

March Seminar 2020

NIDA LACAN STUDY AND READING GROUP

Due to Coronavirus restrictions, we will continue our seminars online until further notice. I will send members copies of the texts of the monthly seminars. New members, please contact us by the email:
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Formations of the Unconscious (V)

The Three Moments of Oedipus Complex

For earlier Lacan, the Oedipus complex was the transition from nature to culture. When the subject began to speak, he is distracting his mythical attachment with nature. His/her identification is grounded in humanization. This traumatic experience introduces the subject with an unbridgable gap, which arises from losing the primordial object of desire. The Oedipus complex is the domain of three moments or ‘times’ of the experience of the lack of object—frustration, privation, and castration. Frustration is the name for the imaginary lack of the real object (*Phallus*), privation is the name for a real lack of the symbolic object, and castration is the name for the symbolic lack of the imaginary object. Lacan highlights the castration complex as the finality on which the whole Oedipus complex hinges.

Lacan underscores, at the outset of the session, that there is a structure within which the subject must insert itself. This structure—the Oedipus complex—is formed outside the experience of the subject. Psychology, like sociology, does not show interest in this structure. The former realizes the individual relations incorporated in the inter-human context, and the latter denies the significance of the Oedipus complex in a social setting. The phallus inevitably conditions the entrance into this structure, which is the object of castration. The first moment of the Oedipus complex is perceived as the relation of the child with not the mother but with the mother’s desire, which makes the subject’s desire a desire for other desire—a desire for desire. At this stage, the child is preoccupied with the desire of the Other (the mother). The Other in this stage is the primordial object of desire. The object of the mother’s desire is the phallus. Its pathology shows itself in perversion. The phallus plays various roles in its relation to the mother. It is the pivot “role in the subjective structuring of the mother, and it can be in different states as an object—it is even what makes what comes next so complicated.” (Lacan, 2017, 183)

Lacan sets up the framework of the first moment where the *I* of the discourse of the child is the Other, identified in the first child-mother attachment. As such, the *I* of the mother becomes the Other for the child. The child identifies himself with the object of the mother’s desire. However, the entry of the father and his discourse changes the mother-child bond. That is the second moment in the Oedipus complex when the father and his prohibiting law emerges on the scene. In other words, the father’s barring discourse affects the mothers’ discourse of the first moments because it prohibits the child from being the object of his mother’s desire. This situation, when the ‘no’ of the father refuses the child to be the object of the mother’s desire, the father takes hold of the position of the Other. The child finds himself in a quandary of work out the desire to be the object of another desire. The second moment as Lacan termed it privation, places the child in his desire in a restricted field. The child’s desire in the first moment was somewhat fluid and mystical in which the mother stood at the place of the Other. This second

moment is recognized as the process of identification with the father or, as Lacan says, “having what the father has.” (187) The father's arrival in this process begins his symbolic function as a law and a signifier—the Name-of-the-Father.

Lacan considers the phallus as having the determining role in the signifying chain. He illustrates this by introducing his four graphs of desire that appears in *Seminar V* as well as *Écrits* and elsewhere as the graphs of desire. The first of these graphs is called the cell of desire, which shows a horizontal vector of the signifying chain crossed at two points by a horseshoe-shaped vector of the subject. Lacan's main intention is to expose the metonymic structure of the object (the phallus), which organizes the flow of all the other signifiers in the signifying chain.

We can settle for situating it amongst signifiers here—it is a metonymic object. Because of the existence of the signifying chain, it will in any case, circulate, like the ferret, everywhere amongst the signified—being, amongst the signified, what results from the existence of the signifiers. Our experience shows us that this signified plays a major role for the subject—that of the universal object. (Ibid)

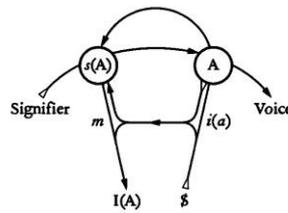
As said above, Lacan points out the signifier of the father (the Name-of-the-Father) has a crucial role to play beyond imposing its law on the discourse of the child. Along this line of reasoning, Lacan introduces his theoretical approach to the clinical evidence of psychosis. He considers the Freudian case history of President Schreber as a crucial example. In Schreber's discourse, speech is related by a delusional dialogue with God. [In a conference in New Zealand, a Lacanian scholar from the UK (I withhold his name) interrupted me several times annoyingly whenever I mentioned President Schreber. He asserted that Lacan never called Schreber President. However, that is not true. Lacan used President Schreber dozens of times in Seminar V and elsewhere]. Lacan fundamental axiom, in a nutshell, is the following: in psychosis, the signifier of the Name-of-the-Father as a symbolic function where “the father at the level of what happens here between message and code, and code and the message is *verworfen*,” (187). [Freud used *verwerfung* in German, which means foreclosure]. In psychosis, the fundamental signifier of the NoF or the commanding ‘no’ of the father is foreclosed, whereby the psychotic subject is incapable of keeping his discourse in a logical order. In this situation, the non-existence of the father as the law excludes the primary signifier from the language. The subject receives the message of the mother as ‘no of the father’. Lacan presents the prohibition of the father that in the graph arrives at point *A*.

