

Discourse and the Master's Lining: A Lacanian Critique of the Globalising (Bio)Politics of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*

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If a single concept could claim to underlie the diverse innovations in post-Marxism, postcolonialism, critical race studies, feminism, queer theory and gender studies over the last thirty years, it would surely be Michel Foucault's notion of 'discourse', understood as the productive commingling of power and knowledge? And yet, relatively few have seen that Jacques Lacan's work offers arguably even richer resources for a theory of the interweavings of discourse, power and knowledge. Well before Foucault's work made such an impact, Lacan had been developing a nuanced theory of discourse that drew on Saussurean linguistics, game theory and cybernetics, as well as Freudian psychoanalysis. It was to discourse, too, that Lacan returned in a novel way in *Seminar XVII* as a response to the radicalism of May '68 (Lacan 2007). However, what Lacan meant by discourse was never what Foucault meant.

In what follows, I want to outline what is specific about Lacan's psychoanalytic rather than sociolinguistic concept of discourse; what separates it from but also allows it to usefully supplement Foucault's; and what it contributes to the key problematic within all truly political theories of discourse: the role of the subject in the dialectic between structure and agency (a question dramatically posed by May '68). My overall claims are that: if we follow *Seminar XVII* closely, the relationship between psychoanalysis and politics can be seen to be irrevocably linked to its clinical practice; that this link to the clinic is what prevents the co-opting of psychoanalytic theory by 'university discourse'; and that the clinical link also focuses Lacanian political theory on the contemporary discourse of health, something Foucault himself recognized as the 'biopolitical' core of neoliberalism (Foucault 2010).

To outline the implications of this juxtaposition of a Foucaultian and a Lacanian approach, I will undertake a brief critique of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, the textbook which governs the application of psychiatric theory and practice in many parts of the world. Following this example, I will then reflect more generally on what the Lacanian theory of discourse offers to the critique of capitalism.

Political Discourse Theory in the Academy

May '68 was arguably a fork in the path for the concept of discourse. As we shall see, it prompted Lacan to reinvent his understanding of discourse. But it was also the moment when a broadly Foucaultian notion of discourse took off in the academy.

Foucault's first major publication, *Madness and Civilization* (1961), had referred to madness as an historically variable 'discourse' rather than an ontological invariant, and was received largely as a structuralist intervention into the history of ideas. This was also the case with *The Order of Things* (1966) which studied the changing discursive conditions of the disciplines of linguistics, biology and political economy, in order to outline an archeology of the sciences of Man. Foucault was then seen to be at the centre of structuralist anti-humanism alongside Louis Althusser and, indeed, Lacan himself - though Foucault came to dispute this characterization of his work (Foucault 1980, 114). And yet the Foucaultian concept of discourse really rose to prominence as part of the *critique* of structuralism, initiated by Jacques Derrida in 1967, but in full swing after May 68.

Althusser's structuralist Marxism had seemed bereft before the novelty of the May movement, and his stubborn adherence to the *Parti Communiste Française* (PCF) condemned him in the eyes of many (Ross 2002). The refreshing combination of Maoist and also Situationist ideas during May '68 (Feenberg and Freedman 2001) paved the way for the replacement of Althusser's structuralist concept of 'ideology' - which only an intellectual vanguard of Marxist 'scientists' could supposedly identify - by the Foucaultian concept of 'discourse' - which was already equipped to critique the social construction of scientific truth-claims, including Marxist ones. Jacques Rancière's very public break with Althusser was based on exactly this issue of the veiled violence of supposedly scientific knowledge. For Rancière, any institutionalized, 'objective' knowledge, whether validated by a university system or a political party, endorses a hierarchical distribution of intellects and roles, so that Althusser's version of ideology critique was actually a 'return to order' (Rancière 2011 xv). The term 'discourse' then, maintained the links between power and contestation but it also ameliorated the reduction of agency to sociological definitions of class on which the supposed 'scientific' legitimacy of Althusser and the PCF rested. Though Foucault himself was considerably more nuanced - *The Archeology of Knowledge*, for example, is clear that discourse is fragile in its very imposition (Foucault 2003) - the dominant understanding of discourse to emerge from this moment was a version of 'social constructionism' that would later feed into the so-called Science Wars and postmodernism.

