



Book Review: Jean-Claude Maleval's *Psychoanalytical Conversations* say a lot about psychoses



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Abstract

Published by Érès with the support of the Centre national du livre, the simple review of the introduction to this collection would already be satisfying. Not that the “revised and expanded” texts proposed by Jean-Claude Maleval are of limited interest. Quite the contrary. However, the dozen or so pages that open these *Psychoanalytical Conversations with Ordinary and Extraordinary Psychotics* contain assertions and other clinical innovations capable of shaking the doctrinal tree. Certainly, there is no surprise in this author's constant and incisive criticism of the “dead end of the descriptive strategy” adopted by successive DSMs and reduced to “entities independent of human history and cultural variations”. Moreover, this in an environment characterized by a “spectacular” increase in requests for psychoanalysis by subjects with a psychotic structure. The clinician briefly explains the reasons: the introduction of the diagnosis of ordinary psychosis, the sharpening of its identification and a better knowledge of the conduct of the treatment. A trend reinforced *a contrario* by the negative effects of a “deterioration of the conditions in which patients receive in psychiatric institutions”.

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The introductory paragraphs dedicated by Jean-Claude Maleval to the “symptomatological variety of psychosis” are more innovative: if he quotes Jacques-Alain Miller on “the gradation within the great chapter of psychosis”, the emeritus professor of clinical psychology at the University of Rennes 2 still distances himself cautiously from him by affirming that “there is no specific clinic of generalized foreclosure” [forclusion généralisée]. He preferred a “clinic of restricted foreclosure” [clinique de la forclusion restreinte] in a place where the “elementary phenomena, common to ordinary and extraordinary psychoses, constitute the clinical expression of the psychotic structure”. A distinction which is not without consequence since it enables a transition towards conceptions elaborated during his long experience in psychopathology: in the first place, not only is the clinic of stabilizing “substitution” [suppléance], sometimes by means of fantasies or perverse behaviors, or even by acting out - in the image of unmotivated murders - but also with regard to the function of writing which becomes “a deposit and a ciphering of the jouissance of the Other” [jouissance de l’Autre]. “Substitution” [suppléance], as the “compensation¹ of the deficiency of the fundamental fantasy”, are concepts used by the author who seems to follow in the footsteps of Helene Deutsch who is admittedly, even still hesitant at her time, of the “functioning as if” described by her in

the avoidance of the triggering of the psychosis. However, is this “Substitution” an *ad hoc* function, a more general defense mechanism, or even a pathognomonic sign of a new entity - the pre-psychosis - capable, as some authors affirm, of “definitively preventing the occurrence of a trigger²”?

Secondly, the author raises the problem of the differential diagnosis between, on the one hand, Asperger’s syndrome – “valorized in the XXIst century” and, on the other hand, borderline case and ordinary psychosis, which was the subject of one of his other works³; in this regard, he suggested a rethinking of the Freudian triad “Neurosis, psychosis and perversion”. In addition to this, he specifies in his fascinating study on Glenn Gould the reason why one should replace this third component with “autism as all studies on the prevalence show an exponential curve”. Additional audacity: his thought aiming at substituting the term of “substitute structure” [structure suppléante] to that of “psychotic structure” to better consider the “modes of specific jouissance” [jouissance spécifique] to these denominations. By making autism an entity in its own right⁴, Jean-Claude Maleval completely empties of its content schizophrenia, which Eugen Bleuler had made in the heart of his discovery : He thus completes its nosographic dismembering, an undertaking initiated in 1981 with his work in Payot Edition and dedicated to Jacques Lacan *Folies hystériques et psychoses dissociatives*, then, in a much more

¹ According to Christian Hoffmann, “compensation” involves, more than substitution [suppléance], “if only etymologically, decompensation”, in Eléonore Galiana-Mingot, *Quelques préalables théorico-cliniques à la conceptualisation lacanienne des suppléances, Du « comme si » d’Hélène Deutsch à la « prépsychose » de Moritz Katan*, Recherches en psychanalyse, Cairn, 2010/1 n°9, p. 149.

² Ibid.

³ *Repères pour la psychose ordinaire*, Navarin Editeur, 2019.

⁴ Jean-Claude Maleval has devoted two important works to this topic: *L’autiste et sa voix*, Coll. « Champ freudien », Seuil, 2009 and *La différence autistique*, préface de Jacques-Alain Miller, Coll. « Arguments Analytiques », Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2021.

committed manner, in a work that is both thorough and astonishingly didactic, for example by separating “psychotic delusion and neurotic delirium”, a book entitled *Logique du délire*⁵. So many innovations made it authoritative; at the end of this abundant introduction, to recall and confirm the fact that “psychoanalysis is in an exceptional position in the field of knowledge in relation to the discourse of science”, he even proposed to add to the latter “ethics committees”. Science must be on its toes.

