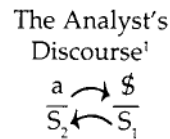
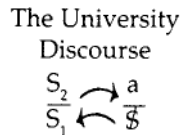


**Editorial:
L'envers de la Psychanalyse**



Paradoxically, Lacan's critique of the university discourse has not been fully appreciated in the American academic setting. Yet his popularity there continues to grow. And curiously, his own theory of discourse explains such a paradox. The university discourse is based on the idea of a universal language, while the analytic discourse accounts for the particularity of each person's desire. What attracts in Lacan's teaching is precisely his implicit and explicit critique of the university discourse's spurious claims to unveil the "truth" of desire in the realm of the universal and general.

In "Duty and the Drives" Jacques Alain Miller describes language as "the universal structure of tongues. [But] there is no universal tongue". What analytic discourse teaches the analyst is, in Miller's words, to "never, never suppose you speak the same tongue as your analysand. Never suppose you know what he means when he says anything . . . And I believe it's clear that there is no common sense in psychoanalysis. There is only particular, peculiar sense."

Yet the university discourse supposes that knowledge (S₂) is a consumable content directly imparted from one container, the professor, to another, the student. But what is wrong with this

positivistic concept of knowledge? If anything other than mathematics is in play grammatical language covers up the fact of the subjectivity underlying knowledge. Now this idea is unfamiliar. Could the wide sweeping theories that underlie the practices of law and medicine, as well as the study of physics and biology, and linguistics and history, to name but a few, be as anchored in unproven data as are notable discourses of opinion or affect?

The question Lacan poses is no less than this: How does one define knowledge and its quest? The academic discourse, while claiming to analyze knowledge for its truth components, is notable for the schisms that obtain from professor to professor in both theory and praxis. Accord and agreement prevail, if at all, only in moments when people speak the same tongue: that is a language of agreed upon universals.

What does the academy deny in its knowledge quest? Jacques-Alain Miller says in "Duty and the Drives" that when a person goes to analysis, he himself suspects that he does not know exactly what his own speech means. In *Television* Lacan defines the unconscious as the "I don't know" in one's speech, one's knowledge.² What the academy denies is that while knowledge organizes itself around the insecurity of the question it opts for the safety and closure of an answer, any answer--right or wrong--rather than confront the anxiety implicit in an "I don't know". The stakes in the academy are not further knowledge of truth, then, but the narcissistic comfort

gained in the conviction of being right. Academics pose questions at the level of theory that they then answer in a master discourse: $\frac{S_1}{s} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$. And a master discourse is precisely the one that denies that there is unconscious knowledge, or that such knowledge has the structure of a fundamental fantasy from which all of a person's choices emanate.

But this is not simply an academic quibble, because power enters the game of defining knowledge, making the question political. Indeed, Miller says, for Lacan "politics is ethics". But Lacan's concept of ethics differs radically from the myriad moralities that today's academy calls ethics. Lacan viewed ethics as individual, teaching that one must not give up on his or her desire, while politics points to the collective, to the existence of the social bond.

But how does the individual get into the mass, into the social? Lacan found the answer to this question in Freud's theory of identification, based as it is on the theory of love: i.e., transference love. One loves an other because one depends on the other for something. Thus, love is a relationship of libidinal investment. But,

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in Freud's view, feeling the same as another person by recognizing what in the other is like oneself is not love. Lacan described this as an Imaginary identification grounded in narcissism. But Freud stressed that love usually is other oriented, i.e., not narcissistic. One loves the other as a supplement to what one lacks: as an Ideal, as Other, as symbolic. In "Group Psychology" Freud explained that many egos can love a same ideal, can introject it.² Lacan explains this process as a symbolic act, not a narcissistic one. What the many introject in common is the same signifier, a master signifier that functions as a common denominator. Indeed, it functions at the level of a local universal.

At the level of narcissistic ego, people identify with one another imaginarily, based on reciprocity. At the level of the ideal, people identify with the signifier of a leader of a group. In Lacanian terms, individuals in a group identify with the signifier for an ideal, however, not with the leader *qua* person.

Why has psychoanalysis failed in the USA? Why has no signifier emerged to represent an ideal for a collectivity? One might argue that because Freud's pupils identified with the American ideal of a father--the medical doctor who has power, money and brings the hope of staying the forces of death--psychoanalysis was foreclosed in the USA from its inception. Freud commented, moreover, on the peculiar American habit of not according leaders their place within a group. The myth of democracy--"all men are created equal"--has produced a cultural fantasy in matters of power wherein everyone supposes himself or herself to be the same as every other. Since leaders are already suspect of the arch crime in the USA--being "above" the members of the group--they never come to occupy the position of cultural ideal in the group imagination. They are never inscribed in the cultural unconscious as different from the others in this group. In consequence: 1) no one feels inclined to learn anything from a leader (master, teacher, etc.); 2) the referent for group knowledge itself becomes the discourse of opinion, indeed, the word of the strongest ("might makes right").

Freud pointed to an even greater danger for civilization than a narcissistic egalitarian myth. In groups where sameness is the unconscious prerequisite for group membership, Otherness is perforce expelled. This is the structure of paranoia. Even more telling from Lacan's viewpoint, is that when Otherness is expelled from a group or a culture, Woman is expelled as a sig-

nifier of honor and worth. The masculine inclination--the closure of the whole--wins the day at the expense of the feminine in knowledge: the "not all"

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where a question remains in suspension One might suggest that, in this sense, American *culture* differs only in self-concept, in narcissistic self-definition, from those Eastern cultures that exclude women, not only from participative democracy, but also from being seen. The veil over the woman's face and body is a literal sign that a part of the Woman is always outside the laws of language or group--Woman as mother being the basis of the more-than-you in-you of every subject--excluded rather than "assimilated" in some fashion (tolerated, interpreted, joked about, etc.). By excluding the feminine, a group imagines itself as whole, equal to its parts, unified, not castrated (I_x). The exclusion of Woman--the first Other--is even more pernicious in American culture where women are the legal, if not the actual, equal of men. The rage at Woman *qua* Other, beyond group control, dwells underground, then, in the interstices of everyday life. This hatred, based on the fear of castration, of Otherness, raises its head each time any woman casts doubt on the myths of the group.

Psychoanalysis does not grow in cultures where Woman is excluded, where castration cannot be admitted, where the functional lie that everyone is "the same" as everyone else sutures the lack-in-being. Is it really surprising that psychoanalysis which is Other, on the slope of Woman, the unconscious, the question, the *pas toute*, has not taken root in the ultra macho culture of the USA?

Ellie Ragland, Editor

Notes

1. The legend for the places and terms of the discourse symbols is found in "A Jakobson" in *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre, XX (1972-73): Encore*. Text established by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p 21.

The places are those of:

<u>agent</u>	<u>the other</u>
truth	production

The terms are:

S_1 , the master signifier

S_2 , knowledge

$\$$, the subject

a , the excess in jouissance.

2. Jacques Lacan, *Television/A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, trans. by Denis Hollier, et al. (New York: W W Norton, 1990).

3. Sigmund Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1921)," *SE* 18: 69-144.