

THE REAL IN THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CARTEL¹ FOUR VARIATIONS PLUS ONE

Florencia F.C. Shanahan

Since the last ICLO intercartel day, last year, I have continued to be part of two cartels and I have joined another three. The pandemic undoubtedly may activate manic defences when these are part of the subject's mode of confronting the unforeseen. However, my way of including myself in each of those cartels has been very different. I would say that this is the first form in which the title of today's meeting presented itself for me: the real in the experience of the cartel is linked to this *difference* that I experience in my own way of inhabiting each cartel.

My hypothesis is that this cannot be explained just because the other members of the cartel are not the same, or by the frequency of our meetings, or the topics we are working on. So I asked myself : how could I try to grasp something of this difference, by making use of the very concept of the *real* ?

In order to do this, I will take up four definitions that Jacques Lacan has given of the real. They belong to very diverse moments of his teaching, and they do not exclude each other. Moreover, they are not exhaustive and we may find others. In fact, what interested me was the attempt to render these various definitions somehow operative when trying to account for what actually goes on for me in this very peculiar device that Lacan invented for psychoanalytic knowledge to be produced, if it is not to be pure repetition of the same or pure misrecognition of how one is implicated in it.

In one of the cartels that was recently formed, which started in the summer, there is a phenomenon that is produced whereby I find myself always coming back to the same problem. We are investigating the notions of foolishness in Lacan, my specific trait being how to connect it with the concept of dupery. I have been going around in circles and, at each meeting, I stumble upon the same quotes, the same references and the same questions. This is my experience of the real in the cartel that responds to Lacan's definition of it as *that which always returns to the same place*.

There is another cartel that has been functioning for much longer, nearly two years now, and of which I am the plus-one. We set ourselves the task of reading one of Lacan's seminar out loud and it is a very enjoyable cartel experience. However, I often find myself delivering explanations, giving references, making connections and speaking too much. The form in which the real makes itself present for me in this cartel is more linked to the symptom (in the mode of excess). Lacan's definition of the symptom as the only *symbolic that comes from the real* is what was evoked for me.

A third cartel, in the form of a 'Flash cartel' that only lasted a couple of months and which also emerged as a way of knotting during the beginning of the pandemic, brought me face to face with Lacan's definition of *the real as the impossible*. We wanted to use TV and Netflix series to interrogate the current responses of discourses to the sexual non-relation. Unexpectedly, at the first meeting we realised not only that we spoke different languages, but that some of us could not speak the others' languages! Despite this, we still met, discussed, exchanged emails, shared references, and binge watched on quite a number of great series. However, there was no written product of this experience. This leaves me thinking...

Finally, there is the cartel that had to stop. We shall resume our work in the new year. We had been working consistently for over a year on the topic of clinical structures, when *the real without law* was made present in the form of the covid-19 affecting one of its members. What I extracted from this irruption was that it was important not to continue as if it hadn't happened. That is to say, not to go on with the absence of one cartelisand, but to inscribe the loss that this version of the real confronted us with, namely, what is incalculable.

It is a question of circumscribing, each time, the obstacle, the spoke in the wheel, the wall or the rock in the middle in the road. And also, of what form of

treatment of each of these versions of the real one may find, with others and thanks to others, in the montage that the cartel constitutes. In other words, how not to ignore this real that is present at every encounter? To put work transference at the heart of the School, leaving open the empty place of the final word, was Lacan's attempt. Today, I thank ICLO and especially Sheila Power and Rik Loose, Delegates of Cartels, for creating the space where something of this can be lodged.

1. ICLO-NLS Intercartel Day, December 2020.