

June Seminar 2021

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

The Significance of Speech in Analytical Practice

The Seminar V: Formations of the Unconscious, XX

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As in a few of his last sessions in this seminar, Lacan scrutinizes the therapeutic aspect of psychoanalysis by freeing the unconscious burdens with analyzing the significant texts about the theories of the cure. He reminds his audience about a seminal essay written by British psychoanalyst Edward Glover titled “Therapeutic Effects of Inexact Interpretation.” He wrote the essay in 1931 when Freud was still alive. The essay examines multiple interpretations to get deeper into the roots of the symptoms. These interpretations might be from frivolous analyses of everything from the hairstyle and ways of speaking of the analysands. The analyst makes an ‘inexact interpretation’ about the symptom to figure out fissures and distortions in the analysand’s speech. In the analytical exchange, the analyst would see how the patients are using substitutes and displacement of the parameters of their symptomatic mechanism. This new technique that Lacan credits Glover for helps scale the patient’s resistance and aggressiveness. Glover’s intention from this path and a wealth of theoretical literature so far in the analysis is to obtain a great deal about the fantasy system. These strategies developed our psychoanalytic knowledge of the cure and therapy compared to the beginning of the analysis. Glover showed much interest in extending the notion of interpretation by looking at the analyst and the analysand’s different positions in analysis. From this, one can draw a structure of the analyst-analysand relation that brings a beneficial therapeutic effect. By making inexact interpretations, may allow the analyst deeper into unconscious repression. Lacan includes that side of Glover’s analytical insight to support his own theory of the talking cure. When the analyst has inexact intervention, the “exactitude moves into the background” (Lacan, 1981, 64). In “The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis, Lacan observes the power of Glover’s therapy of inexact interpretation in the influence of language on the subject and his corporeality. That means that every ‘spoken’ intervention by the analyst has a structuring effect on the subject. In the above essay, Lacan emphasizes the role of language as a material issue that leaves its signature on the human body. Lacan concludes in this seminar that the phobic object is a signifier that refers to different signifieds. Glover’s text is an important reference point for Lacan. *Seminar IV* and *Seminar VI* draw on Glover’s thoughts about the Freudian theory of phobia.

The Word is in fact a gift of Language, and Language is not immaterial. It is a subtle body, but body it is. Words are trapped in the corporeal images. (Ibid)

We know from Lacan’s teaching that the interpretation refers to the sum of statements made by an analyst after examining the analysand’s symptoms, fantasies, and dreams. It also implies identifying the patient’s defence mechanism, repression, and resistance that hides the truth of the unconscious desire. In the meantime, a misrecognition of the truth involved in symptoms could be complicating the symptomatic formation. Nevertheless, as Lacan says, this technique is not altogether useless because the analyst plays a complicit role in forming the symptom.

This begins with the general practitioner who says to the patient, ‘Get a grip on yourself, go to the country, get a new pastime.’ He resolutely places himself in a position of misrecognition, and by virtue of this fact immediately occupies a certain place, that isn’t ineffective, since it can be very well recognized as the very place in which certain symptoms are formed. His function in relation to the patient can be situated using the very terms of analytic topography. (Lacan, 2017, 434)

Drawing on his analytical knowledge and preferences, Glover suggested that the modern therapeutic method draws on bringing interpretation to the sadistic system and the guilt reaction within patients. This method could play a role in relieving the patient’s anxiety but always leaving the sadistic system unsettled and unrepressed. This point is where Lacan was to return in this session. The same goes for the analysis of aggressiveness that Lacan would resolve by saying that the individual narcissistic system was essential for developing the aggressive reaction. This statement will still leave the term aggressiveness confusing.

In contrast, “the aggressiveness provoked in the imaginary relationship with the little other cannot be confused with the sum of aggressive power,” (434). Lacan gives another example where everything seems obvious. Any human-to-human relation generates either violence or speech. The speech and violence are undoubtedly opposed to each other. When looking at violence, even though it is essential to aggression, we are leaving aggressiveness repressed.

Moreover, when this aggressiveness takes the structure of speech, this structure of ‘signifying articulation’ is repressed. When the aggressiveness symbolizes itself as unconscious and repressed, what stays interpretable is “the angle of the murder of the semblable, who is latent in the imaginary relationship,” (435). This means that aggressiveness should be interpreted from the position of the murder or negation of a semblable specular image (the other with little o), which still is latent in the imaginary relationship. That is what Lacan’s theory of the mirror stage unfolds.

