# "Everyone Is Mad"

#### **WAP 2024**

I dedicate this conference to Angelina Harari who, as president for four years, has led the life of the World Association of Psychoanalysis (WAP) with a hand that has sometimes been rough, sometimes gentle, but always to the point.

It falls to me to give the title of the Congresses of the WAP\*. Why is this so? The habit has taken hold, it has become a kind of tradition – danger! This will not always be so. But for now I guess that that time has not yet come. So, I will continue to do so. Our next conference will be entitled: "Everyone is Mad".[1]

EVERYONE

#### Context

Like the title of this conference – "The Woman Does Not Exist" –, "Everyone is Mad" is an aphorism of Lacan's. I fished it out in a small piece of writing that Lacan had written at my request. At the time, it was a matter of defending the Department of Psychoanalysis at Vincennes, whose existence within the University of Paris VIII was under threat. It is still threatened every year – for reasons of circumstance, but also for a structural reason. The truth is that, as Lacan wrote, "[psychoanalysis] cannot be taught".[2] This is due to the opposition, which as I say is structural, between the analytical discourse and the university discourse, between the knowledge always supposed in the practice of psychoanalysis and the exposed knowledge that holds sway in the university discourse. I will not develop this opposition, which is well known to us.

I extracted this aphorism from a few lines written by Lacan from a time that could be said to be beyond the grave, insofar as it is situated after the Seminar that he entitled "The moment to conclude". Everything Lacan wrote or said after this Seminar enjoys a special status as an afterthought to the completed set of his *teaching* – I use this word, which he also used before he pushed it away. This gives these fragmentary remarks a testamentary value. *Everyone is mad*, Lacan formulated it once and only once, in a text published in the then confidential journal, *Ornicar?* Because I pointed it out, commented on it, repeated it, this aphorism entered our common language, that of the WAP, and into what we could call our *doxa*. It has even become a kind of slogan.

In the context of its time, it was understood in a way that catered to contemporary prejudices, namely the democratic claim of a fundamental equality among citizens imposing itself on the traditional hierarchy, deconstructing this hierarchy that governed the relationship of the carer to his patient. I say this without nostalgia, insofar as Lacan had anticipated the contemporary ideology the universal equality among speaking beings by emphasizing the fraternity which, according to him, should exist between the therapist

and his patient. The "emancipated" man of modern society, he said, we have to take him in and, I quote, "clear anew the path to his meaning in a discreet fraternity [...] to which we never measure up".[3]

# Depathologisation

If it is a question of fraternity, it has long ceased to be discreet and is, on the contrary, clamoured for at the top of one's voice as if speaking beings were completely and totally equal.

Under these circumstances, it should not come as a surprise that this demand for equality results in the programmed disappearance of the clinic. All clinical types are being progressively removed from the great clinical catalogue, already debunked, and deconstructed by successive editions of the DSM. And this, at a time when all individuals affected by a mental disorder, a handicap, or something that was once deemed to be an abnormality, are coming together to form groups. These legally stablished and registered groups are often constituted as pressure groups – right down to autistic people, voice-hearers, etc. All indication suggests that the clinic will soon become a thing of the past. It is up to us to bring our practice into line with this new era, without nostalgia, without bitterness, without a spirit of revenge.

In such a context, the Lacanian aphorism can only be interpreted as taking on and validating a term that is now commonplace (we have heard it resound more than once during this conference): *depathologisation*. There will be no more pathologies, there will be, there already are, instead, freely chosen lifestyles – a freedom that is inalienable because it is that of legal subjects [*sujets de droit*]. If you will allow me to put it like this, *le droit l'emporte sur le tordu – the straight prevails over the bent*.[4]

Freud speaks of the substitution of the reality principle for the pleasure principle. We are witnessing the substitution of the juridical principle for the clinical principle, held to be part of a suprematism that is henceforth reviled in democratic systems. The consequences are already being felt. To give just one recent example, the law passed this year by the French Parliament stipulates that any reservation, reluctance, or modulation of the request of a subject – a legal subject – for a gender transition, as it is called, will henceforth be considered an offence. It took the intervention of the submissions by the École de la Cause freudienne for the National Assembly and Senate to ratify two amendments establishing an exception for therapists, provided that their remarks show prudence, invite reflection, and do not contravene the benevolence and respect required before what I have called a free choice of lifestyle. A French politician is even proposing today that gender reassignment be added to the French Constitution and recognised as a fundamental human right, overlooked until now.

