

Five Variations on the Theme of “Provoked Elaboration”

Jacques-Alain Miller

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The expression «provoked elaboration», forged by Pierre Théves from a text by Lacan indicating what corresponds to the «plus-one» of the cartel, hits the mark and I have willingly accepted his invitation to try my hand at variations of this formula this evening. I will propose five. I will not explain the concept of the cartel but state the use I make of it. Straight off: the cartel never interested me other than for the purpose of knowledge. I willingly accept that there are other uses, but this is mine.

Variation I – A contrasted formula

The formula of provoked elaboration is one of contrast and even harmony. It has consonance and speaks Latin. There is the work [*labeur*] and the voice; and also two prefixes, *ex* (out of, from) and *pro* (forward, in front of). And it is always thus that one works through¹: from... and being called by, provoked by... The work is always provoked by a call, a call of provocateurs who will search for what is latent and which, by making the call, reveals it, even creates it. The call to work is the clarion wake up call, it makes an appeal. The simplest structure of the provoked elaboration is given to us by the first line of the first of the four discourses:

$S_1 \rightarrow S_2$

Or even, if we take away the signifiers to leave only the places :



I present this as the minimal structure, the matheme of the provoked elaboration.

Variation II – An elaboration is always provoked

If there is a provocation to work, to elaboration, it is that there is no vocation for the work. Rather, there would be a vocation to laziness. It is a subject for economists: how to provoke the workers to work, those whose inclination – since the establishment of the capitalist discourse- would be to do nothing? By means of which material or ideological stimulants? In fact, stimulation is always signifying/significant [*signifiante*]. Look at the analytic group: the pass is certainly a provoked elaboration. It is a question of, through the call that bears the offer of the pass, to provoke an elaboration of the analysis before the passers; then, after the process, the A.S.², as “named to”, is provoked

1. Reference to Freud's “Durcharbeiten”: in French *élaboration* [TN]

2. A.S.: Analyst of the School (A.E.: Analyste de l'École) [TN]

to elaborate for the public. Nonetheless, an analysis as such belongs to the register of provoked elaboration. This is what the term *Durcharbeitung* says in its own way, which we have tried to translate by varying the word “laboration”, “perlaboration”, “translaboration”; we could content ourselves with the French term «*élaboration*». Analysis is an elaboration provoked by the signifier of the transference. In this regard, let us not forget the signified of the transference, which I called in my Seminar its “semantic effect”. I bring to your attention that the subject-supposed-to-know (which is a signification) is obviously distinct from the subject who knows, which is to be placed in the position of agent. The subject-supposed-to-know is not at all an agent-of-knowledge, which has a rather blocking effect on the elaboration; its way of provoking the elaboration is rather to revoke it, or at least to defer it - which, after all, is what the very notion of education consists of.

Variation III – The elaboration of discourse

The four discourse are, as it were, four types of mastery; but we can also treat each one as a mode of provocation, even naming each of the places of discourse with a new term: in the place of the agent, I put provocation; in the place of the other: work, elaboration; in the bottom right: production, as they say; And, why not in the place of truth, evocation, which responds to the allusive status of truth.

provocation	elaboration
<hr/>	
evocation	production

In the master's discourse, provocation takes the form, which I previously evoked, of the call to work, whose function is recalled by Lacan in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. The university discourse, which I called a moment ago, revoked elaboration, I also said deferred. What is produced here, if not a provocateur? One should not be surprised at the recurrence, there where the university discourse functions, of that which seems to be considered as contingent, and which is its necessary production: the university discourse produces –has always produced- provocateurs, a term which I use in its best sense. This term suits admirably the hysteric's discourse that reveals the provocateur subject. The analytic discourse displaces this subject, making of him a provoked provocateur.

Variation IV – The agent-provocateur

As I understand it, the plus-one must be an agent provocateur. He is, of course, in charge of direction, and I think it should not be a problem to put him in the place of agent. But how to put this *charge* into practice?

