

December 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: Ehsan.Azari@nida.edu.au

Correlation Between Demand and Desire

The Seminar V: Formations of the Unconscious (XIV)

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In the beginning, Lacan introduces the relationship between the signifiers and the things related to man. It is the signifier that changes the man into a desiring being signified by a lack. The signifier marks the things of man. When we speak about the things of man, it is different from speaking about other things. The things are not different from the way the signifier is exploring them. They keep a relationship with the logos. That makes the things still linguistic phenomena. However, things that lie beyond language and the unconscious are different. In modern times, we can see how language penetrates things and inscribes its signature upon them. The more we are purifying the language, the more we distract it from things. Until the beginning of modern science, people preferred to detach the language from things. Lacan's main concern here is that the embryonic organization of the unconscious with language makes it different when talking about the man. When the use of language is outside the domain of man, we are using a different language. In other words, things are always responsive when the signifiers explore them, as the signifiers are related to the organization of the logos. In this context, Lacan claims that language sometimes reaches an impasse when talking about things in a man. Thus the language in which we can question man has not been discovered yet. It appears to us that we discovered this language when we draw on the discourse of academia and psychiatric psychology. For example, in psychiatry, language fails to work out a definition of hallucination.

The entire language of psychiatry presents the same handicap, moreover, and makes us aware of its profound stagnation. We say that such-and-such a function is being reified, and we feel the arbitrariness of these reifications when for example, we speak in a Bleulerian language [Paul Eugen Bleuler was a Swiss psychiatrist who studied schizophrenia] about dissociation in schizophrenia. And when we say 'reify,' we get the impression that we are formulating a valid critique. (Lacan, 2017, 334)

Lacan clarifies his position here that his aim is not to reproach the discourse or the psychiatric psychology (the science of man) that turns a man into a thing. This discourse wants to make a man a thing identified as a 'frozen language,' "which hastily substitutes its own form of language for something that is already woven into language." (Ibid)

To elucidate Lacan's position at the beginning of the session, we need to divide things that belong to man and beyond it. He means that man and what is related to him cannot be distracted from linguistic signifiers. The signifier makes him a man and represents him/her for another signifier. That means what persists in the unconscious chain acts on the body and organism. What appears from the outside as a hysterical symptom is the unconscious influences and acts upon the organism. Lacan criticizes the traditional psychology that defines man with no

regard for its constitution by the signifiers and language. The language used for defining a stone is a different language as long as it is not related to man. Even a thing that is associated with the world of man is a thing that is associated with signifiers.

Lacan calls attention to the Freudian discovery of the 'formations of the unconscious,' the language marks primarily. The primarily here implies Freud's 'primary process' of the unconscious (id) against the conscious or 'secondary process' (the ego). Primary processes are also set in language by linguistic methods such as condensation (metaphor) and displacement (metonymy). The secondary processes identified as verbal thinking is interrelated to the primary. For Freud, primary processes manifest themselves in dreams, and symptoms are an admixture of both primary and secondary (unconscious and unconscious) processes. What is at issue, strictly speaking, are the primary processes as already structured the language. Lacan criticizes psychology or a combination of psychoanalysis and biology to see primary processes, not as part of the language. That is what Lacan precisely promises his audience that he will bring the primary processes into the realm of language.

Lacan reaffirms his theoretical standpoint on the dialectic of demand and desire by emphasizing that demand accommodates within itself an identification with the 'object.' There is no intersubjective exchange until the Other speaks as the speech belongs to the Other. Lacan maxim, the unconscious is the Other's discourse, says the same thing. In pursuit of his argument, Lacan mentions Freud's notion of the 'other scene,' that he borrowed from Fechner in *The Interpretation of Dream*, which suggests that the scene of dreams is different from a wakeful life, for it is the playground of the primary unconscious desire where man's satisfaction has to be shaped by speech. It all means that desire needs to be mediated by speech, which originates in the Other. According to Freud, a child assumes that his parent knows all about his thought. He also considered this moment in childhood symptomatic. It is because the thinking of the subject appears in the Other's speech. Lacan also shows that the identification takes place between the subject and the other (mirror stage). The child's experience suggests that the narcissistic relation of the subject "is open, effectively, to permanent transitivity." (335)

Lacan sees two ambiguities concerning the imaginary and the symbolic, wherein the subject is caught up in his mirror image (the other) and the latter where desire is grounded in the Other's speech. The imaginary establishes a relation of rivalry between the subject and his double (semblable) regarding their object and the symbolic the subject endures himself with the Other's presence. The other is the double, semblable, and another human being, whereas the Other could be parents, culture, and so on.