Nor was this an exclusively French affair. For British Cultural Studies, particularly under the influence of the late Stuart Hall, a turn to discourse in the 1970s was part of a related shift to the so-called New Social Movements, and thus to a broad-based identity politics. Hall himself combined semiotic approaches to 'encoding/decoding' with a Gramscian understanding of a hegemonic cultural politics (Hall 1973). Paradoxically, it was also at this time that Lacan's work began to be taken up in Anglophone academia precisely as a 'discourse theory' that could explain the mechanisms of ideology. This is very clear in the psychoanalytic film theory of the *Screen Studies* group, most famously exemplified by Laura Mulvey's notion of the 'male gaze' (Mulvey 1975). Picking up on Althusser's own use of it in the 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' essay (Althusser 1971), these semiotic critics of film, advertising and mass visual culture used Lacan's early paper on the 'mirror-stage' (Lacan 2006a) to explore the construction of sexed, gendered and raced 'subjects' in capitalist society.

But already, something crucial had been lost in this turn to a constructionist understanding of discourse: the sexed/gendered/raced subject of Anglo-Saxon Cultural Studies had ceased to be a recognizably *psychoanalytic* subject in the Lacanian sense. The fundamental point about Lacan's mirror stage argument is that the foundation of the illusory ego lies not simply in the reflective surface of the imaginary, but also in the validating function of a symbolic Other: it is the (m)Other that confirms the infant's *imago*. The elementary psychoanalytic consequence of this is that the egoic individual who (mis)recognizes himself in the mirror never coincides with or exhausts the topologically distinct subject of the unconscious because his being, as it were, comes from the Other. Lacan was always diametrically opposed to the idea that power positively produces 'subjects' without remainder, whether via Althusserian interpellation or Foucaultian discourse. For him, the very fact of speaking introduces an excess or left-over because the speaker has a real body of drives which cannot be symbolized in speech. Once speech is assumed, desire becomes possible but as what persists (and insists) in the lack produced when need is subtracted from demand (Lacan 2006b). The infant, for example, might seem to demand the breast to satisfy his need for nourishment, but more fundamentally he desires, insatiably, the love of the Other. Lacan's related opposition between the 'subject of the signifier' and the 'subject of the signified' (see Lacan 2006c, 430) demonstrated that while

discourse, understood as a Foucaultian truth-regime, can indeed produce subjects as objects of statements, the *Lacanian* subject evades any such reduction because of its excessive character. To take the simplest example, when in English we invoke the personal pronoun 'I' to try to convey what is most intimate to our sense of self, it is obvious that we rely on a mere signifier that everyone speaking English also leans on for the same paradoxical purpose. In any statement with the structure 'I am x', there is a referent at the level of propositional content and this is the 'subject of the signified' which attempts to fix a meaning. But there is also the excessive moment of enunciation itself, which Lacan calls 'the subject of the signifier', and which makes its presence felt not *as* but *in* speech, often as a break in meaning (the famous 'Freudian slip' for example). Moreover, as the difficult concept of the real comes to the fore in Lacan's later teaching, the subject is more and more indexed to a radically singular mode of enjoyment outside symbolic law, though not outside language in its meaningless materiality. Reading very early Lacan through a Foucaultian notion of discourse, as many in Anglophone academia did, evacuated this all-important distinction between the imaginary individual, with an apparent identity amenable to 'construction', and the real subject of the unconscious which is not a 'social construction' but a singular creation or invention which makes use of the common discourse. Conceptualizing the subject as nothing other than its hailing by power is absolutely incompatible with any psychoanalytic understanding of the subject, even on the most orthodox, biologicistic reading of Freud in which 'instinct' exceeds and undermines the demands of social repression.

Nonetheless, it was from British Cultural Studies that the most overtly 'Lacanian' political discourse theory emerged in the mid-1980s. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985) brought Gramsci and Lacan together in an anti-essentialist post-Marxism that put 'discourse' at the centre of political change. However, the version of Lacan they appealed to was dry and formalistic and entirely divorced from clinical practice. They took from early Lacan two key concepts: the 'empty signifier', and '*points de capiton*' or 'quilting points'. The 'empty signifier', they argued, operates like a master signifier ordering the relations between the other elements in a symbolic system, but only because it is ontologically empty. They had in mind the kind of abstract nouns that do indeed organize much ostensibly political debate, such as 'freedom', 'nation' and 'democracy'. Lacan's other notion of *points de capiton* was then used to refer to the always provisional 'quilting' of the social text(ile), stabilizing a semiotic flux by means of certain privileged signifiers. They interpreted this 'quilting' as a hegemonic filling of these empty signifiers in order to create 'chains of equivalence' encompassing more and more actors in the discursive social space. Official representational politics, they contended, colonizes these empty signifiers in ways that preserve a particular group's vested interests behind the rhetoric of universalism. Yet they also held out a hope for a radical form of democracy that exploits this universalism in order to extend equivalence to minority groups. Yannis Stavrakakis (1999) has highlighted precisely what was Lacanian in particularly Laclau's political discourse theory, while Slavoj Žižek (Butler et al 2000) has pointed out the ways in which it has never been Lacanian enough. Nonetheless, Laclau and Mouffe's nominally 'Lacanian' discourse theory did spawn an approach to 'texts', influential in Media and Cultural Studies, called Critical Discourse Analysis (Wodak and Meyer, 2009). Thanks to the dominance of the hard sciences, there is some debate about whether this can be considered a methodology at all, but it is certainly taught as if it were one.