Consequently, “the father appears as the Other,” (186). This process affects the desire of the subject for the mother, which is initially the desire for the mother's desire. The subject enables an initial closure of the desire for a desire and a primary success in discovering the object of the mother's desire. A perfect subject of such a loss in desire is President Schreber.

Referring to the case of President Schreber, because he has been called upon, at an essential vital detour, to bring the Name-of-the-Father to respond from its place, which is where it is incapable of responding from because it has never come to that place, he sees this structure appears in its place. This structure is brought about by the massive, real intervention of the father beyond the mother, insofar as she is absolutely not backed up by him as protector of the law. (188)

For Lacan, what happens in psychosis is the dissociation between the message and codes. To make this intricate statement clear, I will discuss the second graph of desire from *Écrits* here

more fully. I choose the graph because it evolves as the developed and complete topographical representation of the subject facing the truth of his discourse when the master signifier undermines the desire of the mother's desire for the subject.



Courtesy of <http://iambobby.com>

The graph is composed of two vectors: horizontal *Signifier* \rightarrow *Voice* (the conscious signifying chain) that intersect in two points of $s(A) \rightarrow A$, which has a clockwise motion, and the horseshoe-shaped vector $\$ \rightarrow I(A)$ (the subject from his birth to the acquisition of the language), with has a counter-clockwise motion. These double intersection of the two vectors demonstrates the retroaction between A and $s(A)$. These two points are also known as *point de capiton*, quilting points, anchoring points, and button tie. The quilting points in the Lacanian sense means the temporary stoppage of the sliding of the signifier under the signified, which yields an illusion of meaning. These quilting points are necessary for a normal individual to fall into psychosis. The message of the subject also comes from the Other, as Lacan points out, “Code messages and message codes separate out into pure forms in the psychotic subject, the subject who makes do with the preliminary Other alone,” (Lacan, 2006, 683). In psychosis, the sliding stops and the signifier and the signified appear in divided forms. From Lacan’s algebra, we know that the sign $s(A)$ is the message, the signification of the Other. The A stands for the site of the big Other, the source, or the ‘battery’ of the signifiers. The barred subject $\$$ stands for the split subject, and $I(A)$, the ego ideal. The m stands for the ego, and $i(a)$, is the ideal ego, which in the lower half of the graph topologically illustrate the formation of the I in the mirror stage. The split subject is a product by the juncture of the mythical subject of the need with the signifying chain. The subject splits once it gives in to the signifier that arrives from the locus of the Other in terms of a message.

Lacan emphasizes that this exchange designates a circular movement from $s(A)$ to A and A to $s(A)$. The motion between these two points stops in psychosis because of the foreclosure of the master signifier, the (NoF). As Lacan states, “the result presented itself in the form of the two broad categories of the voice and hallucination,” (Lacan, 2017, 140). The code and message come in Lacanian theoretical parlance from Jakobson’s method of communication. The code in every message is understood by both the addresser and the addressee. For instance, in the codes of the traffic light, red is danger and green is safe. As such, this understanding is imminent between the subject and the Other.

In conclusion, in this session, Lacan discusses the three moments of the Oedipus Complex further. The uses two vectors: the fundamental horseshoe-shape showing the trajectory of the subject that moves from its primitive state when the child is born and is identified with the pure biological need, and the status as the split subject $\$$ when encounters with the demand and desire of the mother (Other). By way of this interaction, the subject finds himself an identity. Lacan’s fundamental argument about the two intersections ($A \leftrightarrow s(A)$) of the two vectors is as follows:

The subject receives his message from the (\mathcal{A}) the locus of the Other, codes, and battery of the signifiers in an inverted way.

What the graph reveals is that identity is a matter of complex relations at all levels, the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. This the vector from the signifier to voice—passing from $s(\mathcal{A})$ through \mathcal{A} —represents the level of conscious discourse. Here \mathcal{A} is the synchronic system of the signifier, the Other as language, while $s(\mathcal{A})$ is the “punctuation” that allows the signifiers to take on meaning through the retroactive effect of temporality. (Lacan, Lee, 1990, 139)

What occurs here is that the subject addresses himself to the Other, and as an answer, he receives back the same message that “there are only two ways one can talk about this S[subject], about this subject that we radically are. These are—either truly to address oneself to the Other, the big Other, and to receive from it the message that concerns you in an inverted form—or to indicate its direction, in the form of an allusion,” (Lacan, 1993, 52). With the introduction of the law of the father the (NoF), language functions universally in the symbolic order as castration for the subject. The role of the language produces a balance, and when it is not working, then psychosis and other symptoms take hold in the unconscious of the subject.

Gathering from Lacan’s observations, it is important to note that before the foreclosure of the (NoF), the subject had free access to the primordial object of desire and its attached *jouissance*. Still, after this traumatic time of castration, the *jouissance* is forbidden. The signifier is, at once, the prohibiting of the *jouissance* and the only means by which the subject could grasp the *jouissance*. To get access to the *jouissance* the subject must transgress the law, something that happens in Antigone.

Notes

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