There is a tendency to do it as a master, and even as a “master-at-work”³ - if I may say so - and one often appeals to the plus-one in this capacity. The problem is that, as master,

3. In French «*maître-au-travail* ». It plays on the homophony with «*mettre-au-travail*»: “to put (someone) to work”. [TN]

he can only put to work a knowledge that is already there and he can only produce that which is outside the symbolic, let us say for the moment, the object *a*.

It must be known in advance, that if one calls on the plus-one as he who knows or would know, one will produce \$; and one must also know what the call made upon the plus-one as analyst (even chosen for this reason) will produce; we will see what comes out of it.

Straight away, I will say that the structure that best responds to my experience of the cartel is that of the discourse of the hysteric. Indeed, when a cartel ends with “something that cannot be said” - I understand that many cartels end with a “we cannot testify to what we have done” - that seems to me to be the sign that there was something of the master at the start, which has not been rid of. I absolutely do not see in the fact of this impotence the proof that there would have been an excellent cartel there.

If the cartel has believed to have co-opted an analyst and the analyst conforms to this, which in a cartel means to play dumb [*faire la bûche*], we know the result: the participants mess around. It is the structure of the analytic discourse, but transposed to the cartel, the result of which is the denunciation of some master-signifiers, which seems to me very poor. If the cartel departs from an already constituted knowledge that would have to be acquired from the plus-one, then the famous “cartel crises”, denoted \$, occur. Generally, they are the testimony that a ready-made knowledge, a knowledge-in-sum [*savoir-en-somme*], was placed in command. Knowledge is obtained as a result only on the condition of placing the plus-one in the position of \$. The structure of the hysteric discourse is therefore here proposed for the cartel, of which one should not forget that Lacan said was almost that of the discourse of science. And that is why, if I had to choose a model of the plus-one, I would choose Socrates; Socrates, who has been remembered by the elaborations he provoked in his interlocutors: what have been called the Platonic dialogues are these kind of provoked elaborations.

The plus-one must come with question marks and (as a certain hysterical subject, who boasted of it as her most eminent function in this world, told me) make holes in the heads. This implies that he refuses to be a master who puts to work; to be one-who-knows; to be an analyst in the cartel; and this in order to be that agent provocateur from where there is a teaching.

Last variation – The art of being plus-one

The reference I made to Socrates' behaviour implies that the cartel is a kind of *Symposium*⁴. *The Symposium*, in effect, includes what I have mentioned so far :

$$\begin{array}{c} \$ \rightarrow S1 \\ \downarrow \\ S2 \end{array}$$

4. In ancient Greece, the *symposium* (Greek: συμπόσιον *symposion*, from συμπίνειν *sympinein*, «to drink together») was a part of a **banquet** that took place after the meal, when drinking for pleasure was accompanied by music, dancing, recitals, or conversation. [from Wikipedia] [TN]

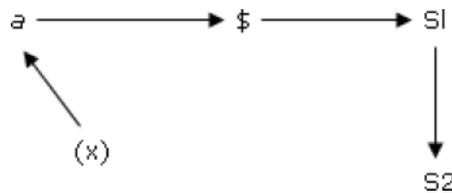


But to this is added that the agent is charged with concealing, in his very void, the cause of desire, under the brilliant outsides of the *agalma* :

$$\frac{\$}{a}$$

What happens in the cartel with regards to this? One can certainly suspect that, in the choice by the four of a one-plus, there is always an element of attraction, and the plus-ones may be flattered by this. But what to do with the *agalma* in the cartel? Is it in its right place?

I would point out that if it is true that the plus-one as subject makes others work – and in this respect we could talk about his act - he has to work himself: there is also a task of the plus- one. And I would not advise him to play dumb [*faire la bûche*], since he is also a member of the cartel. Because he works, far from being located under the bar, *a* comes in position to make the subject work. Which leads me to thus tamper with this structure.



