

SQUARING THE CIRCLE

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Abstract: In this paper I am going to explore the idea of “Leaders” and most particularly “Followers” and focus on the transmission of psychoanalysis. I will consider if Lacan’s concept of the plus one could enable us to move beyond or outside of the trap of binary trajectories. In relation to the question of the formation of the analyst, the plus one seems to fulfil a vital function as an ongoing process. To investigate this, I am going to begin by outlining a short history of the various psychoanalytic groups that have emerged in Ireland and move from that macro level to the micro level of the cartel and hone in on the idea of the plus one. The micro level is important because, as we know in psychoanalysis, it is in the particular details of the particular subject that truth can emerge.¹

Irish psychoanalytic groups are comprised of individual people and the importance of the subject’s name was something transmitted to me not just by psychoanalysis but also in a

¹ I would like to thank Paola Mieli for organising a discussion day at which I presented a version of this paper. It follows on from a seminar I organised in Dublin in 2018 entitled “The scene within the scene,” in which a discussion by Paola Mieli of Herman Melville’s (2000) *Benito Cereno* provided a wonderful metaphor to illustrate the theme of “follower.”

fortunate meeting and wonderful conversation I had with the playwright Brian Friel, one of whose plays, very relevant to this paper, is *Translations*.

The first and oldest grouping in Ireland is The Irish Psycho-Analytical Association (IPAA). It was formed in 1942 by Jonathan Hanaghan who had been analysed in England by Douglas Bryan (Skelton, 1983). Bryan had been a leading member of the original London Psychoanalytic Society, having assumed a place on the British Society's first training committee with Ernest Jones in 1926.

The timing of the arrival of psychoanalysis into Ireland is important as the country was dominated by the power of the church, poverty, privation and lack. To illustrate this, in the same year that the IPAA was founded, the poet Patrick Kavanagh published his satirical work, *The Great Hunger*. Ostensibly commemorating the Irish famine, the poem evokes a hunger of the senses created through upbringing, poverty and religion. According to Fintan O'Toole, Ireland is portrayed as a place without desire marked by a bitterness of sexual sterility and a pleasurable kind of pointlessness (O'Toole, 2015).

He could not walk
The easy road to destiny. He dreamt
The innocence of young brambles to hooked treachery.
O the grip, O the grip of irregular fields! No man
escapes.
It could not be that back of the hills love was free

And ditches straight.

No monster hand lifted up children and put down apes

As here. (Kavanagh, 1942, pp. 63-90)

So this is the Irish “field” in which psychoanalysis takes root. I would like you to keep the idea of the field in mind not only as a reference to the actual landscape but also to the field of mathematics and the field of consciousness.

Hanaghan was a charismatic leader and developed an unorthodox and radical Christian approach to psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis has been refined by Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism and it could be argued that Freud’s ideas could only have been imported into Ireland by combining them with Christianity. Ireland at the time was like a theocracy. Catholicism and nationalistic politics had shaped the formation of the nascent Irish state and some would argue continue to do so today. He believed that Freud, like Jesus, was a Jewish healer and in his book, *Freud and Jesus* (1942), he argued for a type of what might be termed *Christian psychoanalysis*, which amounted to a cure based on a successful identification with Jesus Christ. He regarded psychoanalysis as a form of mental and spiritual healing: the analyst was more than a technician; he was a healer. The approach was broadly Protestant and influenced by Quakerism. Hanaghan also believed in free love, which in the country’s atmosphere of repressed sexuality, gave the group a certain notoriety.

Jonty, as he was nicknamed, trained a small number of analysts in Ireland who began working with patients, often for very low fees. This became known locally as “the Monkstown Group” although there were never any formal arrangements or membership lists. Hanaghan developed a considerable following which continued up until his death in 1967. The analysts he trained were well read in Freud but the devotional adherence to his teachings, especially in the decade after his death, became problematic for some, particularly younger aspiring analysts who felt blocked by the founding fathers. He received high praise from Anna Freud who said, “the mantle of my father’s work has fallen on your shoulders” (quoted in *A Brief History of Psychoanalysis in Ireland*).