Under these conditions, the aphorism formulated by Lacan in 1978 is understood as being perfectly in line with the *Zeitgeist*, the spirit of the times. Yet, from this perspective, it would have been better to say: "Everyone is normal".

# A double paradox

The expression "Everyone is mad", completed in Lacan's text with the words "that is, delusional", is not without a kind of grating sound. Indeed, the imputation of madness and delusion is still considered a clinical matter. It is to assert, it seems, the end of the clinic, but in terms that belong to the clinic. However, this is not the only paradox introduced by this aphorism. Indeed, who is the one saying that everyone is mad? It can only be a madman. What he says is therefore a delusion. As a universal, it is an exact duplicate of Epimenides' saying – stated in the singular on the part of an *I* – namely, "*I* am lying". This double paradox leads us to suspect that there is, in the aphorism in question, something more and perhaps something other than a confirmation of the said depathologisation.

I confess that by spreading this aphorism far and wide, and by taking it out of its textual context, by elevating or lowering it to the quality of an oh-so-effective slogan, I have undoubtedly encouraged a misunderstanding that must be corrected when we make it the theme of our next congress. Nothing could be simpler: it suffices to resituate it in the context of this short text from which I extracted it – which is what I will endeavour to do in an inevitably abbreviated form required by the closing function that determines my duty here.

## **Dialectics for the clinic**

Before engaging in this work of recontextualisation, I will indicate, in a brief excursus, how the clinic could be saved in spite of any depathologisation. It would suffice to have recourse to the dialectic of Monsignor Dupanloup, developed to calm the ardour of those in the Church who rebelled against the proscriptions concerning progress, liberalism and modern civilisation articulated in the *Syllabus* of Pope Pius IX. The cunning bishop, acting as a spokesman for the liberal current, proceeds by distinguishing between two levels: the one he calls the thesis, where the principle is affirmed as absolute; then, below it, he inscribes the hypothesis (in the sense of what is under the thesis), where the relative triumphs. The principle, although absolute at its level, allows for some modulations, admittedly subordinate, but where account is taken of circumstances, of what is and what is not expedient, of what is necessary for it to function, etc. Thus, the absolute and the relative, far from contradicting each other, can coexist as good neighbours, provided that a hierarchy is established between the two terms.

If we make use of this dialectic, the thesis as absolute would be the disappearance of all pathology and post-clinical egalitarianism. However, in the interest of the public and to avoid disorder and destruction that the blind application of the absolute principle would inevitably bring, we would keep the distinguishing features of the clinic at the subordinate level of the hypothesis. I would like to note that this would reconcile the point of view of my colleagues Dominique Laurent and François Leguil with my own – thesis for me, hypothesis for them.[5]

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#### What cannot be taught

After this excursus, my first remark, or rectification, will be the simplest: I will limit myself to taking into account the sentence that immediately follows, which is: "Everyone is Mad, that is, delusional". This sentence is the following: "This is indeed what is demonstrated in the first step towards teaching".[6] Here, there is no depathologisation, but rather a debunking, a degradation, and why not a deconstruction of what teaching is. This may seem surprising from a subject who has long held the position of a teacher and who himself spoke of his teaching.

Indeed, what, according to Lacan – the very last Lacan, the beyond-Lacan – is demonstrated thereby, if not that teaching is madness, that teaching is a delusion? Thus, the aphorism in question is part of a fierce critique of the function of teaching. This fierce and, I might add, properly clinical critique, contextualizes the aphorism: "Everyone is mad". If we reread what precedes it in the text, we can see that, from the beginning, it is a critique, not of the clinic, but of all teaching. From now on, the slogan will be understood to mean: You have to be mad to teach, whoever teaches is delusional [qui enseigne délire]. At first glance, what Lacan seems to be concerned with is the structure of all teaching.

It is a curious way to defend the Department of Psychoanalysis – which Lacan encouraged and the existence of which he always supported– to devalue teaching, and especially the teaching of psychoanalysis, by writing that *the analytic discourse cannot be taught*. And why not? What are Lacan's alleged reasons for targeting the function of teaching in this way?

