



# ALL MY REALS

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## PRÉCIS

In this illuminating text Gerardo Arenas, making use of logic, takes us on a systematic journey that demarcates Lacan's notion of the Real in precise terms. Since the Real is the most 'unstable register' in Lacan, our conception of it remains at times unclear and muddled. Arenas problematizes commonly used notions such as being oriented 'by the Real' or 'by the real jouissance.' Arenas also clearly distinguishes Lacan's Real from other philosophical conceptions of it that still tend to interfere with our handling of the concept, but are foreign to Lacan.

Work that Gerardo Arenas initiated in 2014 in the context of the WAP led him to conclude – along with the analytic community – that the real is multiple, and that in psychoanalysis there are at least two reals at stake. So, there is no such thing as 'the Real' which could function as our compass. And if there are at least two reals, which one is our True North? Besides helping us clarify our conceptualization of the Real, this text provides clear guidelines for further clinical investigations into this register.

*An Bulkens*

*All My Reals, was a video conference given by Gerardo Arenas for the Lacanian Compass USA, August 30, 2020.*

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## ALL MY REALS

I've entitled my talk *All My Reals* for several reasons that I will explain soon, but also in order to echo the title of the famous play by Arthur Miller—not Jacques-Alain, but Arthur Miller: *All My Sons*. Not that I consider myself the father of these reals, but I was the one who proposed the possibility of counting how many reals there are.

In fact, I've structured my presentation around four questions. The first question is: How many reals are there? The second one has directly to do with your next Clinical Study Days: Is there only *one* real at stake in psychoanalysis? The third question is: What is *not* a Lacanian real? And the last and most pragmatic question is: Does the equivalence between jouissance and the real constitute our clinical orientation?

So, firstly...

### HOW MANY REALS ARE THERE?

Seven or eight years ago, something occurred to me: what real do we mean when we talk about the real? Then I was asked to write an article on logic for the *Scilicet* volume of the 9th Congress of the World Association of Psychoanalysis, which was devoted to the real. I took this as an opportunity to try to give an answer.<sup>1</sup>

To get more clarity about our conception of the real, which is the most unstable register in Lacan's teaching, I thought logic would be the best instrument, since in some sense logic can be thought of as the science of the real.<sup>2</sup> In his 19th seminar Lacan says that, "it is at the site of a certain rift in the real [i.e., the sexual non-relation] that the lines of [our field] lie,

lines that we find in psychoanalytic experience".<sup>3</sup> Given this, the logic used to link language to the real might allow us to locate or invent some orientation.

For approaching the real, Aristotle opposed the *universal*, since it belongs to more-than-one (even if it does not hold for all), to the *singular*, which belongs to just-one.<sup>4</sup> For instance, *human* is said of billions of beings, while Mahatma Gandhi is said of only one, so human is universal, Mahatma Gandhi is singular. Two thousand years later, the *empty*, belonging to no-one, whose function is that of the *one-to-boot* (*un-en-plus*), was added to these dimensions. For instance, *square circle* is said of no-one being, so it has an empty extension; but an empty set counts as a part of every set, and thus it adds one more to the number of parts in every whole. This is why we say that its function is that of the *one-to-boot* (*un-en-plus*). So the universal holds for more-than-one (2, 3, 4, etcetera), the *singular* holds for just-one, and the *empty* holds for no-one (a 0 that counts as 1 more).

In addition to this trio formed by the universal, the singular, and the empty, we must also investigate whether each of these three extensions is possible, necessary, impossible, or contingent; that is, what are their *modalities*? Modal logic was born from the idea that sometimes it is not enough to say that a proposition is true (or false): you need to specify whether its truth (or falsehood) is just possible, or contingent, or impossible, or even necessary. If you say, as Hegel did, "Now it is day,"<sup>5</sup> the assertion is true, but it is just *possibly* true, because tonight the proposition "Now it is day," will be false. However, if you say  $2 + 2 = 5$ , the assertion is not just untrue, but it expresses an

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1 G. Arenas, "Logic", in *Scilicet. A Real for the 21st Century*, Paris, NLS, 2014, pp. 196-198.

