

NIDA Lacan Study and Reading Group: December Seminar

Lacan on Sexuation

Date: Wednesday 20 December 2017.

Time: 6-8 pm

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

Reading:

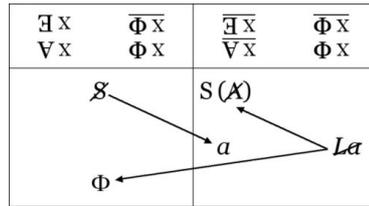
Lacan: Seminar XX: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972-1973. pp.78-89

Despite Lacan's influence on our understanding of the gender variation, it is important to understand that his theory of sexuation is sometimes misunderstood in feminist and other branches of academic studies in humanities. It is interpreted as Lacan's gender demarcation and the mapping of fixed boundaries of masculinity and femininity in terms of biology and anatomy. Other critics assume that Lacan appropriates phallogocentric denomination for universal human sexuality.

In the early seventies of the last century, Lacan devoted his whole *Seminar XX: Encore*, to clarify his theoretical position on the genesis of human sexuality. In Chapter-VII of this seminar, he outlines his groundbreaking description of a flowing principle of sexuality wherein, according to his/her personal choice, a speaking being subscribes to either phallic *jouissance* or the Other *jouissance*. So, for Lacan, the choice of surplus enjoyment or *jouissance* determine sexual preferences. Lacan postulates two paradigms of *jouissances*, namely, the phallic and the Other as the two borderless domains that are open for the entry of either member of the gender groups. In other words, the two sides of the gender difference are not confinements as Lacan at the outset remarks that "every speaking being situates itself on one side or the other. This grounding must be the impulse from which we engage with Lacan in his theory of sexation.

In a multidisciplinary setting, Lacan draws a diagram and formula of sexuation by using the theory of Aristotle's logic of affirmation (full or particular affirmation) and negative (full or particular). Lacan also draws on modern mathematics and set theory and Freud's notion of the primal Father. The diagram is divided into left and right sides. On the right side, we have the barred subject ($\$$) and the phallic function Φ , and on the right-hand side, S barred (A or Other), object a , and the barred woman shown in the diagram here as barred La in French. The \forall stands for quantifier and \exists for existential quantifier. Φx is for the Phallic function (Castration)

We also have on the top of the diagram the following two sets of formulas:



Courtesy of lavaisujet.wordpress.com

On the left-hand side: $\forall x \Phi x$ and $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$: All men are subject to the phallic function (Castration and desire) except one man, the non-castrated primal Father who had access to all females of the horde (Freud), thus there is one x that negates the phallic function. On the right-hand side: $\overline{\exists x \overline{\Phi x}}$ and $\overline{\forall x \Phi x}$: There doesn't exist one woman who isn't submitted to the phallic function. The woman isn't whole because "as soon as Woman is enunciated by way of a non-whole, the W cannot be written. There is only barred Woman here. Woman is related to the signifier of A (Other) insofar as it is barred." This shows that the woman's position is more privileged because she has access to both *jouissances* (phallic and Other).

After discussing Lacan's theory of sexuation, we will have reading of the "Chapter VII" of the *Seminar XX: Encore*.

Dr Ehsan Azari Stanizai