The dialectic of the subject and the other in the imaginary is essentially for recognition. Hegel saw the root of such a conflict of enjoyment at the master/slave dialectic wherein both are struggling to the death. Acknowledging the importance of the Hegelian formulation of master/slave, Lacan contends that psychoanalysis goes further in this respect and sees in the rivalry between siblings the relationship between children and their parents. Instead of a struggle for recognition, there is a demand. Since a child's desire needs to pass through the demand, his desire finds itself alienated in this demand. The dependence of the child on demand and the Other's speech alienates and restructure his desire. At the final Oedipal stage, the demand of the child will accommodate an irreducible desire as Lacan states, "the usual way in which this other desire is introduced for the subject is as the Other's desire. The subject recognizes a desire beyond demand and locates it beyond the first Other to whom he addresses his demand—let's say, to to focus our minds, the mother." (337) The function of this desire brings a division between the subject and the Other. That brings the Other's desire to the fore, which remains beyond the subject's demand. That implies that the subject's desire finds its place in the Other's

desire, whereby the subject's structuring of the unconscious with signifiers takes shape. Simply put, the subject desire is the Other's desire means, that by the mediation of demand, desire means here the recognition that the subject wants from the Other, and secondly, subject desire what the Other's desire and that veiled thing is the phallus, the lack in the Other. It worths mentioning that Lacan's aim from dialectic is not what Hegel said. Dialectic for Lacan is the interchangeability between the opposites where the synthesis neither progressive nor essential. It is nothing but a lack and its persistence. We have to consider this when dealing with the Lacan's use of the dialectic as a concept.

Lacan pays attention to the somatic sphere of the Freudian pathology of hysteria, where the unconscious conflict manifests itself in physiological terms. He begins his discussion with Freud when he speaks about the desire for the first time in dreams. The dream that he highlights is Freud's own dream, Uncle Joseph, that appears in *Die Traumstellung, The Interpretation of Dreams*. That is a dream that evolves in two levels: the signifying level of speech and the imaginary level when the metonymic object reveals itself. Lacan picks and chooses another dream for his analysis, which emerges in the fourth chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, "Distortions in Dreams," a dream by the beautiful butcher's wife. He quotes the verbalized text of the dream from Standard Edition, page 147, as follows.

I wanted to give a supper-party, but I had nothing in the house but a little smoked salmon. I thought I would go out and buy something, but remembered then that it was Sunday afternoon and all the shops would be shut. Next I tried to ring up some caterers, but the telephone was out of order. So I had to abandon my wish to give a supper-party. (338)

When the Butcher's wife told her dream, she argued with him that he repeatedly told her that a dream was often a manifestation of wish-fulfillment, but in her dream, that did not happen. At first, Freud agreed but said that the urge to a dream was often embedded "in the events of the previous day." (339) To have a better grasp of Freud's analysis and Lacan's reinterpretation, I exactly quote Freud here from Standard Edition, page 147-148:

ANALYSIS.—My patient's husband, an honest and capable wholesale butcher, had remarked to her the day before that he was getting too stout and therefore intended to start on a course of weight-reduction. He proposed to rise early, do physical exercises, keep to a strict diet, and above all accept no more invitations to supper. She laughingly added that her husband, at the place where he regularly lunched, had made the acquaintance of a painter, who had pressed him to be allowed to paint his portrait, as he had never seen such expressive features. Her husband however had replied in his blunt manner that he was much obliged, but he was sure the painter would prefer a piece of a pretty young girl's behind to the whole of his face. She was very much in love with her husband now and teased him a lot. She had begged him, too, not to give her any caviar.

What did that mean?

She had wished for a long time that she could have a caviar sandwich every morning but had grudged the expense.

Or, rather, she didn't grant himself that licence.

Of course her husband would have let her have it at once if she had asked him. But, on the contrary, she had asked him not to give her any caviare, so that she could go on teasing him about it.

Then Freud makes this parenthesis:

This explanation struck me as unconvincing. Inadequate reasons like this usually conceal unconfessed motives. They remind one of Bernheim's hypnotized patients. When one of these carries out a post-hypnotized suggestion and is asked why he is acting in this way, instead of saying that he has no idea, he feels compelled to invent some obviously unsatisfactory reason. The same was no doubt true of my patient and the caviar. I saw that she was obliged to create an unfulfilled wish for herself in her actual life, and the dream represented this renunciation as having been put into effect. But why was it that she stood in need of an unfulfilled wish? (339-340)

In another parenthesis, Freud further said that the butcher's wife confessed that she had a skinny female friend and her husband wanted a little oversized woman. His wife knew this and always asked the butcher's wife for another supper to get herself stout. However, her husband's wish to lose weight will not allow her to make another supper. The butcher's wife also disclosed that smoked salmon was her friend's favorite. Freud claims that he met with her friend who loved smoked salmon as the butcher's wife loved caviare. The text of the dream of the butcher's wife and her confession was now enough for Freud to interpret the whole dream. Freud found out that the butcher's wife had been identifying with her female friend. Her bringing the disavowed wish to real life is an indication of this identification.