Firstly, unlike the other three discourses that he constructed, the analytic discourse "teaches nothing", for, as Lacan states, it "excludes domination". It is not a discourse of the master, which is, par excellence, the discourse of domination, because this is established on the basis of the indisputability of a master-signifier. The discourse of the master teaches what a knowledge is, i.e., that knowledge is always the slave of a master-signifier. The conditions in which the University was born do not contradict this, as this can be situated approximately at the time of Charlemagne. Nor is it a university discourse, which installs a knowledge in the dominant place allowing and even demanding to be taught. The University discourse is, par excellence, the discourse of teaching. Finally, the discourse of the hysteric makes the subject the master of the master; it dominates the dominator and, in so doing, puts him to work to produce a knowledge. This is not the master's slave-knowledge, still less the master-knowledge. It is the discourse that pushes for the invention of knowledge, so much so that Lacan underlines the structural affinity between the discourse of the hysteric and that of science.

Analytic discourse also includes the place of domination, which is located at the top left in Lacan's diagrams. However, this place is occupied by an element that is not intended to dominate, command or subdue, but rather to cause desire: what Lacan calls the object a. The object a, cause of desire, I say, even though it is precisely desire that does not allow itself to be dominated, that is resistant to any command, which it thwarts and plays itself out. Where is knowledge in this discourse? It is in the position of being only ever supposed – and not explicit – unlike in academic discourse. Being only ever supposed, it is as sub-posed that it supports the instance of the cause of desire, of which the analyst makes themselves the semblant. Here, there is no teaching, which does not prevent it being possible, when it happens, to be taught by it, but it is a knowledge without teaching value, without order, without coherence and without system, but rather a knowledge based on random encounters, without law. The analytic discourse therefore does not dominate. And, in particular, it does not dominate its subject – to be heard as you will.

The second reason Lacan gives for refusing the capacity of analytic discourse to be a subject to be taught is that "there is nothing universal about it". Indeed, it is by no means for all. It is, if I may say so, for one only, for the One-all-alone. It is for this one alone that interpretation can give rise to knowledge, which vanishes as soon as you claim to universalise it, claiming that it is valid for all. Try to explain the sensational effect of an interpretation to a large audience and it will only serve to highlight its banal or debatable character.

I will introduce a qualification here. Lacan does not say that psychoanalysis is not a subject for teaching, but rather that the analytic discourse cannot used for teaching, that is to say, roughly speaking, the practice of psychoanalysis cannot be taught. Besides this, there are the theories of psychoanalysis, its history, as well as the debates that it has sparked and that have been recorded. Given this division between the practice and theory of psychoanalysis, there is no disavowal at stake in the Department of Psychoanalysis or in the presence of psychoanalysis at university. On the contrary, there is a restriction that opens and frees up a field: the practice of psychoanalysis is not taught; at most, it is supervised on the basis of what, each time, is a singular case, which cannot be generalized to the universal, but which can be raised, when it lends itself to it, to the dignity of a paradigm.

It is therefore a warning from Lacan to his students. Keep in mind and let it be known that nothing that will be taught to you about psychoanalysis at the university will allow you to do without undergoing a psychoanalysis. You will have to, as the opening of the *Écrits* indicates, "pay the price with elbow grease",[7] "pay with your person", and this, as something quite different from a student, namely as an analysand.

## From the impossible to the necessary

I will structure the rest of my closing speech, which is rather an opening speech, by staying close to this text by Lacan, and first of all to the sentence that I placed on the cover of his *petits Écrits*, short texts gathered together in a series entitled *Paradoxes*.[8] It is the third paradox of this text, and it is with it that the second paragraph begins: "How does one go about teaching what cannot be taught?"

This is not the first time that Lacan transforms an impossible into a real. Let's say that he passes here from the impossible to the necessary. How is it possible nonetheless to teach what cannot be taught? Indeed, though impossible to teach, it is nevertheless necessary. We must first distinguish between teaching and teaching, in other words – to use the term coined by Bertrand Russell – we must "stratify" the two terms. There is teaching on the side of the impossible, and teaching on the side of the necessary. Passing from one to the other is, of course, far from straightforward.