The IPAA forged links with the Northern Ireland Institute of Human Relations (NIIHR) founded by John Alderdice, amongst others. Another group in Northern Ireland is the Northern Ireland Psychoanalytic Society founded in 1988 by Thomas Freeman who trained with Dorothy Burlingham.

During the 1980’s, a new direction for psychoanalysis emerged in the Republic of Ireland. Members of the IPAA invited guest analysts from abroad to provide seminars, most notably Masud Khan, Hanna Segal and R.D. Laing. Members such as Olga Cox Cameron, Rob Weatherill and Mary Pyle began to form independent study groups to read Freud, Klein, Winnicott and others, including writers that by-passed the Monkstown orthodoxy. Ross Skelton, who was lecturing in philosophy at Trinity College Dublin, set up a master’s in philosophy in

psychoanalytic studies which ultimately supplied the impetus for a future clinical training in St James' hospital.

Members of the Monkstown group, together with other analysts who had trained abroad, eventually formed the Irish Forum for Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy (IFPP) in 1986 which was to distance itself completely from the Monkstown analysts. The Forum was and remains an umbrella grouping for therapists with broad psychoanalytically-oriented trainings in object relations, Lacan and Jung. Eventually, in 1993, a training institute was founded in conjunction with Trinity College Dublin which introduced a master's degree (MSc) in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy and a master's degree (MSc) in Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy.

During the 1980's, a small reading group emerged, led by Cormac Gallagher. The reading was focused on the translation into English of the seminars of Jacques Lacan. The translations were provided by Gallagher who had attended Lacan's seminars in Paris in the 1970s. Gallagher recalled that while listening to one of Lacan's seminars, he made a comment to Lacan, "I follow you," meaning "I understand you" ("Je te suis, je te comprends") and Lacan retorted in a critical tone, "you follow" (in French, "suivre").

These reading group meetings which were led by Cormac Gallagher were nicknamed the *Gonzaga Seminars*. Gonzaga College is a Jesuit boys' secondary school in Dublin. The group was initially attended by Ross Skelton, Ciaran Benson, Terry Larkin and Ronan Conroy, each of whom went on to have an

important influence in areas of philosophy, psychology, psychiatry and the Arts (Skelton, 1983).

This pioneering reading group was likened to a “group of medieval monks, hunched, closely reading Lacan’s *Ecrits* and that in its obscurity it was not unlike Gurdjieff’s “All and Everything” (Skelton, 2020).

An outcome of this reading group was the establishment of the School of Psychotherapy which was set up in 1983 to develop the teaching of Lacanian-informed psychotherapy in the Department of Psychiatry at St. Vincent’s Hospital. Its first Director was Cormac Gallagher and he co-founded it with UCD Professor of Psychiatry, Noel Walsh and Dr. Mary Darby, consultant psychiatrist. The teaching on this program introduced the work of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan to students who for the most part already had a formal training in psychiatry, medicine, psychology, social work, chaplaincy, or philosophy.

Gallagher initiated an undergraduate degree programme in Psychoanalytic Studies in 1993 at LSB. which subsequently became Dublin Business School (DBS), of which I am proud to say I am a graduate. I was fortunate to have been tutored by, amongst others, Cormac Gallagher, Helen Sheehan and Patricia McCarthy. Other trainings which emerged at DBS were a Graduate Diploma in Psychanalytic Studies established in 1995 and an MA in Psychoanalysis in 1996. All of these trainings follow Gallagher’s translations of Lacan’s seminars and the teachings and interpretations of Charles Melman and Guy Le Gaufey, as opposed to those of Jacques-Alain Miller.