From the point of view of psychoanalytic clinical practice, it is clear that many crucial concepts are lost in this translation of Lacanian ideas into social and political theory, and into transmissible methodologies serviceable to academic knowledge-production. What becomes, for example, of the unconscious itself, as an enjoying knowledge that does not know itself

(Lacan 1999)? Laclau and Mouffe effectively claim to master the unconscious as a structure of lack whose effects can be formalized, predicted, and even mobilised as part of a political programme of increased inclusivity. In all rigour, this cannot be found in Lacan. For related reasons, academic discourse analysis seems to reduce speech to two modes: either the speech of the Big Other imposing hegemonic power, or an attempt by the subject to make their voice heard by addressing to that Other a demand for recognition. Clinically speaking, this reduces speech to its self-reinforcing imaginary dimension. In analytic practice, Freud's 'fundamental rule' of free association aims to enable the speaker to hear the Other already in their own speech. Certainly with neurotics, analysis moves in exactly the opposite direction of any 'politics of identity', even one based on a structural lack assumed to be democratically empowering. One of Lacan's most succinct definitions of the aim of analysis is the attainment of "absolute difference" (Lacan 1998a, 276), meaning the singularity of the analysand's mode of enjoyment as radically distinct from wider social norms. Such absolute difference is incompatible with the 'multicultural' or 'rainbow' version of difference dreamed of by the liberal pluralism that Laclau and Mouffe's approach comes dangerously close to resembling.

I would suggest that this tendency to remain at the level of the imaginary stems from a problematic conflation of speech and discourse within academic discourse analysis. This is due probably to the discipline's origins in conversation analysis and sociolinguistics, where discourse is indeed conceptualized primarily as 'talk', as well as its recourse to a constructionist reading of Foucault. From a Lacanian point of view however, the structural gap between discourse and speech is a prerequisite for any notion of the unconscious, and thus for any topology of the relationship between subjectivity and the 'social link'. One of the underlying problems in all of this work therefore, is a deeply non-psychoanalytic conception of the link between psychoanalysis and politics, in which the former becomes a theory appropriable by the latter. However, by turning now to *Seminar XVII* (also a response to May '68), we can explore Lacan's psychoanalytic understanding of 'discourse' and, in the process, reconfigure the psychoanalysis-politics relation by foregrounding clinical practice.

A Closer Look At The Other Side

The Other Side of Psychoanalysis is one of the most startling innovations in Lacan's teaching. Loosely, it can be situated as an auto-critique of aspects of *Seminar VII* on ethics, as a continuation of the concern with the foundations of psychoanalysis in *Seminar XI*, and as paving the way for the renewed focus on knowledge in *Seminar XX*. Most famously however, it is where he chooses to formalize the 'four discourses': the discourse of the Master, the Hysteric, Analysis itself, and the University. I am going to say less about each of these individually, and more about what they reveal regarding Lacan's approach to discourse in general, since from the outset it was productively different from Foucault's.

The profound consistency in the way Lacan uses the term 'discourse' was already evident in his interpretation of three key theoretical resources during the 1950s: Saussurean linguistics, Lévi-Strauss' concept of myth, and cybernetics and information theory.

Firstly, from Saussurean linguistics Lacan takes the distinction between *parole* as speech, and *langue* as the underlying system of differences invoked in every speech-act. *Langue*, then, would be the linguistic unconscious into which we are constitutively thrown by dint of our pre-natal induction into a particular speech community. Crucially however, one can never point at or circumscribe *langue*: even in Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, *langue* represents a limit to positivist knowledge, linking it, in Lacan's view, to the unconscious. Whenever Lacan

speaks of ‘discourse’ then - as in the famous aphorism ‘the unconscious is the discourse of the Other’ - he is invoking the Saussurean point that *langue* only exists in the social conventions of speakers. Discourse is thus an intrinsically *social* bond not only because it involves, minimally, two subjects, but also because it distributes relations between them prior to any particular act of speech: for there to *be* speakers, this distribution must already have taken place. Even when one speaks to oneself, the symbolic Other is present. To express this using one of Saussure’s favoured examples, if it is possible to play oneself at chess, the rules of chess must be in place as a ‘third’ that facilitates the turn-taking of the ‘two’ which, in purely chess terms, are indeed at play even in this scenario.