In detail, some unpublished texts such as *On the desert clinic*, the one on Glenn Gould’s *Asperger’s syndrome or ordinary psychosis?* and the one, particularly edifying in that it makes a case for the numerous related contradictions on “the borderline catch-all diagnosis”, shoulders with older contributions: Some of them, published in the past in *exclusively* Lacanian journals, remain more difficult to decipher because of a metalanguage that is less accessible to those *uninitiated* in Lacan’s formulas. However, it must be recognized - and we readily agree with this observation - that Jean-Claude Maleval is an *enlightened translator* in explaining the latter with the presentation of clinical cases backed up by an academic thought that is resolutely oriented towards teaching. That is, with a rare efficiency for the audience or the reader.

Among the articles that have caught our attention is the one entitled *Unmotivated murder and the function of acting out for the psychotic subject* : From Esquirol’s “homicidal monomania” to Lacan’s “process of alienation in the image of the

other” through Guiraud’s and Cailleux’s “murder as an effort to liberate the pathologically transposed illness in the outside world”, the author’s historical and clinical erudition, enriched by his own experience, *elucidating* in a very convincing way the stages, mechanisms and other obscure chains in these homicides, the reasons for which are supposedly inexplicable. Additionally, other professions directly linked to these rapidly increasing phenomena would be well advised to learn from these texts.

In the same vein, we have carefully compared the original version of his study *Necrophilia, psychosis and perversion* published in 1997⁶ with the one in this collection. The author replaces each occurrence of the meaning “murderer by lust” [assassin par lubricité] by “murderer by pure enjoyment” [assassin par pure jouissance], an inflection - apparently minimalist in form but more in conformity with Lacanian doxa - introduced by a few lines of Jacques-Alain Miller distinguishing between “crimes of utility” [crime d’utilité] and “crimes of enjoyment” [crime de jouissance], the latter “delivering to the actant a satisfaction which is so singular that it cannot be shared”.

On the other hand, we will question his text *Un sinthome masochiste hors normes*, initially published in *La Cause freudienne* under the title *Suppléance perverse chez un sujet psychotique*. Its content is based on a clinical vignette - if one considers two sessions with a subject, followed ten years later by a report, could have this meaning - written by Michel de M’Uzan in 1972⁷. Jean-Claude Maleval detects in this case the

⁵ *Logique du délire*, Nouvelle édition revue et augmentée, Coll. « Clinique Psychanalytique et Psychopathologie », Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2011.

⁶ Th. Alberne (sous la direction de), *Criminologie et psychiatrie*, Ellipses, 1997, pp. 207-227.

⁷ « Un cas de masochisme pervers, Esquisse d’une théorie », in *De l’art à la mort*, Tel Gallimard, n°84, 1977, pp. 125-150.

setting up of a “perverse sinthome to be able to remedy the failure of the Borromean knot rings” or, more simply said, “to put the ego back together”: the tattoos as well as the scars of the sado-masochistic practices make “hold together body and imaginary”. Nevertheless, two questions arise: If Lacanian doctrine holds perversion to be a series of trans-structural conducts, in what way it would be possible to see it as a specific and successful replacement for the foreclosure of the Nom-du-Père [forclusion du Nom-du-Père]? The author then seems to take into consideration the absence of limits in the search for enjoyment of the subject and this, contrary to the numerous cases of sado-masochism where a preliminary agreement between the actors takes the place to define mutual limits not to be exceeded. However, Mr. M's very “lucid” refusal of an “amputation of the penis for fear of medico-legal complications”, in addition to the undoubtedly phallic significance of this *retreat*, does it not remind us of the partial existence, in any psychotic, of a “psychic attitude that takes reality into account⁸”? In this perspective, can we still evoke the central hypothesis of a “substitution” [suppléance]?

Whether or not one is close to, convinced of, or simply interested in Lacan's thought in the orientation proposed by Jacques-Alain Miller, it is undeniable that Jean-Claude Maleval's *Psychoanalytical Conversations*, apart from a few very Lacanian pages, clarifies with acuity and instructs our knowledge of psychoses with sharp intelligence. In other words, the book is a must for any self-respecting clinician.

Nice, May 2023

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Laplanche et Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, Coll. « Quadrige », PUF, 2014, p. 70.