Enthralled by this whole text of the dream and Freud's analysis, Lacan examines the dialectic of demand and desire—often a case with hysterics. That was a clear articulation of Freud about the signification of a hysteric's identification. As Freud argues, such an identification is not just the same as hysterical imitation, as it might happen when another female imitates the hysterical gestures of a female hysteric. That is what Lacan calls 'hysterical contagion.' Freud hints at such a hysterical copycat that is well-known to the psychiatrists. The scribe remembers such a case when a girl was brought to a hospital in Kabul with a complaint that she had copycat her hysteric friend's symptoms. From the very beginning, the butcher's wife presents an unsatisfied desire.

Lacan relates the dream in question to the staging the butcher wife's satisfaction of a wish—a wish for an unsatisfied desire. He concludes that the underlying situation that this dream exposes is the actual situation between demand and desire. That is a usual occurrence in hysteria. A hysteric "is suspended between this necessary split, as I was showing you earlier, between demand and desire." (342) As Lacan articulates his theoretical point that a hysteric to enter the domain of love, she/he needs first to desire 'something else,' like caviar in the dream. He reaffirms Freud's position that she wants her husband to refuse to give her caviar in order to remain madly in love with him. However, Lacan thinks these are structural elements and can add something significant to the dream's original meaning.

What is expressed is a structure which, beyond its comical side, has to represent something necessary. The hysteric is precisely a subject who finds it difficult to establish a relation—one that enables her to retain her place as a subject—with the constitution of the Other as big Other and bearer of the spoken sign. This is the very definition that one can give of the hysteric. In a word, the hysteric, man or a woman, is so open to suggestion through speech that there must be something in it. (343)

Presenting an unsatisfied desire by the subject is the condition for establishing the big Other for the subject, which is not impending in the offing for mutual satisfaction of demand or whole of desire by the Other's speech. The unsatisfied desire in the dream is the Other's desire. In the dream, the desire for caviar is not sought by the dreamer for satisfaction in reality. The desire for caviar is represented in the dream by the skinny friend with whom the butcher's wife identifies. Her other is also a hysteric whose desire, like those of other hysterics, is constituted on the Other's foundation. So the desire for smoked salmon belongs to her friend. The smoked

salmon she is left with and unable to give a party means that the salmon is the Other's desire. Even though the butcher's wife cannot give the party, all that counts is her intention to give salmon to her friend. The butcher also has his desire in the dream, and it is the beautiful girl whose face he requests the painter to draw. Lacan iterates in his observation that a hysteric's desire goes beyond the demand and always sustains as a refused desire in demand. In his paper "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of its Power," Lacan restates his position that in the dream under review, the butcher's wife hides her desire for caviar behind her female friend's desire for smoked salmon. Her desire takes the shape of an unsatisfied desire, a signified of the desire for caviar.

A desire for desire, in other words, a desire signified by a desire (the hysteric's desire to have an unsatisfied desire is signified by her desire for caviar: the desire for caviar is the signifier), is inscribed in the different register of a desire substituted for a desire (in the dream, the desire for smoked salmon, characteristic of the patient's female friend, is substituted for the patients' own desire for caviar, which constitutes the substitution of a signifier for a signifier. (Lacan, 2006, 518-519)

Lacan answers the question of the persistence of an unsatisfied desire in hysterics. Since the Other's desire is always barred, the subject acknowledges his barred desire as unsatisfied desire with the Other's intervention. The phallus as signifier occupies the locus of the Other's desire. Since the Other's desire is barred, this brings up castration in the final stage of the Oedipus complex.

Lacan returns to the butcher wife's dream in *Seminar X: Anxiety*, where he reiterates that a neurotic like the butcher's wife functions as a sham object *a* in fantasy to defend her/himself from anxiety. She refrains from feeding her husband the caviar because she presents an unsatisfied desire by placing nothing on the table. Lacan draws up a universal underlying neurotic character from this formulation of hysterics. The object *a* functions as a defense against anxiety. That is, in fact, "the bait with which they hold onto the Other." (Lacan, 2014, 50)

The butcher's beautiful wife is fond of caviar, of course, only she doesn't want any, because it may well give too much pleasure to her big brute of a husband who's capable of gobbling it up along with the rest. Even that won't bring him to stop. Now, what interest the butcher's beautiful wife is not in the slightest, of course, feeding her husband caviar, because, as I told you, he'll add on a whole menu. He's got a big appetite, this butcher. The only thing that interests the beautiful wife is her husband fancying the little negligible amount, the *nothing*, that she keeps in reserve. (Ibid)

