keywords: *logical time, sophism, desire, object a, time that remains.*

In "L'étourdit", Lacan (2001, p. 449-495) opposes the saying (*dire*) to the said (*dits*) of the unconscious, but – within a psychotic clinical structure – it is as if this saying had not been forgotten because the perception of the hallucination becomes eternalized and does not pass into the said. For this reason, there is no distance between the voice and the said and, as a consequence, it is undisputable whatever the voice says: this means that the saying was not forgotten, but remained to parasitize the said. However, the fact that the saying is not forgotten is not a gain, but rather a difficulty, which is the model for object *a*. The forgotten saying actually constitutes the repression – precisely not just the original repression, as it happens each time we speak. Regarding this loss of saying, the question is how it could be recovered or how it could be possible for a subject to approach it or to

profit from this loss which, eventually, is necessary. The difference between Lacan's "La chose freudienne" (1945) and "L'étourdit" (1970-1973) consists in approaching this forgetfulness of the real as being structural. And this is where the logical time comes in, which Lacan does not stop revisiting[1].

We are generally used to the three dimensions of linear time: past, present and future. The three dimensions of time for the subject who occurs in (*advient*) the place of the Other are no longer the present, the past and the future, but the instant of the gaze, the time for comprehending or understanding and the moment to conclude. This conception of the time of the subject, which passes through the entire Lacanian teaching, is in a different register in comparison to that of the common representation of linear time. This does not mean, obviously, that we leave aside the successive order of the three grammar tenses – because speech, in its linearity, pertains to classical geometry and chronology. But, if we are to use a special representation of the duration of an analytic course, it cannot be a linear one, but a topological one, in precisely the sense that Lacan makes topology (Aparicio, 2003, p. 39) in his last seminaries. The time of the subject – which Lacan calls *logical time* – is the time of the analytic experience, but between this particular experience of time and the chronological time there is a lack of adequacy.

In the creative experience of a subject, one must take into account a time that cannot be resumed to the past-present-future linearity involved by every speech in the indicative verbal mode. The three dimensions of the time of the subject are (Lacan, 1966a, p. 197-214): the instant of the gaze (*l'instant du regard*), the time for comprehending (*le temps pour comprendre*), and the moment to conclude (*le moment de conclure*). *The instant of the gaze* is inserted in that dimension that language establishes as *synchrony*.

When Lacan highlights that the Freudian unconscious is a network of signifiers, this reveals the synchronic aspect of the functioning of the unconscious, whose only opening towards diachrony is given by a possible incidence of the real as an event. Or, the analyst is the one who, by his intervention, marks a scansion in the significant synchrony of the unconscious, by introducing a temporal element. This timelessness that is characteristic of the Freudian unconscious finds its paradigmatic example in the temporal knot, which Freud tackles at the end of *Interpretation of dreams,* when he speaks about the indestructibility of desire. The Freudian thesis of the timelessness of the unconscious proves to be that of a desire that is always present and unaltered by the flow of time. In this very point Lacan situates the demand in its tireless repetition, defining desire as "dealing exclusively with the demand, being what is produced as subject in the act of demand" (Lacan,

[1] *Cf.* Jean-Jacques Gorog (2008, p. 88) who actually says that haste (*hâte*) manifests the presence of the object, whereas the equivoque is the tool of the analyst.

1967[2]), the indestructible desire being an indicator of the actual presence of the subject. Nevertheless, if desire escapes the flow of time, this is because it is subjected to another type of temporality: that of logical time, which consists of anticipation and retroaction. One can find here the structure marked by scansions, that which appears between the initial and final points of the logical time, between the instant of the gaze, in which something is always eluded, lost, and the elusive moment, in which the seizing of the unconscious does not conclude, instead being rather a deceived retrieval. (Lacan, 1973, p. 33, own translation)

The place where in the analytic experience one can understand what is the correspondent of the Freudian timelessness of the unconscious is the phantasm (Aparicio, 2003, p. 41), because the fundamental, unconscious phantasm is the expression of what ex-sists outside the chronological time. It happens as if a subject who is confronted with the enigma of the Other's desire would always and definitely answer with his phantasm, yet this fixity and persistence of the phantasm is what keeps a neurotic in a safe place, outside-of-time, which allows him his (un)comfortable inadequacy with time. An illustrative example is Lacan's commentary of Hamlet that reveals the connection between time, desire, the Other and the phantasm. The neurotic's subordination to the Other's desire makes him live like Hamlet "always suspended at the time of the Other" (Lacan, 2013)[3].

