

NIDA LACAN STUDY AND READING GROUP: SEPTEMBER SEMINAR

The Mirror Stage and Negation

Date: Wednesday 27 September

Time: 6-8pm

Location: Tutorial Room No.3, NIDA, 215 Anzac Parade

The Mirror Stage (Phase), is Lacan's earliest (1930s) theoretical postulation for the fundamental structure of human subjectivity. Mirror Stage is referred to a specific historical period in the infantile development, when the formation of the *I* and the Ego, as a configuration of the identification on the basis of an idealised external (Specular) image, takes place. As a consequence of this procedure, the totality and wholeness of a subject has become an illusion and a distant mirage. Lacan's theory thus marks the culmination of the debates in continental philosophy and psychoanalysis in the twentieth century, which called into question the nature of the Cartesian autonomous subject, centred on the consciousness and thinking.

Lacan reconceptualizes as such Descartes' simplistic formulation of the cogito, *I think therefore I am*, into a decentred and fragmented entity with its centre of gravity outside of itself. The process of identification is correlated with the transformation that takes place within the subject, when the subject simulates a captivating and alluring image as the source and precisely the origin of its own identity. The joyous assumption takes place when the human infant is still trapped in his motor incoordination and in an utter dependence on the mother or the carer. The fixation of identity on a foreign image occurs prior to the acquisition of language, which puts the ego in a direction of discordance with its own reality. Put in other way, this makes the subject a product of misrecognition with the external and idealized image. The idealized image, on its part, has an infallible captivating, seductive, and fascinating effect upon the subject, as Lacan summarizes this in his seminal essay on the Mirror Stage, "The mirror stage is a drama whose internal pressure pushes precipitously from insufficiency to anticipation—and, for the subject caught up in the lure of spatial identification, turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body to what I will call an "orthopaedic" form of its totality—and to the finally donned armor of an alienating identity that will mark his entire mental development with its rigid structure."

One major implication of the structuring of the elusive identification is *negation*, as a procedure that the subject contrives in order to persist on a repressed wish or thought by way of its denial and disavowal. This always happens during the practice of treatment and analysis as a resistance on the part of the analysand, which in the meantime is a way of the perception of the repression as well. For example, the subject will say 'no' while he means 'yes' as Freud argues in his short essay "Negation". The 'no' here is meant for the ideational representation of the unconscious wish, and 'yes' to the primordial unconscious source of that wish or feeling. Negation in philosophy and psychoanalysis is comparable to a degree.

In September seminar, we will discuss first Lacan's theory of the Mirror Stage and then his theory of negation and provide examples from literature, art, and culture as a whole. In the second part of the seminar we will read from his essay, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the *I*," and a selection from Lacan Seminar: Book I.

Dr Ehsan Azari Stanizai (0402440637)

Reading:

1. "Introduction and Reply to Jean Hyppolite's Presentation of Freud's *Verneinung* [Negation]," from *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's paper on Technique*.
2. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I," from *Écrits: the complete edition*.