The signifying power of speech and the drives carry essential need and desire. Lacan redraws the elementary schema of desire where the vertical vector intersects with the horizontal vector of the signifying chain. With this intersection, the drive and desire articulate themselves in the signifying system of language [see *Seminar V*, p435, Polity Press]. By way of a supposition, the reality for the human being must be converted into a signifying articulation. Lacan also suggests that the signifier has the function of ‘conditioning [in psychology it means the training of a subject or animal to do a certain action in given circumstances]—I won’t say of reflexes [in psychology it denotes automatic responses to the existent stimuli] but of something reducible to reflexes.’ (Ibid)

Language is different from something that professional trainers induce particular performance in animals, as the Russian physiologist Pavlov manages to do. His dogs learned to secrete ‘gastric juice’ by ringing the bells, even though the bell’s sound could be considered a signifier. However, in the human world, everything is coordinated around a merging of needs requiring satisfaction with what Lacan calls ‘predetermined signs.’ These signs are diverse and different from one person to another. If all were to be satisfied with the same signs, we could build an ideal utopian society.

Every expression of the drive commensurate with needs will be associated with a diverse and varied sound of the bell, which will function so that he who hears it will immediately satisfy the said need.

This is how we arrive at the ideal society. What I am depicting is what has always been dreamt of by utopians, namely a perfectly functioning society, and it culminates in the satisfaction of each according to his needs. One adds, to be honest, that everyone participates according to their merits, and that's where the problems start. (435-436)

Lacan reiterates the topological representation of the intersection between the need and drive that meets with the signifier first at A, the Other, and then ends with the message that comes back from A, at the $s(A)$. Before giving in to the signifier, the subject is a mythical child identified with pure need. The child expresses his need in the presence of his mother at point A of the intersection. Lacan clarifies this point: "It's here, in A, that he encounters the mother as a speaking subject, and it's here, in $s(A)$, that the message ends, at the point at which the mother satisfies him," (436). This implies that at this point, $s(A)$, the mother cannot satisfy what lies beyond the child's need. Consequently, the child faces frustration, which means the effect of "non-satisfaction of a drive or failure to achieve a goal." (Rycroft, 1972, 55)

The British paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott examined this issue, the fantasy system in the state of the borderline with psychosis. In his essay on transitional objects, he argues that the critical thing to construct his world is how a child appears from satisfaction, not frustration. Winnicott coined *transitional objects*, referring to soft toys like teddy bears, blankets, clothes, etc. These objects function as the transition from "the first oral relationship with the mother to the "true object-relationship" (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988, 464). The above small objects that are still dearest to children stand for a close relationship with the mother.

When the message does not arrive from the Other to the subject, the child experiences frustration. One complication that the child carries to his relationship with his mother is his body image and the other, as postulated in the mirror stage. The mirror stage arises in the imaginary order before returning the need (satisfied on non-satisfied). The child feels apprehension with his own body concerning the idealized image he has already internalized from his surroundings. This is due to the premature birth of a human child, as Lacan emphasizes in the mirror stage theory. Here two tracks meet one another. The first is the symbolic order, where the superego develops. The second is the imaginary relations with the internalized self-image that seems harmed and frustrated for the subject.

It turns out that the circuit is being played out on two planes from the outset, a symbolic plane and an imaginary plane. On the one hand, the relationship to the primordial object—the mother or the Other as locus where the possibility of formulating need in signifiers is located. On the other, the image of the other, little *a*, where the subject has a kind of link to himself, to an image that represents the line of his own completion—imaginary completion, of course. (437)

Lacan admits that mental life shown by the analytical experience comes to fruition if there is a primordial beyond the Other with the power of its omnipotence. The frustration does not characterize this primordial position of the mother, for it is insufficient. On the contrary, *Versagung*, with "ambiguity of promise and refusal that this word contains," makes the subject mindful of the Other—the locus of speech. Lacan states that everything he says in *Seminar V* endorses this critical point—the integration of the need and especially the demand for love in the signifier.

In the Freudian Oedipal triangle as a foundation of the social experience, one thing needs more attention: the signifier that means more than it conveys. For example, a Father with a signifier of the father's name is much more than just a father. As a signifier, the father's name is the dead

father, a primary Oedipal signifier the functions as a denominator for the entire system of the signifier. That signifier symbolizes the first Other to whom the speaking subject addressed himself. That is the signifier that its absence will unsettle the subject's whole system of language. Lacan gives the example of Pavlov's bell sound, which is not the Other but the locus of the system of the signifiers.