In 1993, APPI was established as a learned society and in 1994 was incorporated officially as The Association for Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy in Ireland, with its Primary Object, as set out in its Constitution, “to advance Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic psychotherapy.” There was debate at the time about the inclusion of the word psychotherapy but the incorporation was to allow for an application to be made to the Irish Council of Psychotherapy for state recognition. This did not happen in fact until 2018.

In 2007, Gallagher and some members broke away from APPI and established the Irish School of Lacanian Psychoanalysis (ISLP). This was set up in accordance with the recommendations made by Lacan in his 1964 paper, “Founding Act” that the structure of the school would be as free as possible of the effects of demands for qualification and professional recognition.

In 2009, some other members of APPI founded the Irish Circle of the Lacanian Orientation (ICLO-NLS) as an associated group of the New Lacanian School (NLS), which is one of seven Schools that constitute the World Association of Psychoanalysis (WAP) which follows the teachings of Jacques-Alain Miller.

Two points to note at this point. We can discern the growth of various academic trainings which were created by members of various groups. This is the effect of the production of a university or indeed master discourse which produces a

knowledge, a *connaissance*. However, as psychoanalysts, we are more concerned with knowledge as a “savoir.”

In addition, the emergence of the Irish School of Lacanian Psychoanalysis (ISLP) is noteworthy. The original grouping of APPI had enshrined the primary object within the organisation’s memorandum of association and I think that the aim of the School (ISLP) has been to reformulate that aim, literally returning to the original starting point of 1993 to create a new circle.

So moving now to the particular and returning to utilise again the words of the poet as a prop, Seamus Heaney, who was a follower of Patrick Kavanagh’s, evokes in his poem *Follower*, his father, an expert, and says:

I stumbled in his hobnailed wake,...

All I ever did was follow In his broad shadow round the farm. (Heaney, 1966, p. 8)

How do we as psychoanalysts move beyond following the leader, accepting as we must that at the same time the ultimate leader is the unconscious, in whose broad shadow we will inevitably follow in a circle? I think that this is the fundamental question involved in the formation of the psychoanalyst. How to ensure that it is not only a university discourse or master discourse that is produced? The plus one within the cartel structure may shed some light on these questions. Consideration must be given to the acknowledgment that the transmission of what can be

classified as psychoanalytic knowledge, cannot be transmitted within a university or master discourse.

The three pillars which can be erected to establish the psychoanalyst are a lengthy personal analysis, clinical supervision and participation in a cartel. In 2020, my own cartel group began re-reading *Seminar VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1959-60/1992) and the reading underscored the basic principle that to practice as a psychoanalyst, one must analyse one's own desire. This is achieved via an analysis; however a supervision may also function in terms of allowing interpretations to arise with regard to the analyst's desire. This point is worthy of a lengthy discussion which is beyond the remit of this paper but I mention it because the third element which triangulates this ethical dimension is that of the cartel. The cartel can be described as functioning as an interlocutor, as an adjunct to an analysis. The group of four members agree to meet on a regular basis and read either a Freudian text or Lacanian seminar together. However, what further defines the cartel as being distinct from a reading group is that each year, members are encouraged to write about a topic or theme that captivated their attention within the text. This idea of a value of a writing is derived from Lacan's (1975/2016) commentary on *The Sinthome* and he had previously made some pertinent comments on writing and *jouissance* in *Seminar XVIII, On a Discourse that Might not be a Semblance* (1970-71). Again, an elaboration of this point is beyond the remit of this paper.

Already these digressions display how swiftly the field of Lacanian psychoanalysis can become mired in a master or university discourse and therefore the function of the plus one is exemplary in cutting through this.

Dominique Holvoet, a member of the WAP, describes the pass and the cartel as the two lungs of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Without the cartel and the pass, she argues, the school would suffocate. But she claims one could also say that the pass and the cartel are two grains of sand in the functioning of the group; two little grains of sand that Lacan placed there to jam the machine, to block the “it works” of the group, which is the other side of the discourse of the analyst; two grains of sand to make the School (Holvoet, 2013).