2 J. Lacan, Seminar XXI, "Les non-dupes errent", lesson of February 12, 1974 (unpublished).

3 J. Lacan, Seminar XIX, ... or *Worse*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2018, p. 11.

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4 Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, part 7. Unfortunately, it is common practice to translate the Greek term *kath'ekaston* ("singular") into English as "individual" or "particular".

5 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1998, p. 60.

impossible truth (except in an Orwellian novel...). So, a proposition might assert a possible truth, a necessary truth, an impossible truth, or a contingent truth. Therefore we say that possible, necessary, impossible, and contingent are the four *modes* of truth. That is the reason why this branch of logic is known as *modal* logic or simply *modality*.

Now imagine each extension (universal, singular, empty) as a thread, as three parallel threads, while each modality (possible, necessary, impossible, contingent) is represented by another thread, four modalities as four parallel threads that may cross over the threads of extension. If you tie an imaginary knot at each crossing, as if you were making a fishing net, how many knots would you have? It should result in a network composed of twelve knots in total (three extensions crossed by four modalities:  $3 \cdot 4 = 12$  knots). These are all my reals. And the network they constitute provides, if it is correctly used, the lines of force which could guide us like a compass for the real. I will give you a few examples.

There is no signifier of the subject: the expression “x is a signifier of the subject” thus has an empty extension, and it is also impossible for this expression to be true. So, the subject is situated at the *empty-impossible* knot, that is, the knot where empty extension crosses the modality of the impossible. On the other hand, what Freud calls “the core of our being,” our singular essence,<sup>6</sup> that which makes us unique, results from a contingent decision, so it belongs to the *contingent-singular* knot.

Let us now look at the real with this compass at hand: shall we call this “the Lacanian Compass”? As you probably know, the ancient *episteme* was born when Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* banished the *singular*; whereas modern science was born when Bacon’s *New Organon* excluded the *empty* subject from its territory. Therefore the current scientific discourse is heir to these two *Verwerfungen*, which give it access to a *universal* real, even if it may be contingent—despite ongoing efforts to show that it is necessary. If we recall the Lacanian formula *What is foreclosed in the symbolic returns in the real*,<sup>7</sup> we can conclude that psychoanalysis, which

leads the empty subject to its singularity, constitutes the emergence, in the real, of the founding foreclosures that gave rise to modern science.

By the way, no scientific revolution has ever done anything to diminish the belief that there is no real without a universal law. Does the real always return to the same place, or does it not? This does not matter to science. But science would never admit a real that could do just as it pleases. The scientific creed follows Occam: just as God is subordinated to logic, nature is subordinated to necessity.

Psychoanalysis is founded on such a belief. In Freud, it takes the form of overdetermination, which is the ultimate basis of any supposed knowledge. The residues of the two *Verwerfungen* on which science is founded define the action of the analyst’s desire, which through the signifier directs the treatment so that the subject can reach their singularity.<sup>8</sup> In terms of the register of the real, then, this action leads the subject from the impossible to the contingent. This leads me to answer my second question.

## IS THERE ONLY ONE REAL AT STAKE IN PSYCHOANALYSIS?

In fact, what I have said reveals that psychoanalytic experience puts *at least two* reals into play: one is impossible and universal, while the other is contingent and singular. The first characterizes both the barred subject and the sexual non-relation. The second corresponds to the core of our being, but also to the *sinthome*.

This means that each time we speak of the real in psychoanalysis it would be a good idea to ask ourselves: to which real are we referring? The extensional-modal network I baptized “the Lacanian Compass” could be a fertile starting point for organizing our answers. Thus, logic is not only the science of the real, but it also gives us a good compass for approaching the real in psychoanalysis. Later, however, I will return to this assertion in order to criticize the way it is generally understood and used... even by myself.

