

EDITORIAL

"Fair Science frown 'd not on his humble birth" wrote Gray in the Epitaph to his *Elegy Written in a Country Church Yard* (1751). But, since Gray was doubtless referring to himself - a student of history, poetry, politics and fine art -, that eighteenth-century "Science" which did not scorn Gray's obscure social origins would today more resemble the 'Arts' to us than it would resemble science in our contemporary sense. Rousseau's *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750) dates from virtually the same moment, and Rousseau's "sciences" refer to branches of human knowledge in a way that reflects the basic etymology of science as Latin *scientia*, or knowledge in general. So the meaning of "science" has really changed in the last two hundred years; just as Renaissance science gradually discredited and replaced the untested Medieval science of the Scholastics that preceded it.

The meaning of science may be about to change again. One of the constant preoccupations of the last thirty years of Lacan's life was the question: is psychoanalysis a science? This issue of the *Newsletter* offers one of Lacan's most dogged and complex replies to his own question in the first English translation from the *Ecrits* of "Science and Truth" (1965) by Bruce Fink. In the process of defining the status of psychoanalysis as a science, however, Lacan placed the epistemological status of science itself in question. Against the criteria of positivism (empirical confirmation, validation, grounding), Lacan had, in "Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis (1953)," directed his argument towards an emphasis on the grounding and scientific status of psychoanalysis as a *problem of formalization*. This, as Jonathan Scott Lee has recently written, leads to the provocative claim that it is precisely the

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mathematization - that is, the formalization - of claims about the natural world that is of the essence of natural science, rather than the positivist idea that these sciences owe their status to empirical confirmation. He quotes Lacan: "It is clear that our physics is simply a mental fabrication whose instrument is the mathematical symbol. For experimental science is not so much defined by the quantity to which it is in fact applied, as by the measurement it introduces into the Real" (*Ecrits* [1966], 286).

The main sections of the current issue of *NFF* are devoted to unfamiliar explorations of the question of science, its relation to the real (Zizek) and to causality (Miller). Moreover, inasmuch as positivism moves naively from objects of perception to scientific generalization about them without considering the unavoidable mediation of language, it also fails to account for representation. Two Lacanian perspectives on issues arising out of the dilemma of representation are the pieces on Velazquez (Gueguen) and metaphor (Grigg).

We hope at the very least to make the reader pause as to what science is. More potently still, to a contemplation of what the claims of natural science have to do with truth, and what truth is according to Jacques Lacan. We live in a world devastated by science. The unleashing on the planet of science and its poor sister, technology, as a dialogue of materialisms, has since 1840 reduced the Earth to a kind of vast death-row. And natural science, functioning without ethics, is even less a respecter of human sub-

jects which it excludes - than it is of nature. What Lacan gave mankind, by raising a new energy into psychoanalysis, was a project for survival and some refutation of modern science through a "new love" for knowledge and truth: a love in the subject concerning what is Real for him.

Hard though it may be to conceive, it is thoroughly possible for the theory and practice of science, in the old positivist mold of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to be discredited and surpassed like its predecessors. Indeed, a common complaint of presentday theoretical scientists is that the significance of their work is obscured by a public fidelity to outdated notions of natural science which theoretical advances have already rendered obsolete. Granted, more recent speculative accounts of nature - by their tolerance of contradiction, probability, indeterminacy, and antimateriality - may actually point more in the direction of Lacan than they do of the biologism and positivism jubilantly revived by the Restoration of the 1970s and 1980s. We may also grant Gray his

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view that "Full many a gem of purest ray serene / The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear." But we shall also do better seeking for value in the litter on the beach, or the speaking surface of things, where contradiction, probability, predeterminacy, and materiality are features of the Real of the unconscious.

The Editors

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