This passage is intended not for everyone. Lacan implies that it is not a matter for *all*, but for *one*, namely Freud. For the sentence that follows appeals to him directly: "This is something Freud ventured into." There is a privilege here: Freud was the first, and for a long time, he was in charge of teaching the unteachable, that is, the practice of psychoanalysis. And he did so by paying for it with his person. In the *Traumdeutung*, he shared many of his dreams and never shied away from drawing on his own unconscious formations for the advancement of psychoanalysis. But what applies to Freud does not apply to everyone.

Yet, I would say, it also applies to Lacan. It hardly seems possible that he was not thinking of himself. However, he doesn't say so. Perhaps this is the only occasion on which he shows modesty, since it is not something he was inclined to. Given that Lacan was a reformer of analytic practice, it certainly applies to him too, though he defended himself in this regard by saying that the traits that distinguish his practice are valid only for him. Whether to imitate him or not is each one's responsibility. Nevertheless, on one occasion, he developed a doctrine out of the variable length the session, but not on its brevity. There would be much to say about it here, which I will not do now, because I want to make something of the sentence that follows, which contains our aphorism.

# "All is but a dream" [Rien n'est que rêve] V WAP CONGRESS

Here it is: "Freud (...) thought that all is but a dream, and that everyone (if one can say such a thing)" – in fact, it is universal, contrary to what Lacan asserted earlier – "is mad, that is, delusional". The theses concentrated in this sentence concern dreams, madness and delusion. They need to be unravelled. It should be noted that they are attributed to Freud by Lacan. So, it is first of all from Freud's works that I will draw in order to shed light on this sentence, in which the whole of metapsychology and the whole of the clinic are at stake.

Note that, with Lacan, sessions are not the only things to be short, even ultra-short. His writings [écrits] are always under tension, an incessantly shifting tension – sometimes he beats around the bush, associates, and wanders from the path, sometimes his discourse suddenly tightens and shoots a merciless arrow that fulminates. This is the case for this sentence – except that, in this short text, everything is sparse, stripped back, reduced to the bone.

Let's start with the proposition "everything is but a dream". A breath-taking expression. One wonders if it was Lacan who could have written this, given that, in a Seminar, he refers to the famous title of Calderón's play, Life is a Dream, to deny the thesis it conveys and invalidate it as far as analytic discourse is concerned. If everything is but a dream, what about the real? Should we then say: nothing is real [rien n'est réel] (real in Lacan's sense)? Is the real only illusion, fiction, or even delusion? After all, why not?

Here, Lacan's words come to mind that have always been considered enigmatic. In the first lesson of his

Seminar, *The Sinthome*, Lacan points to the homogeneity of the imaginary and the real, which he claims is based on the binary structure of number, before referring to Cantor's theory – which is also found in what follows in this text, the composition of which I am analysing closely here. This is certainly homogeneous with what is said in the form of "everything is but a dream". The imaginary-real homogeneity is rendered complete by the comment that "the symbol offloads onto the imaginary".[9] With respect to the mathematics he evokes, and specifically set theory, it is as if the real as well as the symbolic were resorbed into the imaginary.

Isn't this what is required to provide the basis for the affirmation that "everything is but a dream"? This supremacy of the imaginary is indeed the condition *sine qua non* for saying that "everything is but a dream". Lacan began what we must call his teaching by accentuating the prevalence of the imaginary, for example in "The Mirror Stage...". Would it not also be the imaginary that Lacan would come to promote at the end of the trajectory of his discourse? This would not be unsatisfactory for minds that like discourse to loop back upon itself. However, I will leave this theme in abeyance, using an interrogative style and the conditional tense.

## Invention of the real

Following this thread, a second comment by Lacan is found in the ninth lesson of the same Seminar. He himself notes here that he is taking a different course from Freud. In fact, he says: "the instance of knowledge that Freud (...) renovates, in the shape of the unconscious, does not on any account necessarily presuppose the real that I make use of".[10] I take from this statement that, according to Lacan, the Freudian theory of the unconscious does not presuppose the real, and that it could be sustained without the real.