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6 S. Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, The Standard Edition, London, Hogarth Press, 1953, vol. V, chapter VII, part E.

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7 J. Lacan, Seminar VI, *Desire and Its Interpretation*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2019, chapter XVIII.

8 G. Arenas, “Eros’ Arrow”, in *Parce que ce n’est pas ça. A Lacanian Online Journal*, 2 (2020).<sup>9</sup> SE XIX p 25

But let me go back to 2014. A few months before the WAP Congress in Paris, I was also invited by its director, Guy Briole, to add the points I have just made to the clinical paper I had submitted. It was considered worthy of opening the international meeting! This was amazing, but I also felt a heavy responsibility.

As you surely know, in our little world it is generally assumed that Lacanian psychoanalysis is oriented by the real, but my reasoning had led me to conclude that—truth be told—such a compass is faulty. So, I had been invited to publicly promote a thesis that contradicts our common sense, and to do so in front of almost our entire community! What I decided to say was approximately what I will tell you now.

To draw the field lines of sexuation, in *Seminar XIX* Lacan used a compass whose three dimensions were designed by logic to relate language to the real: functions, quantifiers and negations.<sup>9</sup> I tried to build a similar compass to orient myself in the real, using three materials employed by Lacan: modes, extensions, and discourses. But it went wrong and, although I recognized this at an annual meeting of my School, no one has yet helped me to discover what that compass's defect was. Many colleagues tested it, and this taught us that it is not enough to just be saying *the real* without specifying at least its mode and its extension, and also that this compass is faulty, because it does not designate a North, although it does allow a map of the classes of reals to be drawn.

However, can we speak of *classes* of reals? Let me share with you five reflections about this:

First: Lacan noticed that Freud called *identification* various things that had no common genus, and proposed to give that name to only one of them.<sup>10</sup> But is there any common genus between the real in *Seminar II* and the real in *Seminar XXIII*, or between the real in mathematics and the real of trauma? For one to be able to talk about classes of reals, one should prove that this is the case. Nobody has done it yet.

Second: If it were demonstrated that all these reals shared more than the name Lacan gave them,

why should we be oriented by their common genus? Would it not be better to be oriented by only *one* of its classes? And if so, which?

Third: Lacan said *The real is x*, giving *x* so many values that the entire list would bore you. Did he change his conception of the *real*, or was he speaking of different things? If there is no common genus between those *x*s, is it not better to do with Lacan what Lacan did with Freud? That is, name only one of them real and rename the others? By replacing *the real* by *a real* in the title of the IXth Congress (a change that was a one-time event in the history of the WAP), Miller admitted that there are *reals*, in the plural, and that we must then choose *a real* for psychoanalysis. If we do this, then making the map of the classes of reals will lose meaning.

Fourth: I am quite sure that Lacan perceived these difficulties. He said he spoke of the real as impossible because it is *lawless*; that is why he only aspired to talk about a fragment of the real—he also said—and why the real, by itself, *doesn't form a whole*.<sup>11</sup> Did he not thus reject the idea that there is a common genus of the real? Analysis would not be a way of accessing *the real* (which would not exist), but *reals*. Later, I will show this in a testimony of the pass.

Fifth: Lacan also said that by means of the real he rejected Freudian energetics.<sup>12</sup> Not without reason! But in moving from energetics to the real, how much is gained? If the real is both multiple and refractory to concepts, how might it orient us?

With these questions in mind, let us go back to the relationship between science and psychoanalysis. Black holes and chaotic systems are phenomena essentially refractory to the rule of law. And since nature is one of the many things that Lacan had once considered *real*,<sup>13</sup> the existence of these phenomena shows that certain zones of the real are lawless for our science. But is there any link between this real and the real without law proper to psychoanalysis? If the real that responds to scientific discourse is universal and aims at being necessary, while that which responds to analytic discourse is singular and has a contingent lineage,

9 J. Lacan, *Seminar XIX, ... or Worse*, op. cit., chapter I.

10 J. Lacan, *Seminar IX, Identification* (unpublished).

11 J. Lacan, *Seminar XXIII, The Sinthome*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2016, pp. 118, and "Television", in D. Hollier, R. Krauss, A. Michelson (trans.) and J. Copjec (eds.), *Television / A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, New York, Norton & Co., 1990, p. 41.