In psychoanalysis, the more the subject achieves a desiring position, the farther he gets from time as a sum of instants. Therefore, the question is to capture the metonymy of desire because the subject enters time through desire and ceases to think, which means that entering in time and reflecting over time are opposed to one another in the same way in which being and thinking are. It is not a surprise that an analytic cure would produce a change in the subject's relation with time, precisely due to the fact that analysis touches the phantasmatic structure. The revealing of the phantasm which was framing, ordering and sustaining the subject's reality modifies his way of dealing with time, thus putting an end to the above mentioned temporal inadequacy, which is so often expressed in neurotic complaints of being too soon or too late. Although, during an analytic cure, the phantasm "composes itself" through a long elaboration, there is however a singular, decisive moment in which the subject realizes what he hadn't always known. "The instant of the phantasm" (Lacan, 1966b, p. 834) opens towards the moment to conclude.

With the phantasm, the subject substitutes the lack of certainty of the unconscious and, within the oscillation of the phantasm, another temporality emerges, favored by anxiety (*angoisse*). In fact, with any subject, there may be found both the idea of a delay that is proper to the symptom and the passage to

[2] Lesson from 21st June.

[3] Lesson from 15th April 1959. The procrastination of an obsessional subject is a good example regarding the meeting with the Other sex.

another temporality given through anxiety. This latter temporality includes time as marked by the pulsations of the unconscious, that is its formations and repetition, but it allows the situation of a *beyond* that Lacanian conception articulates with the function of the haste or imminence (*hâte*). *The moment to conclude* is logical time as *imminence* (*hâte*), the imminence "of saying that I am human before the others would say it, before I do and leave me behind"[4].

"Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty: A New Sophism" is the first text in which Lacan approaches and then gives a logical solution to the problem of the subject(s)-subject(s) relation and of the relation of the subject to oneself, by articulating in a *temporal* manner the plurality of subjects and the uniqueness of a subject. In short, the prisoners' sophism[5] is as follows: a prison warden has three selected prisoners summoned and announces them that he would set one of them free if they pass the following test: "There are three of you present. I have five discs, differing only in color: three white and two black. Without letting you know which I have chosen, I shall fasten one of them to each of you between his shoulders; outside your visual field and without any means of mirroring. You will be left to consider your companions and their respective discs without being allowed to communicate amongst yourselves. The first to be able to deduce his own color will be the one to be set free. His conclusion must be founded upon logic and not probabilistic reasons." After having contemplated one another *for a certain time*, says Lacan, the three prisoners take a few steps together and pass through the doorway simultaneously as one man, each one of them giving the same logical deduction of the fact that his disc is white.

The prisoners' sophism allows Lacan to isolate the *three specific dimensions* of the temporal relation of the subject to the Other, relation which, if the act is missing, becomes eternalized: the *instant* of the gaze, the *time* for comprehending and the *moment* to conclude. These time instances, which are constitutive to the whole process of the sophism, allow the emergence of a true logical movement. The three dimensions are knotted in an *act* that has the property of "simultaneously making surface and time" (Lacan, 1974[6]) – in connection to the object *a*, whose function we shall explain below. The second time, the time for comprehending – that which is comprehensible – comes with the necessity of a scansion, a scansion applicable to a cease, a stop and a restart[7], therefore not being a linear time. Historical time circles round – and, from this point of view, there is no progress –

[4] A second time, logically "prior", had been the time for comprehending, which is still linked to a seemingly solidity, to an irreducible character, to a structure of the subject in a toric shape, such as Klein's bottle.

[5] For the wider presentation of the logical problem and its solution, see Lacan (1966a, p. 197-214).

[6] Lesson from 9th Aprilie**.**

[7] The register of *possible* is that which ceases to write itself, but does not cease to repeat itself, precisely in the sense of Freudian repetition. It must cease writing itself in order to prove something, and the three prisoners must prove how they reasoned: in mathematical logic, writing is there to make proof, because the letter is somehow inherent to the passage towards the real. For this, see Lacan (1974).

for topological reasons, namely because the human world is a toric world (Bousseyroux, 2003, p. 130): the neurotic subject is made of the fabric of a torus which attracts him around a "central exteriority".

The prisoners' sophism appears to be a paradox in the classical logic because classical logic does not accept anything that cannot be seen in simultaneity. Yet, in this sophism – and contrary to classical logic and to its spatializing conception, which sees everything all at once –, what prevails is the temporal structure of the logical process, and not the spatial one. The *suspended motions* tell about what subjects found out from what they could not see: black discs are significant by means of their time of stop, and, therefore, their crucial value is not of a binary choice, but instead it belongs to a verifying motion that is established by the logical process in which the subject transforms the three possible combinations in three *times of possibility*.