Secondly, this emphasis on discourse as a chess-like combinatory is explored further through Lacan’s reading of structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969). In his approach to myth, Lévi-Strauss argued that the diverse cosmologies invented by different cultures around the world are effectively imaginary treatments of underlying symbolic systems. What Lévi-Strauss contributes over and above Saussure, however, is the additional idea that myths are responses to fundamental logical contradictions which cannot be resolved: again, we see a constitutive relation to impossibility that gets mythic systems underway, as reaction formations to what Lacan would call the real. For example, Lévi-Strauss shows that the elaboration of Oedipal themes in many cultures reflects a ‘treatment’ of the incest taboo regulating exogamous kinship structures (Lévi-Strauss 1969). By such means, a contradiction which can be formally expressed ‘X:Y’ is, not resolved, but sublated by myth into a narrative form that re-presents that contradiction at another level, as ‘Y:X’. Mythic speech is thus secondary to a preceding symbolic discourse.

Thirdly, Lacan further separates discourse from speech with reference to developments in cybernetics and information theory. Taking his lead this time from Roman Jakobson who was tangentially involved in the famous Macy conferences on cybernetics, Lacan parses a distinction between ‘message’ and ‘code’ (Lacan 1998b). Any meaningful message, he recognized, is but the epiphenomenal result of an underlying logical system of encoding which is absolutely without meaning. In this sense, if a discourse can be said to be ‘common’ (16) it is only by ‘saying’ absolutely nothing (just as, in our digital era, the fact that binary code means nothing whatsoever is the very quality fuelling the information revolution). Lacan’s early challenge to psychological theories of communication predicated on intention therefore paralleled developments in information theory at this time, thanks to which messages were being re-conceptualized as patterned randomness or organised ‘noise’. For Lacan, there is always a failure in the imagined circularity of human communication, and it is precisely this that discourse explains.

One can see these traits of discourse coming to the fore in a new way in *Seminar XVII* where Lacan declares that “discourse can clearly consist without words” (Lacan 2007, 13) but that “[t]he deployment of speech [...] has been confused with what discourse is” (167). Was this critique already directed at a simplistic conception of Foucaultian discourse? Echoing Lévi-Strauss, Lacan also clarifies that discourse is structured around something opaque and irresolvable. Early on in the seminar, this relates particularly to the S^1 as a unary trait which intervenes into the “battery of signifiers”, written S^2 , in order to construct a coherent field of knowledge, but one which is henceforth marked by this initial meaningless inscription (13). As the seminar unfolds, it becomes clearer that this opacity at the kernel of all discourse is ultimately the real of *jouissance* (in relation to which the unary trait is already a treatment, a regulation via the repetition of the signifier). Discourse of any kind is therefore an attempt to order the disordered real.

Here we could contrast Lacan's assertion that "the impossible is the real" (165) with the famous Situationist slogan circulating around the same time: 'Be realistic, demand the impossible!'. Though the latter invokes a critique of dominant conceptions of both 'reality' and what is possible within it, Lacan's intervention implies that every demand is already indirectly addressed to an impossibility, but one that, as real, can never be granted by the Master still implied within the Situationist slogan (for to whom but a Master could such a rebellious demand be addressed?). This is where the stakes of the distinction between speech as talk, and discourse as *structure*, become apparent. Although Lacan acknowledged that, historically, the Hysteric's critique of the Master has led to displacements of discourse (94), he also recognized, in the wake of May '68, that no amount of breathless pseudo-Maoist chatter at the level of speech could *in itself* produce change at the level of the real of discourse. It was the old astronomical notion of 'revolution', as a heavenly rotation returning to its starting point, that Lacan had in mind when he said to one of the radicalized *soixante-huitards*: "What you aspire to as revolutionaries is a new master. You will get one" (207).

It would be a major mistake, however, to conclude that Lacan was a conservative reactionary. As a psychoanalyst, he was necessarily committed to the notion of change. But also as a psychoanalyst, he was committed to the *specificity* of that change within a mode of discourse like no other: psychoanalysis itself as a clinical practice. Defining psychoanalysis as a discourse and thus a social bond between analyst and analysand, and *not* as a mode of technical talk reserved for expert initiates, indicates that just because the phrase 'the unconscious' is being used, it by no means follows that the unconscious is at work. Indeed, the reverse would be a safer bet. Such a distinction was already at play in Lacan's critique of the 'other psychoanalysis' of ego psychology and Kleinian object relations. But *Seminar XVII* goes further by formalising the structure of analytic discourse itself, as a response, I would argue, to the risk that psychoanalysis would be pulled into the vortex of the various 'philosophies of desire' then fuelling aspects of May '68. Is this not a genuine danger the moment psychoanalytic knowledge is abstracted from clinical practice where its discourse is operative? Psychoanalytic talk is cheap, but a discourse that can sustain transference effects is rare and precious.