12 J. Lacan, "Conference à Louvain", in *Quarto*, 3 (1981), pp. 5-20.18 J

13 Cf. J.-A. Miller, "The Real in the 21st Century", available online.

both reals seem to share nothing more than the name we give them. Later I will try to soften this argument.

But let us leave behind these generalities and enter the field of the singular, where psychoanalysis has truly probative force. To do this I will discuss a testimony of the pass given by my close friend Gustavo Stiglitz.

He presented, as the closing bow of his *sinthome*, a rhinitis that had developed in his teens, and returned when he was brought face to face with an embodied paternal signifier (a cat), and then finally lessened when an encounter with a black cat evoked his father's Yiddish nickname, and then worsened when he separated from his father. This rhinitis consumed his libido to the detriment of love, friendship, and humor. His analysis broke the master signifier, the one that had sustained the psychosomatic phenomenon, by means of an equivocation, and this operation produced a subject-effect absent from that phenomenon. This in turn became a symptom. It gave up a part of its libido and, although it persists as a reminder of *the singular epic saga of tying the sinthomatic knot*, it only returns now as a sign of love. The rhinitis repaired the failure of the paternal function—a corollary of the inexistence of the sexual relation—through an equivocation on its signifier, and today it gives the libidinal bond its style.

Notice that when describing this solution we had no need to make use of the term *real*, and introducing it would not have done much to clarify things. In fact, nasal erogeneity—the source of the drive—corresponds to the organism (sometimes wrongly thought of as the *real* body), and it is both universal and necessary. The knotting operation, which is also real, is contingent and singular. We take as real the resulting *sinthome* too, which is necessary and singular. And finally, the inexistence of the sexual relation is real because its writing is impossible for all. This proliferation of reals does not arise from the irreducible leak or flight of meaning. In our analytic discourse we give the name real to four very different things: one is universal and necessary, another is singular and contingent, the third is singular and necessary, and the fourth is universal and impossible. Which of all these reals should be our True North?

Let us now apply our former questions to this pass testimony. Is there a genus common to the drive source, the knotting operation, the *sinthome*, and the inexistence of the sexual relation? It does not seem so. But if there

were one, would we not be better oriented by a *single* class of the real? One would have to specify that there is *a* real and the rest would have to be reformulated; or, we would have to call only one of them *real*.

If, throughout his teaching, Lacan gave the name real to such different things, how could we know whether this singular analysis gave access to *any* real, if we do not know what *the* real is? This would be like solving Meno's paradox, with virtue replaced by the ship of Theseus, and I do not know how to do it.

That was in Paris more than six years ago. I closed my opening of that Congress by expressing the hope that the debates that were to take place could shed some light on these puzzling problems. The meeting then concluded that at least *two reals* are at stake in the analytic experience. Nevertheless, a large part of our community still speaks about *the* real, as though it were one and homogeneous, and they even claim to be oriented by *the real* without specifying which real they refer to, even if after that Congress it was clear that one should always add adjectives to the real. This is one of the reasons for celebrating the selection of the question *What real at stake?* for your Clinical Study Days.

Let me now add a few things I have thought about this issue since 2014.

## WHAT IS NOT A LACANIAN REAL?

When I was young, we used to play a game called billiards, something like playing pool but without pockets and with fewer balls (three or four). The highest scores are achieved when one manages to perform a carom, making one ball bounce against three or more of the four cushions that delimit the table, before the ball touches the two or three balls remaining. I think the game is also called “three-cushion billiards.”