Holvoet describes how the cartel, of course, responds to the Freudian logic of the collective, which only constitutes itself as a group thanks to a leader, responding to the logic of male sexualisation” (Holvoet, 2013). But in the cartel, the place of the at-least-one, the leader, is reduced. What’s more, it is a permutative function. No at-least-one but one-more, one-extra (*un-en-plus*) adding him or herself to the four, to be the hysteric or Socratic agent of a provoked elaboration. The plus-one is here extimate, adding him or herself to the cartel only to incomplete it. In short, the plus-one is the person who takes care to consider the work of others, to give to the work of each its place. But the plus-one is also the person who feminises the cartel, making it pass from the logic of the all to that of the “not-all” (Holvoet, 2013). Viewing the plus one as a person is problematic as we will see, however

the reference to the feminising principle is important because it evokes the Lacanian concept of “not all.”

A cartel as proposed by Lacan is a working instrument to try to decrease the series of problems identified by Freud in his 1921 work, “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego.” A cartel is an artificial group that tries to defy the imaginary obscenity of the group. Lacan calls on the student to become a worker and what is at stake is about the *work of each one*, in a *circular organisation, not a hierarchy*. Lacan’s proposal of the important organising principle of the plus one functions, according to Holvoet, to take each one’s specific relationship to knowledge into account, so that a particular moment might be elaborated in the group by accepting the certainty of unconscious causality and evoking something of this desire in the production of a paper (Holvoet, 2013).

The invention of the cartel in 1964, as Jacques-Alain Miller shows, was accompanied by an anti-authoritarian movement and an argument may be made that the cartel may function in some way as the continuation of the analytical experience.

In his positional paper, “Situation of Psychoanalysis and Formation of the Psychoanalysts in 1956,” Lacan criticises the IPA for promoting the theory of an “autonomous ego.” He denounces the conception of the analysis as “dual” identification of the analyser to the analyst, thereby evoking the imaginary identification in the masses and in the groups, and he questions

the cult of hierarchy within institutions which pay homage to the didactic masters (Lacan, 1956/2001, p. 397).

When Jacques Laberge spoke on the topic of cartel and plus one in Dublin in June 2019 he said, “It is our practice that is directly questioned,” and, referring to the unconscious, said we must “follow its effects, and submit oneself to it.” Furthermore, the cartel makes “analytical doctrine a shared task,” contrary to the position of the master “who imagines himself alone head-on with the task” (Laberge, 2019).

In 1975, eleven years after the foundation of the Freudian School of Paris, Lacan invited psychoanalysts to bring the Founding Act up to date and proposed a debate on the topic of the cartel. Laberge presented a paper about the transcripts of this debate at the Irish School of Lacanian Psychoanalysis, (ISLP) Intercartel day in Dublin in 2019. What follows is a reading of some of the key points he conveyed.

At the beginning of the debate, Lacan comments that “this plus one” “ought to have deserved a better fate,” and says “the $X+1$ is very precisely what defines the Borromean knot,” “of which remains—namely of the X in question—there is no more than the one by one.” This refers to the “subject who is always a one plus” and this “person whom I somehow take care of to isolate from the group, but that does not mean that it cannot not be any person” (Lacan, 1975, p. 221). Laberge observed on his reading of the transcripts:

Here are the interventions of a small group led by Lacan who refers to the plus one as a person. But it will be interesting to note now (IN the discussion) that the great majority of the participants have the freedom to disagree with the master and question the function of plus one being attributed to a person (Laberge, 2019, p. 4).