1. "Being in front of two blacks means being a white". In the expression "two blacks, therefore a white" one can see the *instantaneous* value of the obvious, one which has a zero time of fulguration. One instant opens the interval so that the data of the antecedent would become data of the consequent. It is an instant called the *instant of the gaze*. But this is only an impersonal subject.
2. "If I were black, the two whites that I now see would not linger in recognizing that they were white". Here, the subject – which is an indefinite subject of reciprocity – objectifies in an intuition something more besides the actual data – that he is seeing two white discs – and, in this way, the *time for comprehending* is defined for the other two subjects. This means that there is a certain time for meditation when the two whites become aware, each one for the other, that "if I had been a black, he would have gone out without hesitation, but since he meditates, it is because I am white too". As for measuring this time for comprehending, it can be reduced to the instant of the gaze, but, on the other hand, the gaze in its instant can include the whole time that is necessary to conclude.
3. "I make haste (*je me hâte*) to assert that I am white so that these two whites would not outrun me in recognizing themselves as what they are". Through this assertion upon himself, the subject concludes the logical movement. The return of the movement of comprehending continues for the subject in a reflection where this instant reappears in a subjective manner as a *time of delay* (*temps de retard*) towards the others within the movement itself and, therefore, it logically appears as imminence of the *moment to conclude*. But only at this moment to conclude the subject is a white, because if he lets himself outrun by his fellows in this conclusion, then he will no longer be able to recognize himself as a white. So, under the urgency of the logical movement, the

> subject precipitates both his judgment and his departure; in this way, the tension of time is manifested in the act that shows to the others that the subject has concluded. The assertive – that is, subjective – judgment manifests itself in this third moment through an *act*. A singular act. Through topology, Lacan tries to spatialize the temporal relation by introducing the *logic of the act*. But, let us specify that this is neither an *acting out* – which would stage what has not been symbolized, but nevertheless with the possibility of a retour within the symbolic – nor a *passage à l'acte* as retour in jouissance – and, thus, something that would be short-circuiting the symbolic and the time for comprehending, with the only consequence of a retour within the real, that is the instant of the gaze compressed together with the moment to conclude.

This sophism maintains all the constraining rigor of logical process, states Lacan, "on the condition that one integrated therein the value of the two *suspensive scansions*" (Lacan, 1966a, p. 201)[8]. The truth of the sophism is only verified by its presupposition, it manifests itself by outrunning error and by advancing in the act that produces certainty. The subjects are others for the others and this common measure is given by the time for comprehending, which is the essential function of any logical relation of reciprocity. The referring of "I" to the others must be temporalized. None of them can reach the truth other way than through the others. This is what Lacan calls a "collective logic"[9] (Lacan, 1966a, p. 213), which has three moments: A human knows what a human is not; Humans recognize each other as being humans; I assert myself as human so that I should not be convinced by humans that I am human for fear not to be convinced by humans that I am not human.

Lacan (1966a) observes that the urgency of concluding cannot happen without the objectifying of the *time of delay*. Thus, subject A must say quickly that he is a white for fear that he could not know anymore whether he is or is not a black. It means that the act of departing anticipates the certitude of the assertion "I am a white": through his saying (*dire*) – from which any act occurs – he outruns the said (*dit*) of his conclusive declaration. Hence, in the logical progress, there are the two stops of the prisoners and if we were to consider them, then logical time would no longer be a sophism, but a pure logic of act, which would not take place without the function of imminence (*hâte*). The logic of act, in fact, is in continuous growth throughout the test and is objectified by the third and last departure, which is no longer stopped.

[8] Had it been four subjects, there would have been three stops; for five subjects, four stops, and so on.

[9] This collective logic answers to the problem of identification with the group in a different manner than Mass psychology: this new manner is the group without leader, a group that, in 1975, was formalized as a Borromean cartel.

Concerning "intersubjectivity", in *Encore*, Lacan (1993) says that each of the three subjects is not "one amongst others", but in relation to others he is the stake of their thinking. He is the stake of their thinking by appearing as the object *a* under their gaze, the *petit a* which Lacan later calls "the gold number" (Lacan, 1967)[10].

Hence, each of the three subjects, A, B and C, appears under the others' gaze as the object *a*, a stake of their thinking. This means that, in reality, they are 2+a, which is reduced to 1+a. Object *a* is the real subject of this reasoning, whereas 2 ciphers the two others' gaze who see him a white, a gaze which becomes the stake of a bet over the time that remains to get out of doubt, to go out of the postponing without exit. The reduction of 2+a to 1+a is made when A says: "I make haste in asserting that I am a white so that these two whites would not outrun me by recognizing themselves as what they are before I myself do it". At this point, through imminence, the act anticipates the certitude of the subject's assertion that "I am One white (*Je suis Un blanc*)". This is because none of the three – each of them being able to come in the place of A – could not make this assertion if *petit a* had not been added to the unity of place of the act. *Petit a* is the little time of advance that the other would have upon the subject if ever he himself (A) were black. The function of the haste (*hâte*) is the very function of *a* (Lacan, 1963)[11].