So, let me use this image to define the “three-cushion real,” a new game where the ball is the real and the three cushions are what a real should instead *never* touch if it wants to be a Lacanian real. To play the game, we must be clear about what these cushions are. I will call them the Kantian “thing-in-itself,” superstitious materialism, and the extraterritorial realm. The first cushion we should avoid is that of equating the real with the noumenon or the Kantian thing-in-itself. The thing-in-itself can be thought of as a kind

of absolute epistemological limit: we will never have more than representations or images of every object, while the object as it is, not for us but in itself, will always be impossible to know. We must admit that this Kantian trick is ingenious, although it was anticipated by Shakespeare, when he makes Hamlet say, “There are more things in heaven and Earth, Horatio, / Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

Now, you must remember that psychoanalysis is not a science, but an experience, so that epistemological categories do not apply to it. In other words, in analysis we do not deal with objects of knowledge, but with objects of jouissance. And, if you keep this in mind, you will never oppose the psychoanalytic real to the semblance understood as mere “appearance.” Or, in other words, you will never oppose the real thing to the way it looks. It would be a category error! However, it is frequently committed by many colleagues who do not note that in this way they lose sight of the experience and focus on an epistemological category that will mislead them if, even worse, they used it as their orientation.

So, the Kantian “thing-in-itself” is the first cushion our real must not touch if it wants to remain a Lacanian real. By the way, notice that the epistemological opposition between the real and its appearance contains a tacit assessment and comparison, according to which what matters is the real, while appearance does not matter so much (this proves that Kant was not a fashion designer). This assessment is then transferred to psychoanalysis in terms of the belief in certain sacred and almost mystic values being assigned to the real to the detriment of the semblance. Also, since speech and signifiers live in the dimension of semblance, this comparison leads to an unconfessed and dangerous cult of *the unspeakable*, *the unsayable*, and so on, a cult strictly opposed to the orientation that Lacan gave to the analytic experience from the beginning of his teaching to its end.

So much for the first cushion.

The second one, which I am calling superstitious materialism, is to some extent the opposite of the Kantian cushion. If the “thing-in-itself” is an inapprehensible version of the real, the cushion of superstitious materialism is its most palpable version. Equipped with a

naïve conception of matter, as if quantum physics and general relativity had not been developed, those who believe in superstitious materialism are convinced that the real equals the material, which equals *what we touch*, and so they do not deify either the unspeakable or the unsayable but rather the palpable, concrete thing. For instance, as I said when I commented on Stiglitz’s testimony, they think that the body can be separated into a mirror image, a big Other, and an organism considered to be the *real* body, since that is what we can touch with our *real* fingers...

Why do I say that this is *not* a Lacanian real? Because instead of such a naïve materialism, Lacan proposed, of course, what he called a *materialism*,<sup>14</sup> that is, the materialism of *mots* or words. He did this for three reasons. One of them, which can be applied to the Kantian cushion as well, is that naive materialism results in an unacceptable hierarchization of the registers rather than a full equivalence among all of them. This hierarchization is what makes such a materialism superstitious. The second reason is that Lacan made many strong efforts to dismantle this conception; for example, when he gave the Holy Sacrament, that is the Eucharist in a Christian mass,<sup>15</sup> as a model for the *real* presence.

And the last reason is the aforementioned definition of logic as a science of the real. Should we consider logic the science of the touchable?

So, in order to be a Lacanian real, what we call *real* should avoid touching this cushion too. In all honesty, this conception does not seem serious. However, what surprises me the most about it is that it can live in a suspiciously friendly coexistence with the former creed, the Kantian one which assigns an inapprehensible character to our real. Both conceptions constitute a weird but enduring couple.

Putting superstitious materialism aside, I will discuss the third and last cushion, the one I put under the heading of the *extraterritorial realm*. First, I must confess that six years ago, in Paris, I myself touched this dangerous cushion. It was an unforgivable mistake on my part. I take this opportunity to publicly apologize for it. In truth, there were two linked errors: mistaking Miller for Lacan, and touching this cushion. I will explain both.