Colette Soler was keen to take the position that the plus was not necessarily a person (Soler, 1975, p. 226). Lacan was in favour of the point that this “person,” who is in some way the echo of the group, exists in every functioning of a group” (Laberge, p. 4.) Nasio says, “the plus one is the one who sustains in the group the desire of the Other” (Nasio, 1975, p. 226). For Charles Melman, “it may be the location of the real” that summons the “plus” participants to produce a “plus one piece of discourse” more than the master, the university, the hysteric (Melman, 1975, p. 246).

About a clinical cartel, Alfandari refers to the plus one as “a kind of empty place” (Alfandari, in Laberge, p. 5.) Intrigued, Lacan asks: “who performs a knotting function? The clinic?” (Lacan, in Laberge, p. 5). “No plus one person” but always one person in the imaginary,” says Pierre Kahn (Kahn, 1975, p. 223). Safouan speaks of the “necessity of the plus one” of “pointing out to a subject his contradictions” (Safouan, in Laberge, p. 4). Fennetaux speaks of the plus one group effect which allows everyone to intervene, or the most experimented as the leader, or

even the absence of a perplexing supervisor when in this case there would be “one less” (Fennetaux, 1975, p. 225).

Here are three versions of the plus one: the super-person of the leader, a term that evokes the perpetuation in power; the person who speaks, thanks to the plus one of the group; and the absence of the inhibitor. Laberge, in his remarks on this point, considered that we may wonder if this is about three possible options so as to differentiate one cartel from another, or about three possible moments of a cartel. (Laberge, 2019). For Sol Rabinovitch, the plus one would be the “blind spot” or “I do not understand” (Rabinovitch, 1975, p. 226). Laberge drew our attention to Lacan’s ambiguous response, “a question without answer,” then “always present, but always unknown.” Does Lacan end up conceding something here, seeming to place himself at some distance from the idea of the plus one person” (Laberge, 2019, p. 5)

For Botvinik, “a group is formed around a word, a theme” which “will never respond” (Botvinik, 1975, p. 227). And he adds: “The plus one, this evokes in me as it were the surplus *jouissance*.” Philippe Girard recognises in the cartel the attempt to avoid both the authoritarian figure and the liberal fictitious equality of the rivalry of the egos (Girard, 1975, p. 238). The plus one, according to Robert Mund, would be, facing up to the “difficulty of leaving the imaginary” (Mund, in Laberge, p. 5).

Laberge observes that given the systematic questioning of the “plus one person,” Lacan recognises himself as being up against an “enigma. In fact, at the opening of the

debate, Lacan had underlined a division, on the one hand the $X+1$, the subject as one plus and, on the other hand, the plus one person. But the person easily slips to the position of leader, the object of love and hate, and the cartel, unfortunately, transforms itself into an obedient group. There is at this point in the discussion an important interjection by one of Lacan's mathematics teachers, the psychoanalyst Daniel Sibony. Laberge observes that his comments come to "occupy the rest of the debate time of April" (Sibony, 1975, pp. 251-259). Sibony was a follower of mathematician Georg Frobenius who eschewed the traditional style of German universities and argued that new inventions in mathematics would only arise in the individual and not via the organisational field.

Sibony endorses that the "plus one is not a person" but is a repetition that "may be purely numerical: $1+1+1$ " (Sibony, 1975, p. 255). He speaks of psychoanalysis, or of the object of psychoanalysis, as plus one and makes reference to the Borromean knot and human groups. Lacan reinforces this idea saying, "Latent infinity, is precisely what the plus one is" (Sibony, 1975, p. 255). Here he seems to be evoking expansion and infinite comprehension.

From this, Laberge surmised that Lacan ends up saying: "what the Borromean knot does is submitted to this condition that each one is effectively, and not simply imaginarily, what sustains the whole group" (Laberge, 2019, p. 6.). This is just as in the Borromean knot in which each ring sustains the position of the other two and each is equally necessary. Thus, Lacan

announces the rotation of the plus one, but in this case the plus one who is a someone. (Laberge, 2019, p. 6).