One particularly widespread understanding of the relationship between psychoanalysis and politics is what I would call *the politicization of libido*. By this I mean that seductive fantasy of the violent return of repressed sexual instinct against the forces of social control broadly shared by thinkers coming out of the Frankfurt School's Freudo-Marxist tradition, such as Wilhelm Reich, Herbert Marcuse and, later, Deleuze and Guattari (to whose *Anti-Oedipus*, of course, Foucault wrote such an affirmative preface). Significantly, many in this Freudo-Marxist tradition, Theodor Adorno most notably, viewed clinical psychoanalysis negatively as a disciplinary mechanism for imposing bourgeois norms, despite seeing great revolutionary value in psychoanalytic *theory* and its account of libido. Lacan would agree that libido – or, in his terms, *jouissance* – is political, but not in this vitalist sense. Despite appearances then, the assertion in *Seminar XVII* that "the only discourse there is, and not just analytic discourse, is the discourse of *jouissance*" (78), represents a crucial shift *away* from this naïve politicization of libido which coincides (but hardly coincidentally) with a downplaying of the clinic.

Ten years earlier in *Seminar VII*, Lacan had argued that the symbolic and *jouissance* are fundamentally opposed, though he presented transgression, via the figure of the Marquis de Sade, as a roundabout way of attaining it from the dialectic between law and desire (Lacan 1997). But here in *Seminar XVII*, he shows that the symbolic and *jouissance* have merged under

capitalism. He does so by developing a theory of ‘surplus *jouissance*’ which draws on, but also adds to, Marx’s notion of surplus value. His key insight is that far from inaugurating a loss of enjoyment through alienation from one’s ‘species being’ - as the early Marx of the *1844 Manuscripts* argued - with labour’s transformation into a commodity, work in fact becomes enjoyment itself, rendering loss and surplus two sides of the very same coin. As Lacan puts it, “the important point is that on a certain day surplus *jouissance* became calculable, could be counted, totalized” (Lacan 2007, 177). The Master suddenly takes an interest in counting, in knowledge itself as a means of accumulation. The feudal lord, blissfully happy in his ignorance of practical life so long as his serfs took care of all that, is replaced by the bookkeeper, the bureaucrat, the statistician, and today perhaps the performance reviewer. This culminates in what Lacan calls, not without calculated irony, the ‘university discourse’, in which knowledge comes to occupy the place of mastery. By *Seminar XVII* then, knowledge becomes not the mortifying enemy of *jouissance*, but the “sister of *jouissance*” (67), i.e., the vehicle of its production and transmission, its blood-relation.

This new simultaneity of knowledge and *jouissance*, and the related understanding of all discourses as apparatuses of *jouissance*, means that we are no longer dealing with a simplistic model of libidinal repression as the psychosocial core of civilization. Repression persists, but it is not of affect as some kind of substance or *élan vital*: it is of and through signifiers (144). Lacan takes us beyond the tradition in political philosophy of ‘social contract theory’. For with figures like Hobbes, Rousseau, and indeed a certain Marx, do we not see a consistent recourse to problematic figures of what might be called ‘enjoying nature’, whether sublated in a sovereign Leviathan (Hobbes), corrupted by the absence of a general will (Rousseau), or quashed by the division of labour (Marx)? And in each case, can it not be said that these images of enjoying nature play a part in presenting the structural fact of the impossibility of the real *as if it were merely a contingent loss*, getting a whole massive effort of recuperation underway? Nor does Lacan spare Freud from this kind of critique: a third of *Seminar XVII* is taken up with a discussion of Freud’s Oedipal “dream” (117) about the ‘father of the primal horde’ in *Moses and Monotheism*, which similarly situates loss in a primordial past, and projects backwards the fantasy of an uncastrated man who can enjoy all women.