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14 J. Lacan, “Geneva Lecture on the Symptom”, available online.

15 J. Lacan, Seminar VIII, *Transference*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2015, chapter XVIII.

Nobody doubts that Lacan is not Freud. Commenting on Freud, he defines his own conception, which sometimes differs from the Freudian one. Nobody then mistakes Lacan for Freud, so I do not understand how I could have mistaken Miller for Lacan. I should repeat what I just said *mutatis mutandis*. Nobody doubts that Miller is not Lacan. Commenting on Lacan, he defines his own conception, which sometimes differs from the Lacanian one. That said, you can verify that Lacan never referred to “the real of such and such a discourse,” yet this kind of expression is made in Miller, ever since the sixties. Well, my first mistake was to assume that it was posed by Lacan, and the second was to conclude that hence one must not only specify the extension and modality of each real, but also the discourse it belongs to. The motto of this notion would be, “To each discourse its real.” However, this notion of a real that is as multiple as the discourses is in fact foreign to Lacan’s teaching, at least because of one of its immediate consequences: that we would be authorized to speak of a real that is exclusive to analytical discourse and, thanks to that, that psychoanalysis would be guaranteed an extraterritoriality Lacan had condemned from the beginning. How so? It would allow us to affirm things like, “You have your real, while we, analysts, have ours,” and this would close psychoanalysis in on itself and prevent it from dialoguing with any outside discourse—which is unacceptable from a Lacanian point of view.

In conclusion, a Lacanian real should never be discourse-dependent, and this is the reason why I said that the extraterritorial realm is the third cushion our real must never touch.

To summarize, each of these three cushions (the Kantian “thing-in-itself,” superstitious materialism, and the extraterritorial realm) is in some way unaware of Lacanian developments concerning the real, or even contradicts them.

I have asked how many reals there are, and answered that there are at least twelve. Then I questioned whether there is only one real at stake in psychoanalysis, and my answer was negative, since at least two of them matter in the analytical experience. Thirdly, my question was what is *not* a Lacanian real, and I answered that no real that touches any of the three cushions of the billiard table that I built for you can be thought of as a Lacanian real. Now, even if we avoid these three cushions, and

from the twelve possible reals we choose only one of them to be at stake in psychoanalysis, one might imagine that the real *jouissance* orients our compass. Hence my fourth and final question.

## DOES THE EQUIVALENCE BETWEEN JOUISSANCE AND REAL CONSTITUTE OUR CLINICAL ORIENTATION?

At first sight, the answer seems to be a simple *Yes*. However, would that hold up under closer scrutiny? Here the complications do not arise from a Miller-Lacan debate but from some debates between Lacan-Lacan and Miller-Miller. Yes, a couple of times Lacan juxtaposes or even seems to equate *jouissance* and the real. And yes, there is also a quite long period—I mean two or three decades—when Miller upholds and explores that equivalence. Nevertheless, at some point both authors broke with their own previous positions in this regard, and then made new developments that imply a *No*. This is what I am now about to propose for your consideration, although in this case I will not follow a chronological order, since discussing the Miller-Miller debate first will be easier based on the point our discussion has just reached.

I cannot assign an exact date to the first time Miller proposed or suggested an equation of *jouissance* with the real, although I am certain enough to affirm that in the mid-eighties this was already a not unusual practice in his well-known courses of the Lacanian orientation. However the one held eleven years ago, *Choses de finesse en psychanalyse*,<sup>16</sup> entailed an abrupt reorientation in many levels of his teaching, including two that are central to what we are considering today.

To begin with, although he himself coined the expression that defines the Lacanian Compass for the direction of the treatment as one that is oriented by the real, in the first six lessons of that academic year he succeeded in redefining it in terms of singularity, with no reference to the real. If I am not wrong, such a huge change would have entailed a Herculean effort on his part. And this may be considered a logical condition for our discovery that the real, being neither one nor homogeneous, is a faulty compass for the analytical experience.