Sibony alludes to the group of mathematicians and to the “plus one” of the imminent theorem that, once written down, is considered dead. It makes “a hole, an emptiness, and carries with it a plus as a minus, an absence that insists.” “It became “an evanescent (evan-s-ent) o effect, non-apprehensible,” “the object of desire.” He says “Everything depends on which One this group is dealing with” (Sibony, 1975, p. 255). These interesting comments from Sibony may be interpreted as positing the plus one as a type of conduit, that can, in a sense, create a moment where something of the Real emerges (the Real is understood here as that which is beyond language and cannot be spoken about). Lacan asked Sibony if the plus one can be “of the order of the person, of the subject,” and Sibony replies: “not a person,” “perhaps death,” certainly a function” “where “a certain circulation is produced” (Sibony, 1975, p. 257).

Sibony also highlights the “fleeting moment” of this plus one, in the passage from the plus to the minus, it represents a fading, a disappearance, “where the real will insinuate itself in the group” (Sibony, 1975, p. 255). The plus one might therefore be glimpsed as fleeting, transient and impermanent.

Laberge comments that “... Lacan had accepted the plus one as mathematical” (Laberge, 2019, p.6). Sibony realises that Lacan took advantage of the plus one in order to increase the number of persons in this function. Sibony confronts him and says “as soon as the plus one is acquired, that is, from the

moment it comes into play, it is a spent force.” The “plus one” is a presence, the plus, of the One but “This plus one then has no need to incarnate itself to function” (Sibony, 1975, p. 255).

Although Lacan insists that perhaps the plus one can be “of the order of the person, of the subject,” Sibony is adamant that it is “not a person,” “perhaps death,” “certainly a function” where “a certain circulation is produced” (Sibony, 1975, p. 257). Sibony confirms his position in a post-script in which he evokes the religious:

Sibony confirms his position in a post-script, stating: “The plus one is a presence, the plus, of the One. There are religions where as soon as three faithful are together, there is a presence of the One that they invoke, which is dispersed with them. This plus-one then has no need to be incarnated to function; and this effect is not shown, but demonstrates itself” (Sibony 1975, p. 259).

So to summarise, can we say that the plus one as a presence seems to enable an emergence of some kind, perhaps along the lines of the emergence of meaning that arises in the words of the poem or in the meaning between the signifiers, an emergence of a dimension of the unconscious which may have been revealed? This moment of the plus one is fleeting, ephemeral and momentary. At the moment it appears, it disappears. So the plus one is not a person, the function of the plus one is to produce something—perhaps a *savoir*—certainly a production of a writing of some kind which reveals a blind spot. And we can say that the plus one effectively cuts through the

imaginary dialectics of the group. The plus one, as not-all, allows for a refusal of completeness, a refusal of a definitive answer, a reminder that there is always more. No one has the answer. We know that the space of the Other may be occupied by the church, groups or charismatic leaders—they are not the plus one and yet they are versions of the plus one because they may evince a new knowledge. They are and yet they are not. A group can also function as a plus one so that the presence of another group is not necessarily a negative thing.

It is worth noting the metonymic evolution of the Irish groups—one after another—a group may only produce knowledge, and may only generate leaders and followers but the group as a plus one can create transmission at a subjective level at the level of the parlêtre. But the groups also represent the weaving, an inter-connectivity, that is inherent in the structure. If we accept that the place of psychoanalysis is always on the margin, at the edge, the group then is most useful if it functions outside of the organisational structure and the plus one has an effect because it functions as an outside force on the inside. The squaring of the circle is not only a metaphor for impossibility—impossible because there is a truth within the unconscious of which we wish to know nothing—but also evocative of the possibility of transformation. Philosophically and spiritually, to square the circle means to see equally in four directions. Perhaps the plus one can enable this broader view.

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Video

A Video clip representation of the holomorphic field to further illustrate mathematical consequences of plus one. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dc_V-OcQ5IA.