A quite different topology of the ‘other side’ becomes discernible with this reading of discourse as an apparatus *of*, rather than against, *jouissance*. Analytic discourse is very precisely the ‘other side’ of the Master’s discourse in that the former results from a 90° counter-clockwise rotation of the latter’s matheme. Certainly, Lacan believes there is something subversive in this turn. But his title also parodies metaphysical notions of the ‘other side’ characteristic of what I have called the ‘politicization of libido’. The topology he has in mind is much closer to a moebius strip in which psychoanalysis is the ‘other side’ of the Master’s discourse only as a twist in the very same discourse. *Seminar XVII* suspends all simplistic notions of a pure before or beyond or outside of discourse, and yet also of total discursive determination on the ‘constructionist’ model. In the fourth session, Lacan gives us another way of thinking of the psychoanalysis-politics relation:

But the fact that the analytic discourse completes the 90° displacement by which the three others are structured does not mean that it resolves them and enables one to pass to the other side. It doesn’t resolve anything. The inside does not explain the outside (Lacan 2007, 54)

Here, Russell Grigg provides a useful translator’s note that reminds us that *l’envers* can also mean ‘the lining’ “as in the lining of a jacket” (54). Is this not an excellent figure for the kind

of topological twist Lacan is describing? A lining offers a surface that follows the innermost contours of a jacket tailor-made to embody the Master (in the midst of May '68 we can perhaps think of the uniform of *les Flics*, the academic's no-doubt corduroy jacket, or today the business suit). Nevertheless, such a lining also introduces folds, slippages, little wrinkles of excess that help the jacket sit on the body it borrows as a framework, but can lead to uncomfortable furrows. These furrows also relate to knowledge, for precisely as a *lining* of the Master's discourse, analytic discourse is too internal to provide a transcendental (masterful) knowledge of the whole. Far from being a mode of ignorance however, this awareness of the lack in the Other is the positive form of psychoanalytic knowledge. For a long time, Lacan had been saying 'there is no such thing as a meta-language' or, differently put, that 'there is no Other of the Other'. This is at once an ethical and a logical proposition. It is logical to the extent that, as Bertrand Russell pointed out to Frege, there cannot be a set of all sets that do not belong to themselves, a structural fact that Gödel articulated for the field of mathematics. For psychoanalysis, however, that there is no Other of the Other is also an ethical proposition insofar as it bars a global knowledge of the unconscious that would somehow be outside of, or uncontaminated by, the unconscious itself, a pure knowledge free from the effects of the signifier or of *jouissance*. An analyst, for example, who both listens and interprets from such an imaginary position of ideal or transcendent knowledge is entirely deaf to the unconscious, and his interventions will inevitably close it down. In a culture that sustains dreams of masterful metalanguages, such as the Human Genome Project as the overarching 'Book of Life', this insistence on a lack, limit or lacunae in knowledge, goes very much against the positivist grain. Lacan's invocation of the lining here, however, suggests that unconscious knowledge will always exist in the intimate folds of the Master's discourse which needs its lining to clothe the body-politic.

But to repeat, this knowledge emerges from analytic discourse itself. It is not disseminated by institutional power, which is why Lacan gave such careful thought to the structure of the psychoanalytic school (see Section V of Lacan 2001). As a critical and cultural theory, psychoanalysis certainly has an important place in the academy. But as a practice, it is inseparable from a discourse in which masterful knowledge is only an initial supposition that must ultimately be discarded: this is the famous 'subject supposed to know' which, at least in the case of the symbolic transference of neurotics, instantiates in analysis an Other deemed to have the answer to one's existential questions. But crucially, such a subject supposed to know is precisely a supposition internal to the transference address, and not an ontological fact: like Socrates, the analyst is only wise to the extent that he knows he knows nothing. The subject supposed to know is thus what Lacan calls a *semblant*, an appearance that, although essential early on, is destined to fall away. In this sense, though the matheme of the analyst's discourse in *Seminar XVII* places the cause of desire in the position of agency, it would be a category error to promote analytic discourse to a 'science of desire' because the kind of knowledge it produces is not of the scientific kind. The link between psychoanalysis and politics rests, rather, on a claim to being the only discourse capable of showing the desire - or better, the *jouissance* - at work in the others, particularly university discourse and its reification of, precisely, science.

The Biopolitics of the DSM

One would be hard-pushed to find a better example of university discourse than the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Health Disorders* (DSM). Yet, as a nodal point linking an ensemble of deterritorialized institutions, it is also a quintessential example of Foucaultian discourse operating at the nexus of power and knowledge (see Rose 1998; 2006). Globalization of any kind obviously profits from standardization, whether English as the 'language of

business' or of GDP as the 'universal' measure of good governance: the globalization of mental health is no different, and the DSM is its primary instrument.