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<sup>16</sup> Held in 2008-9, this course is known as “Analytical Subtleties” in English.

But the second level at which that course interests us today is the one where Miller establishes a neat and sharp distinction between *jouissance* and the real. You probably remember that Lacan used to play with French adverbs like *tellement*, *probablement*, etcetera, because their last syllable, *ment*, means also “lies.” This led him to say some things related to the equivocation between *réelment*, which means “really”, and *réel ment*, which means “the real does lie.” But instead of stressing the fact that, if the real is a liar, we should not trust it to define our orientation, I will instead call your attention to a strong assertion made by Miller in the course we are discussing. He strikingly says that the real lies but *jouissance* does not lie. Surprise! The alleged equivalence between *jouissance* and the real is thus destroyed and, after years and years of making them practically synonymous, he finds a key point where they irremediably diverge, ultimately becoming antipodes.

Lacan is not so clear about this. In the first place, because he had never insisted (as Miller did) on the supposed (and finally discarded) equivalence between *jouissance* and the real, but mainly because he worked hard to construct a detailed and clinically useful economy of *jouissances* that presupposed their non-equivalence. That was the core subject of my most recent book in English, entitled *A Practical Way to Feel Better*.<sup>17</sup> I don’t like to repeat myself or to comment on my own books, so I’ll only say a few things about this issue here.

At the beginning of the events that shook France from May 1968 on, Lacan said that psychoanalysis must respond to what happened with the students in the universities and the industrial workers in the factories by avoiding any reference to Freudian energetics.<sup>18</sup> He devoted himself to this task following two lines of interrogation. One of them led him to build, within a couple of years, the structure of the four discourses.<sup>19</sup> The other demanded a more difficult work that allowed him to construct what must really be considered a true metapsychology of *jouissances*.

You surely know that during the First World War Freud defined metapsychology as an approach to a psychic process that can answer three questions: 1) Where is

it located? 2) What forces dynamize and disturb it? 3) How can it be economically described in terms of a quantity redistributed without loss or gain?<sup>20</sup> Well, in the six years that followed May 1968, Lacan constructed a metapsychology of *jouissances*, since he succeeded in locating every *jouissance* in the coordinate system that was provided by his three registers (imaginary, symbolic, and real). He also succeeded in describing the way each type of interpretation alters and disturbs the different *jouissances*, and he finally formulated an economy where the different *jouissances* can be redistributed without any loss or gain.

About this construction, presented by Lacan in full form during a conference named “The Third,” I would like to make just a few remarks. Lacan reduces every *jouissance* to a combination of three basic types not located in specific registers, but between pairs of them: one between the symbolic and the real, another between the real and the imaginary, and the third between the imaginary and the symbolic. So, no *jouissance* belongs to a single register. In particular, no *jouissance* is real at all!

Does the equivalence between *jouissance* and the real constitute our clinical orientation then? I would answer definitively No, since Miller showed that there is no such equivalence and Lacan provided a most useful clinical tool based on the location of each *jouissance* not in a single register but in the intersection of two.

That is all. These are all my reals. This is how I think of them. Before giving you the floor, I want to congratulate again the Lacanian Compass because choosing “What real at stake” as the title of the next Clinical Study Days points towards a realm plenty of hot debates and recent developments that will demand from everybody crucial discussions about the way we conceive the analytical experience. But the mere title already forces us to define, as Raymond Carver could have said, what we talk about when we talk about real.

Thank you.

*Edited by An Bulkens and Elizabeth Rogers*

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17 G. Arenas, *A Practical Way to Feel Better*, Barcelona, Xoroi, 2020.

18 J. Lacan, Seminar XV, “The Psychoanalytic Act”, lesson of May 15, 1968 (unpublished).

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Artwork: *Untitled*, Wade Guyton, 2007

Epson UltraChrome inkjet on linen, 84 x 69 inches, 213.4 x 175.3 cm

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