I therefore expel the *a* from its rightful place. That would be the asceticism of the plus-one. The plus-one does not have to exhaust himself to embody the function of the plus-one. The plus-one is not the subject of the cartel; it is incumbent upon him to insert the subject effect into the cartel, to take upon himself the subjective division. This leads me to clarify the term of plus-one with that of minus-one: the plus-one adds himself to the cartel only to decomplete it, “to have to be counted there and to only function there as lack”(*)

<i>The attraction</i>		<i>The plus-or-minus-one</i>		<i>The swarm</i>
<i>a</i>	→	<i>\$</i>	→	<i>S1</i>
↑				↓
<i>S2</i>		<i>(x)</i>		<i>S2</i>
<i>What Lacan knew</i>		<i>Asceticism</i>		<i>The surplus-knowledge</i> <i>[plus-de-savoir]</i>

of knowledge is concerned, that each one is in the cartel to surrender to free association, or to mess around. This cannot be the case for the cartels of the pass, which have a job to do, the obligation to produce knowledge, and whose functioning is to be found in relation to the hysteric discourse, in so far as it is almost that of science. The cartel of the pass certainly goes in the opposite direction to the analytic discourse, since it grants or refuses a nomination; whereas the analytic discourse culminates in the denunciation of the master- signifiers, in the so-called effect of subjective destitution. The procedure of the pass is a new institution, in the very sense of the analytic institution. It is not, however, the discourse of the master, since from him who is «named to»⁶ [*nommé à*] one also expects a work of production of knowledge. This way of approaching things has the advantage of indicating how to raise the question of collective elaboration. This question arises everywhere in science in the form of priority: when two or three people talk together, go figure out afterwards who made the thing emerge! there is the one who said it, but there is also the one who made him say it, and the one who realized that it was important. Finally, they share the Nobel Prize... It is the Bourbaki⁷ idea, which presided over the creation of *Scilicet*. For if there is a structure in which the collective has a meaning, it is in the hysteric discourse. Hysteric epidemics are indeed phenomena of collective elaboration. And in all phenomena where there is spontaneity [*spontex*⁸], as in present student demonstrations, there is collective elaboration, small texts, little slogans. Perhaps there is a small committee somewhere that cuts them, to the millimeter, as in the cabinets of the *Affected Young Ladies*⁹, but it is nevertheless a collective elaboration. In short: the more cartel hysteria is cultivated, the more the elaboration is collectivized.

[...] the analytic experience produces master-signifiers in a status of decay. I have emphasised the aspect of “denouncing the identifications”. What punctuates an analysis? Identifications that “fall”. Even though they do not all disappear, at least the subject experiences that of which is not represented of his being by these master-signifiers.

[...] Strictly identified elements are the only way to work to produce a knowledge. We see this in the Scouts: each one invents a name for themselves. Of course, we will not compare the cartel to a band of Scouts, but well! they have in common the notion of team.

It is at the insistence of Jean-Pierre Klotz that I give this intervention to the Lettre mensuelle: I would not want to perpetuate Lacan's mathemes transformed for the needs of the cause. J.-A. M.

* This is to move the cartel away from the logic of the all and the exception where it was born (the name of “plus-one” indicates it sufficiently) towards that of the not-all [response to a comment by Brigitte Lemerer].

Translation: *Linda Clarke – Florencia Shanahan*

6. i.e. nominated as Analyst of the School (AS) [TN]

7. Nicolas Bourbaki is the collective pseudonym under which a group of (mainly French) 20th-century mathematicians, with the aim of reformulating mathematics on an extremely abstract and formal but self-contained basis, wrote a series of books beginning in 1935 (source: Wikipedia) [TN]

8. Reference to the term Mao-Spontex, which refers to a political movement in the Marxist and libertarian movements in Western Europe from 1960 to 1970. The neologism is composed of Maoist and Spontaneist. (source: Wikipedia) [TN]

9. Reference to *Les Précieuses ridicules* (The Ridiculous *Précieuses* or The Affected Ladies) is a one-act satire by Molière in prose. It takes aim at the *précieuses*, the ultra-witty ladies who indulged in lively conversations, word games and, in a word, *préciosité* (preciousness). [TN]