Clinical psychiatrists, psychologists, counsellors and even social workers around the world now use the DSM as a standard diagnostic assessment tool, shaping hospital admissions, care 'pathways', and regimes of pill-based treatments. Academics within and without the 'psy' fields use the DSM's categories to organise their empirical research and interpret their findings. The multi-billion dollar global pharmaceutical industry tailors its research and development to the DSM's latest classifications. That industry also has a very substantial role in the formation of those classifications in the first place: members of the DSM committees have been forced to declare very significant ties to 'Big Pharma', from holding shares, to serving as paid researchers, to endorsing the most recent off-the-shelf anti-depressant or anti-psychotic drugs. These same companies undertake aggressive marketing campaigns in order to shift cultural frameworks around mental distress: witness Glaxo-Smith Klein's intervention in the 1990s into Japanese perceptions of depression (Watters 2011). In the wake of this cultural manipulation, health insurance companies – more and more prominent within the neoliberalization of various health care systems - administer their claims through DSM categories. There is even worrying evidence of a strong correlation between the size of a health insurance claim and the likelihood of the pay-out diagnosis being given (Moloney 2013). Legal systems in various countries now base convictions and sentencing on 'expert' advice from criminal psychiatrists and psychologists whose authority rests upon their invocation of the DSM. Therapists of various persuasions know to utilize DSM vocabulary when called upon to write court reports, even when it does not inform their clinical work. And by locating itself at the centre of this web of productive global power, the DSM is a serious money-spinner: the *American Psychiatric Association* makes over \$5 million a year from the sale of this 'textbook', totalling an estimated \$100 million over the DSM's sixty year existence (Angell 2011).

A detailed genealogy of the emergence of the DSM is out of the question here, yet a quick sketch will show its 'Foucaultian' dimensions. It is inseparable from the rise of statistics as an instrument of governmentality, having its origins in census data from the 1880s when an attempt was made to measure levels of 'idiocy' in the American population (notably, many towns in the south automatically placed all their African-American residents under this heading). Just as stereotypically Foucaultian is the fact that the first DSM was explicitly based on a 1943 War Department technical bulletin entitled 'Medical 203', shifting the locus of the production of psychiatric knowledge from asylums and hospital settings to the US Army and its concern with the psychological robustness of soldiers. The DSM has since specialised in the exponential proliferation of new mental disorders. The first 1952 edition listed 106 disorders; the second in 1968 listed 182; and the massive revisions involved in the third edition of 1980 led to no less than 265 disorders. This third edition explicitly abandoned Freudian psychopathology and the related categories of classical psychiatry, basing the etiology of mental disorders instead on the catch-all notion of 'chemical imbalance' (to which, of course, pills could best respond). The 1987 revision of DSM-III once again increased the number of disorders, this time to 292. The fourth edition published in 1994 listed almost triple the number identified in the first edition, at a whopping 297. The general upward trend has continued with most recent, and controversial, DSM-V, as has a very problematic tendency to dramatically reconfigure previous categories. Autism has ceased to be a 'spectrum' and 'Asperger's' has disappeared completely, though, confusingly, those who have received that diagnosis are permitted to keep it (American Psychiatric Association 2013). Very much in keeping with Foucault's later theorisation of biopolitics, the DSM can be seen as pivotal in placing a certain

understanding of health - at once affective and connected to economic productivity - at the centre of neoliberal modes of social control (Foucault 2010).

So what might a Lacanian notion of discourse add to these Foucaultian insights into the DSM? Immediately, it encourages us to look beyond the technical vocabulary the DSM utilizes and even the institutional contexts that implement it, to focus on the structure of the social link it implies, and relatedly, at the relationship to knowledge and *jouissance* it maintains.

As a diagnostic tool, the DSM inscribes a social link that fits perfectly into Lacan's formalization of university discourse. We can take each of the four quadrants of its *matheme* in turn. Firstly, in the place of agency the DSM relies on a classificatory form of 'neutral' knowledge that kicks its machinery into motion prior to any medical professional's speech: if a diagnosis has performative efficacy it is because of the preceding primacy of this 'evidence-based' knowledge. Yet this supposedly 'neutral', self-reinforcing 'evidence-base' covertly relies on the incorporation of the DSM's own epistemological limits into its very diagnostic logic, as indicated by notions such as 'co-morbidity' and various 'not otherwise specified' disorders (see Hacking 2013 for a critique of this problem) Secondly, in the place of truth, this neutral yet dominant knowledge, or S^2 , conceals its roots in a new S^1 , a now distributed form of statistical mastery linked to the uncoupling of expertise from individual experts (is this disembodiment of clinical knowledge not one effect of 'evidence-based medicine', such that we now have Cognitive Behavioural Therapy that can be delivered entirely online?). Thirdly, as a discourse the DSM produces individuals marked by the label of a disorder which can often stay with them for a very long time, a lifetime in some cases. No longer the castrated neurotic of Freud's era however, this is a subject ordered, as it were, by their disorder: DSM labels often support group-identities based on medicated subject positions, as with the role of Ritalin in Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder. Fourthly then, the DSM is paradigmatic of what Lacan calls 'university discourse' insofar as it puts *objet a* to work not as desire (metonymically passing along a signifying chain and given imaginary coherence by a fantasy framework), but rather, as an object of consumption produced by the market. Such objects plug directly into bodily *jouissance* without passing by way of the Other of language, often in the form of mood-stabilising 'happy pills'.