The Other, potentially the Father, the locus in which the law is articulated, is itself subject to the signifying articulation and, even more than subject to signifying articulation, it's marked by it, with the denaturing effect that the presence of signifiers entails. (438)

This signifier also represents a lack symbolized by the system of signifiers in terms of the phallus. Freud situated his death instinct there too. Where does a symptom stand here? A symptom is what Freud specified as signification and signified, $s(A)$. It doesn't stand only for the subject but his whole history and medical history. The past experiences in the life of the subject provide the signifier of the symptom. We find what is repressed at the heart of the subject and the symptom—the castration complex. Freud calls the primal scene (natural or fantasized) the subject's initial trauma. The subject interprets this as the father's violence. In Freud's sense, in each symptom, what is involved is the signified attached to a bunch of signifiers.

The studies on hysterics reveal how to find out the source of the neurosis. It begins from the correlation of the signifiers with the subject's dependence on the demand. That is why a hysteric must formulate her desire and the object. The object of this desire is never the object of need. Lacan postulates this by examining the butcher's wife, as cited in the earlier sessions in this seminar. Freud found this out at the very beginning when he said that the essential question for a hysteric is to make the object her desire sustains different from the object of need. Thus a hysteric's desire is a latent desire or better hysteria as a denominator for a universal human desire. Hysterics faces her desire as a mask wherein various forms of lack exists active.

By contrast, the desire of the obsessional is to deny the Other's desire and sustaining himself through fantasy to prevent the vanishing of the subject. The obsessional faces with an impossible desire. An obsessional subject destroys the desire of the Other. At the same time, this access to his own desire is through the Other's desire.

Those who already have an obsessional in hand may know that it's an essential trait of his condition that his own desire decreases, blinks, wavers, and disappears the closer he gets to it. For an obsessional, his desire appears as destroying itself. In away desire is his rival, and he relates himself to it in terms of destruction. That is like the relationship of the subject with the image of the other in the mirror stage. Lacan clarifies that "the obsessional's approach to his desire remains, therefore, struck by this mark such that every time he approaches it, it disappears." (442)

The innate dynamic of the obsessional is a perpetual attempt to ruin the Other's desire. In the domain of the obsessional, this war of attrition with the other has amounted to the destruction of the obsessional's own desire. One thing that differentiates children from one another is the degree of persistence in their demands. The obsessional demand is always felt by the one who deals with it, such as parents. They always find such a demand intolerable. That is not because their demand is something exceptional but the way they make it. The exact character of such a demand implies the relation is the subject's correlation to the demand after the resolution of the Oedipus complex or the invisibility period (in Lacan, the symbolic order).

The things for the hysterics are different. They support their puzzling desire by using object *a* as an ‘artifice.’ They use object *a* in two levels. First, the hysteric subject has a desire found in the level of $[\$ \langle \rangle a]$. Second, in the level of $i(a)$, the specular image or the other. Lacan gives the example of Dora’s relationship with Herr K., who places herself as an object *a*—the object of Herr K.’s desire. However, the obsessional uses other elements and a different place. In the relationship with his demand, the obsessional by positioning himself about demand expressed by the formula, $[\$ \langle \rangle D]$. As such, the obsessional distances himself from his desire by persistent demands. The obsessional lives in a world of the signifier. He manages to preserve the Other by articulating the signifiers as much as he will destroy it.

In analysis, a solution comes into effect that the obsessional figures out from the position of the analyst what relationship he has with the phallus—the signifier of the Other’s desire. This is how the analyst keeps the analysand’s demand satisfied by an “imaginary mirage by granting him his object through the symbolization of an imaginary fantasy by the analyst,” (447). However, this is an illusory solution to bring a change in the subject’s stability. As such, the analysand will be immersed in what Lacan calls a “euphoric identification, intoxicating for the subject, the description of which completely matches a masculine ideal located in the analyst.” (Ibid)

To sum up, in this session, Lacan examines Glover’s text about new and unusual methods in analytical practice. The inexact interpretation that Lacan has considered helpful for excavating more plunging into the subject’s unconscious. This method demands that in analytical experience, speech, especially its signifying power in the analysis, plays a decisive role. As soon as speech appears, the subject drives show themselves in terms of symptoms in terms of signifiers. By analyzing the signifier’s signifying effect, the analyst accesses the critical repressed material within the unconscious of obsessional and hysteric. The emergence of desire out of need and demand takes place through such a signifying process. The demand within the demand—love, and presence—is an articulation demand in the signifier.

Notes:

Lacan, Jacques, (1968), *The Language of the Self: the Function of Language in Psychoanalysis*, tr. Anthony Wilden, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore.

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

Laplanche Jean & Pontalis, (1988), *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, tr. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Karnac Books, London.

Rycroft, Charles, (1972), *A Critical Dictionary of Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books, London.