The real that operates in the analytic discourse is of his invention, it is – as Lacan indicates – his *reaction* to the Freudian articulation of the unconscious: he reacts tof it by inventing the real. Lacan goes so far as to reduce the real to being only his "*symptomatic response*" to the Freudian unconscious.[11] This is to strip this term of any claim to universality, to reduce it to the symptom of one-all-alone. There is a lot to be said here, but I will keep it short.

Let us return to the idea that Freud's theoretical conception does not presuppose the real. Yes, no doubt, but it articulates the fact that something operates, allowing the subject to discriminate, let's say, without going into details, between dreams and hallucination, on the one hand, and reality, on the other.

## **Substituting without revoking**

Freud's position varied considerably on the status of this apparatus, this mechanism that he called *Realitätsprüfung*, reality-testing, as it has been translated. To argue, as Lacan does, that *everything is but a dream* is to disregard reality-testing, it is to amputate from Freudian theory a term that nevertheless seems essential to it and is considered as such by psychoanalysts.

How impudent, then, to count reality-testing as nil and, moreover, while imputing it to Freud! However, Freudian theory is not so obscure that one cannot discriminate between what is kept and what is discarded on this point in the course of his work. There is room for choice in Freud's work – which is not the French garden planted by Lacan, but rather a jungle. Lacan chooses to emphasize in Freud that which relativises, or even renders illusory, the very notion of reality-testing. This is a fascinating question for an analyst, and I can only approach it here by way of a short-cut.

This is why I will go straight to Freud's short and masterly 1911 text entitled "Formulations on the Two

Principles of Psychical – or according to the translation – Mental Functioning", leaving aside two texts that precede it, the first in the "Project For a Scientific Psychology", of 1895, the second in the famous chapter VII of the *Traumdeutung*. I also leave aside the text written three years later on the metapsychology of dreams, where he states, I believe for the first time – as James Strachey, the admirable translator of Freud's complete works into English, indicates – that the ego is the seat of reality-testing. (He also notes this in his text on the *Verneinung*). Freud introduces the term reality-testing for the first time in "Formulations on the Two Principles…", but it is only to note straight away the unconscious processes' "entire disregard of reality-testing" and that they are impervious to its action.[12]

In the first place, the text aims to articulate the relationship between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. It focuses on Freud's thesis that the decisive event in psychological development is *Einsetzung*, the establishment of the reality principle, which would constitute progress of the highest importance: the reality principle replaces what was pleasurable, sought after under the dominion of the pleasure principle, namely a *Lustgewinn*, a gain of pleasure, a surplus enjoyment [plus-de-jouir]. Here we have the satisfaction of rediscovering in psychoanalysis a most traditional scheme, according to which growing up, reaching maturity, implies renouncing pleasure in order to face up to harsh reality. No more laughter! However, as already noted, the unconscious knows nothing of reality-testing.

To this an essential comment by Freud is added that nuances or even contradicts the idea of a pure and simple substitution of the second principle for the first. Freud himself qualifies his statement: it would be wrong to think that the substitution of the reality principle for the pleasure principle implies deposition, revocation or forfeiture (Absetzung in German). "Actually – [in French "Effectivement"] the term I use to translate Wirklichkeit – the substitution of the reality principle for the pleasure principle implies no deposing of the pleasure principle, but only a safeguarding of it".[13]

In other words, and to parody a famous quote by Clausewitz, the substitution allows the pursuit of the pleasure principle by other means, namely those of the reality principle. What it is a question of obtaining via the pleasure principle, then via the reality principle, is always the *Lustgewinn*, according to the term sometimes used by Freud and which we will translate with Lacan's term: surplus enjoyment. And this proves to be, to use Lacan's words this time, impossible to be negativized by the reality principle.

#### **Dream and madness**

In the manner of a short-cut, let us say that if we choose to privilege this perspective, rather than that of so-called reality-testing, we demonstrate in what way the state of the dreamer is indestructible, that waking up is but an illusion. To wake up is to continue to dream with one's eyes open. In this sense, "everything is" indeed, "but a dream". For Freud, delusion belongs to the same class of psychical phenomena as the dream. This is stated in the preface to the first edition of the *Traumdeutung*: "the dream is the first member of a class of abnormal psychical phenomena of which further members, [are] hysterical phobias, obsessions and delusions...".[14] It would be important to know why he places hysterical phobias and obsessions in the same basket, but I have not yet considered it.