This elevation of a real rather than a symbolic treatment of *jouissance* even suggests that the DSM is barely definable as a *social* link at all: the psychiatrist merely enacts the pre-given logic of the standardising system with little or no clinical judgement of their own entering in to the process. Speech in general is suppressed to the extent that DSM diagnoses are known to take a matter of minutes (Verhaeghe 2004). The 'subject' of this diagnosis, moreover, is effectively silenced as the object of a knowledge they do not possess: they become what Foucault presciently theorised as the neoliberal subject that simply responds, flexibly and without friction, to biopolitical forms of social control (Foucault 2010). Is this not also exemplary of the imbrication of capitalism and science which Lacan coins, in *Seminar XVII*, the 'alethosphere' (Lacan 2007,182)? With this term, Lacan was already describing an atmosphere or environment characterised by gadgets and instruments of consumption, developed by the market in order to stuff the mouths of subjects before they can articulate a desire that would be distinct from (supply and) demand. And does this machinic discourse of the DSM that simply 'works' - grinding subjects, psychiatrists as well as patients, up into its cogs - not imply that each individual is left alone with their own monetized *jouissance*-object, with no overarching Other through which to encounter even imaginary others, let alone the desire in their own speech? If Lacan always defined discourse as a social link, it may not be correct to refer to the discourse of the DSM, which seems to sever such links.

The Discourse of the Capitalist

During a conference in Milan in May 1972 entitled *Du Discours Psychanalytique*, Lacan drew on the board the four discourses he had elaborated two years previously, but then added a fifth: the discourse of the capitalist.

$$\downarrow \frac{\$}{S^1} \times \frac{S^2}{a} \downarrow$$

Lacan does not say much about this new matheme, and never makes use of it again to my knowledge. However, he does say two significant things – that it is “insanely clever” (*follement astucieux*) but that “it is bound to puncture” (*voué à la crevaison*) (Lacan 1972). Its diabolical cleverness is quickly apparent, for unlike the other discourses which are marked by a disjunctive impossibility, the orientation of the vectors here describes a figure eight, symbol of infinity, and thus an infernal circuit. There is also an inexplicable rupture with the combinatory logic of the other four discourses: this configuration cannot be derived even from the Master’s discourse which it most closely resembles. This is because Lacan has swapped the \$ and the S^1 from the lower and upper registers respectively in the Master’s discourse, so that the divided subject here takes the place of truth and is animated by a new master signifier. What Lacan seems to have in mind is the idea that under capitalism the agent (\$) addresses his lack to the S^1 of the market, which then produces some knowledge (S^2) that can respond to this lack, which in turn informs the production of an object (a) that satisfies the subject’s demand. In fact, there is no gap or excess in this circuit, because unlike the other discourses it is not organised around an impossibility: it seems to model a ‘consumer satisfaction’ without remainder, in so far as, rather like the drug Soma in Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, everything is provided for, all needs are met, all wishes fulfilled.

Why then is Lacan so blithely confident that “it is bound to puncture”? It can have nothing to do with a labour of the negative, for it is as if the capitalist Master has found a way to respond to the old Situationist slogan by making the impossible possible: castration is excluded from this circuit. Its propensity to deflate seems instead to have something to do with spinning too fast - an update it would seem, of the vicious circle Freud had already recognised in *Civilization and its Discontents*. Lacan says of the discourse of the capitalist that “it works like clockwork, but precisely it works too fast, it consumes itself, it is consumed so well it consumes itself/burns” (*ça se consomme si bien que ça se consume*) (Lacan 1972). In other words, the consumer of goods comes to be consumed by them. But it is precisely here, at this internal limit of capitalism borne of its reliance on desiring human bodies, that we find a suffering subject inextricably linked to clinical phenomena. Lacan’s late mathem of the discourse of the capitalist bespeaks a deflation or exhaustion that registers itself not in the overheated economic cycles of the markets per se, adepts as they are at turning crises into opportunities, but in the new symptoms that we see today of anxiety, addiction, depression and eating disorders.

For this reason, if Lacanian psychoanalysis is to contribute to political theory and political practice, it will have to be not simply at the level of a theoretical speech amenable to university discourse, but as an analytic discourse which, against the dominant therapeutic culture constructed by the DSM, produces a singular social link between analyst and analysand by means of which to de-suture the subject from its neoliberal individuation.

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