Object *a* is a plus[12] that I presuppose in the other and that brings about my haste or imminence. Herein lies the necessity of adding the mark of the One over the body – the white disc – the incorporeal part of the time of the possible advance of the other –, which is written 1+a and which causes the exit from the repetitive departures. Let us not forget that a third stop would make him miss the exit forever. Through time – as incorporeal – each subject equalizes the equation of 1+a and 1/a, through which comes the splitting of the "I" through that particular object that is the *remnant of time*.

Lacan (1978) returns to the prisoners' sophism when he speaks of the end of analysis, namely after the double topological tour of the two scansions:

The end of the analysis is when we have twice turned in circle, meaning that we found again what that something is to which we are prisoners. Because we must understand that even if the problem of logical time takes place between the four walls of language in which we dwell, still we are captive of the sinthom (*sinthome*)[13]. (Bousseyroux, 2003, p. 135, own translation)

The time for elaborating the phantasm brings forth a revealing moment, yet the time for elaborating is more like a time for apprehending – as we mentioned

[10] Lesson from 1st March. The mathematical property of the golden number puts *petit a* in the following equality: 1+a=1/a.

[11] Lesson from 16th January.

[12] Plus time and plus-jouissance, see Soler (2003, p. 111-126).

[13] We cannot give a proper translation in English for the Lacanian concept of sinthome. In Romanian it would perhaps be sîntom, which would cover both meanings, those of symptôme and saint homme. Lacan speaks about the end of analysis in his lesson from 10th January 1978 of "Le moment de conclure" (Apud Bousseyroux, 2003).

Klein's bottle – rather than for comprehending. The moment of the phantasm, the moment when the phantasm unveils itself as the fiction through which a subject gives meaning to the Other's desire, has the effect of separating the subject. This is why Lacan uses the expression in connection to the two movements of alienation and separation. Separation is considered in both ways: *separare* and *se parere* (Lacan, 1966b, p. 843).

In 1967, Lacan was still referring to the *après-coup* of logical time: the haste linked to the fact that the subject lets the phantasm to fall and, thus, the insurance that was given by the phantasm also falls; the passage from analysant to analyst was related to an inverse urgency to the one of the phantasm. In that period, *hâte* was related to the destitution of the subject, to the loss of faith in a *sujet suppose savoir* within transference, to the *desêtre* of the analyst. But later, in 1970 – *Radiophonie* – and 1976 – *Preface to the English edition of Seminar XI*, where he makes the word play of *histérisation-hystorisation*, and then, in seminar *L'insu que sait de l'une bévue s'aile à mourre* –, he developed a toric structure of the subject and spoke about an emergency in the testimony of a lying truth in the *passe*. There is, as such, an absence of truth that would characterize the end of analysis, which is different from the intersubjective truth of the logical time.

From then on, the subject is no longer suspended at the time of the Other, but is inscribed in the "time that remains" (Agamben, 2000/2009)[14]. It is a messianic time, the one that Agamben finds at Saint Paul the Apostle: it is that time that, beginning with the event of Resurrection, remains for the Christian as time of the end. But this is not the end of time, but it is a time of "now", which is fundamentally present. Messianic time is neither *olam kazzeh* – time that goes from the creation of the world until its end – nor *olam kabba* – time that begins after the end of time. It is the time between the two times – the time that remains between time and the end of time – when time itself is split by the messianic event of Resurrection. For Agamben, we are nothing but time, this is the only real time, the only time that we will ever have and having the experience of such a time leads to a complete transformation of the subject and of the way he lives.

Analytic experience could confront the subject with such a time that remains. The event that opens this time is the revealing of the phantasm that used to order reality or, to put it in Freud's words, to sustain the indestructible desire. But the question is what kind of desire is there when entering this kind of time? It is something that makes us follow Lacan, when he speaks about the happening of an original desire that is no longer the indestructible – Freudian – desire that was sustained by the phantasm and that was constructing the future in the image of the past, as it was in the Freudian conception, but it is the emergence of a singular desire.

[14] We cannot give a proper translation in English for the Lacanian concept of sinthome. In Romanian it would perhaps be sîntom, which would cover both meanings, those of **symptôme and** saint homme. Lacan speaks about the end of analysis in his lesson from 10th January 1978 of "Le moment de conclure" (Apud Bousseyroux, 2003).

The difficulty of making a discourse about this type of experience is due to the fact that even if the time of an analytical experience is not linear, the sentence and the discourse are nevertheless linear. Perhaps this is the reason why Lacan indicates a correspondence between topology and practice.

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