The identification between the butcher's wife and her female friend reveals the entire hysterical paradigms where a female always introduces her own desire behind another female's desire. As Dor writes, "It is a commonplace that the hysteric always fixes on one or another feminine model as she tries to assume her own femininity," (Dor, 1999, 88). Lacan shifts focus on another Freudian case known as Dora, which reveals that identification more conspicuously. Dora is captivated by another female's charms, Frau K. Her identification with K. for Freud was enough to see it as a case of hysteric homosexuality. In such instances, the hysteric loves to look like her double in every aspect of her life. Dora broke up her treatment and suffered from severe hysterical symptoms like dyspnea (breathing difficulties), aphonia (loss of voice), nervous coughing, and migraine. Lacan refers in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* to Freud's confessed failure in Dora's treatment. Lacan argues that Freud failed "to formulate what was the object both of the hysteric's desire and of the female homosexual's desire," (Lacan, 1994, 38). Dora upholds her desire for a man through her admiration for her father, who had a liking in

return for Frau K.—Herr K.’s wife. This last desire was also barred and unsatisfied desire. Dora does this by liking Herr K. Dora thus fails to realize herself capable of desiring the Other. She defies her desire for her father by utilizing the Other’s desire. In other words, she articulates her own desire in her father’s or Other’s desire. That is the reason that Lacan calls her desire “beyond-the-Other’s-desire,” (Lacan, 2017,347). In the end, Freud understood that Frau K. was the object of Dora’s desire. She identified with the object of her father’s unsatisfied desire— Frau K. This is the whole point of significance in a hysteric’s desire that Lacan defines as subject dissolves itself in the object a , $\$ \langle \rangle a$. Frau K. holds the position of an object a , which here functions as her other. Dora made herself closer to Herr K., who satisfies Frau K.’s desire to sustain her other. That does not mean she is in love with Herr K. Her admiration for Herr K. is, in fact, for securing her object of his desire, Frau K. However, everything falls apart for Dora once Herr K. tells her that his wife is nothing to him. That is what put her in a regressive plane, for what she wants is Frau K., as an object of desire for Herr K. does not pertain to the drama that Dora arranged for her desire. After this unpleasant event, as Lacan stresses Dora falls back to her ‘primitive’ demand for her father. That is a paranoid state that she demands—a demand for love and care from the Other or her father. Herr K.’s magic words collapsed Dora’s position from a desiring hysteric into the demanding female.

Following Herr K.’s words, our hysteric falls from on high and returns to the entirely primitive level of demand. She simply demands that her father take care of her, that he give her his love—in other words, according to our definition, everything that he does not have.” (348)

Lacan’s interest in these two cases is evident in his repeated comments in different of his seminars. In *The Seminar XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, comparing these two cases, he points out that the butcher’s wife presents in her dream smoked salmon, which is the object of desire for her female friend instead of caviar that her husband desires. What is essential for her husband is left for another woman for her own *jouissance*. She identifies with a male subject that she can see in her dream. She is unable to symbolize that.

Through the adoration of the object of desire that woman has become on her horizon—the woman she envelops herself in an who in the case study is called Frau K., the woman she is going to contemplate in the figure of the Dresden Madonna—through this adoration, she plugs her penile claim [revendications]. And this is what makes it possible for me to say that the butcher’s wife does not see that, like Dora, she would ultimately be happy to leave this object to another woman. (Lacan, 2007, 74)

In sum, Lacan tries in this session to elaborate on the dialectic of demand and desire—the relationship, interchangeability, and interplay between these two vital psychoanalytic concepts. By way of illustration, he chooses two case histories from Freudian hysteric patients, the butcher’s wife, and Dora to show how demand and desire are interchanging in accordance with the hysteric desire. The mediation of the Other’s desire as the Other’s lack determines the relationship between demand and desire. The female hysteric desire mediates through identification with another female.

Notes:

Dor, Joel, 1999, *The Clinical Lacan*, ed. Judith Feher, Other Press, New York.

Lacan, Jacques, 1994, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, Penguin Books, London.

———2006, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, tr. Bruce Fink, W W Norton & Company, New York.

———2007, *The Seminar XVII: The Other Side Of Psychoanalysis*, tr. Russell Grigg, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, W W Norton & Company, New York.

———2014, *The Seminar X: Anxiety*, tr. A R Price, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, Polity Press, Cambridge.

———2017, *The Seminar V: Formations of the Unconscious*, tr. Russell Grigg, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, Polity Press, Cambridge.