Moreover, in the chapter of the *Traumdeutung* entitled "Relations Between Dreams and Mental Diseases", Freud treats dreams and madness on an equal footing. We see him quoting philosophers in support of his thesis. He is not accustomed to doing this; it would be interesting to list the appearance of philosophers in his text, which is extremely rare. Well, here he quotes Kant: "*The lunatic is a waking dreamer*" – which is really a Freudian thesis – and then Schopenhauer, where he says that "*dreams [are] a brief madness and madness is a long dream*".[15]

Should we strictly distinguish between the dream as a universal phenomenon and madness, which affects

only a few? Common sense would have us distinguish between them, not put them in the same class. Yet, what defines psychoanalysis is seeing between the two, only differences in quality and not differences in nature, to take up, in an approximate way, Clérambault's orientation, mentioned yesterday by F. Leguil. To put these phenomena in continuity marks the specificity of psychoanalysis, whereas it is up to the guardians of common reality to discriminate between them and draw an impassable line between the normal and the pathological.

In spite of the short-cuts with which I have had to reconcile myself in order to avoid unduly prolonging this closing speech, I believe I have proposed a clear orientation for the work that will be presented at our next congress in two years' time.

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- [1] Lacan J., "There Are Four Discourses", Culture/Clinic, no. 1 (2013), p. 3.
- [2] Ibid. [or perhaps more specifically: it "is not a subject to be taught" T.N.]
- [3] Lacan J., "Aggressiveness in Psychanalysis", Écrits, London & New York, Norton, 2006, p. 101. Here, the French also includes the idea of something that we cannot measure up to and to which we are "toujours trop inégaux", i.e., "always too unequal". T.N.]
- [4] This formula, which highlights the place of the law/rights [*le droit*] in our time, reverses the one that J.-A. Miller proposed to specify the orientation marked out by Lacan in the Sinthome: "*le tordu l'emporte sur le droit*", Miller J.-A., "Notice de fil en aiguille", in Lacan J., *Le Séminaire, livre XXIII, Le Sinthome*, Paris, Seuil, 2005, p. 209. [In the published English translation of this seminar, this formulation is translated as "the bent takes precedence over straightness" (see J.-A. Miller "A Note Threaded Stitch by Stitch", *The Sinthome: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIII*, trans. A. R. Price, Cambridge, Polity, 2005, p. 185). In its original context, Miller's expression evokes the points in his seminar where Lacan refers to the curvature of an infinite straight line in space. In British English, 'bent' can signify what deviates from the law, and also what deviates from the 'straight'. However, in this present context, Miller evokes an idiomatic use of the word 'tordu' in French, to refer to a madness that has marked one out from the norm, thus 'warped' or 'twisted', the latter seeming to best exemplify the topology at stake in the topology of knots. T.N.]
- [5] Cf. Laurent D., "Le pousse-à-la-femme: de la structure à la logique" & Leguil F., "L'érotomanie

dépathologisée", interventions at the Grandes Assises, published in *La Cause du désir*, n. 112, (2022/3), p. 88-94 & 82-87.

- [6] Op. cit. [translation modified].
- [7] Cf. Lacan J., "Overture to this Collection", Écrits, op. cit. p. 5.
- [8] [T.N. Miller is here referring to short interventions by Lacan gathered together in a series of pocketsized individual volumes, with the series title: *Paradoxes de Lacan*. These texts have now been translated, for the most part, into English but without ostensibly being placed in a series. The one that appears to be most relevant for Miller's remarks here is, *My Teaching*, London, Verso, 2008.]
- [9] Lacan J., The Sinthome, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XXIII, op. cit. p. 18. [i.e. the symbol is something of a slacker and leaves it up to the imaginary to do all the work.]
- [10] Cf. ibid, p. 132.
- [11] *Ibid*.
- [12] S. Freud, "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning", S.E. XII, p. 223.
- [13] *Ibid.* [In German this sentence begins "*In Werklichkeit...*" T.N.]
- [14] S. Freud, "Preface to the First Edition", The Interpretation of Dreams, S.E. IV. P. xxiii.
- [15] S. Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, op. cit. p.90.

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