French intellectual life appears to exercise a fascination, some might say a dreadful influence, on the English intellectual avant-garde. In the 1960s it was the tortuous debate between Sartre and Levi-Strauss; in the 1970s, the 'true', dehumanised Marxism of Althusser; and as we enter the 1980s, we have a new master, embodied in the labyrinthine prose of Jacques Lacan. The 'theory of the subject' is with us and Freud has, at last, been assimilated into Parisian debate, and in this process, into Marxism itself.

And yet, doubts exist. How far are we still with Freud? Is the Marx/Freud marriage legitimate? One is initially bedazzled by Lacan's elephantine prose, beguiled by his new conceptual armoury, a uniting of Freud and linguistics, in whose glossaries the word 'real' is defined under the entry for 'imaginary'. And then comes the act of interpretation, an act in which many have already failed, and many will continue to do so. Was Lacan a Gongorist [1] given to deliberate obscurantism? Was he speaking to us directly from his unconscious, enjoining us to psychoanalyse his works? Did he believe that all language, especially that which is clear and concise, is ideological, and that total unclarity is as close as we can attain to non-ideology? [2] Or are we being duped by a con-man masquerading as a prophet? Whatever we are faced with it will not go away if we ignore it, as Edward Thompson has already warned us of in the case of Althusser [3]. The act of interpretation must be boldly attempted. But how?

Two strategies suggest themselves. One is embodied in Amika Lemaire's Lacaen [4], which had the approval of the godhead, and involves presenting Lacan within his own universe of discourse, a universe not renowned for its clarity and straight-forwardness. There is little attempt to translate into alternative universes, so that one is left with Lacan at second-hand, but in broadly the same words. And it is often the very words which are so recalcitrant. A second strategy simply involves an attempt to present Lacan in non-Lacanian language, as Bar [5] and Wollheim [6] have tentatively冒险eried. If this involves a terrible injustice to the man himself then the risk has to be taken. Better some Lacan than no Lacan at all! The effort will be especially rewarding if the result is more clarity and understanding and, as I suspect, more awareness of two crucial factors: firstly, that Lacan's works have much less to say than might appear to be the case; secondly, that this work is, at best, an eccentric reading of Freud.

The above may appear disparaging and to be pre-judging the issue. Its tone arises from three contexts: (i) ten months of wrestling with Lacan's texts; (ii) a developing awareness that Freud had already said all that is important in Lacan in a far more accessible form and, by implication, that what is new in Lacan is radically non-Freudian; (iii) a developing annoyance with unclarity, with a position that sees the world as so opaque that study of it yields only incomprehensible edifices in front of which the mind reels.

The Three Processes

Three processes are crucial for Lacan in any understanding of the person and of his entry into the world of rules, of society. One of the processes is centrally Freudian, the Oedipus situation, which initiates the individual into social rules and prohibitions. One is discussed by Freud, but is hardly central - the fort/da game [7] which Freud observed his 18-month-old nephew playing. For Lacan, this game forms the basis for language usage, for the alienation of the self, and for the substitution of demand for desire. The third process is pure Lacan - the mirror phase, in which ideas of the person, the self, the ego, the other are acquired.

A diagram may suffice to produce a little order, and on it we can hang a number of Lacanian concepts:

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Process One - the entry into language

Language is the key to Lacan, and Lacan's basic project is to provide a linguistic version of Freud. There are two major concerns for Lacan: the nature of language and its relationship to the unconscious; the way in which the individual acquires language, the model for which is the fort/da game alluded to earlier.
The nature of language and its relationship to the unconscious

For Lacan, language substitutes a sign for reality, so 'it is the world of words that creates the world of things' [8]. The mechanisms involved in this substitution are precisely the same as those which Freud saw as basic to the workings of the unconscious. Where Freud talks of condensation and displacement as indicative of the workings of dreams, Lacan talks of their equivalents, metaphor and metonymy, as basic to the 'structure' of the unconscious and of language [9]. Following de Saussure, some would say eccentrically, in defining the linguistic sign as a unity of signifier and signified, Lacan sees the relationships between these as characterised by metaphor and metonymy. What this leads Lacan to is to identify four central roles for language. Firstly, as the condition of the workings of the unconscious, such that 'language is the condition of the unconscious ... it creates and gives rise to the unconscious' [10]. Secondly, language is seen as the basis for an alienation between self and the world, producing a 'true' self (the Other, with the capital 'O!') and a self-for-others (the ego, the cult figure of American psychoanalysis). This alienation involves a distinction between an infinity of desires, unrealisable because of social rules, and a finitude of demands, allowable by society. The acceptance of a part rather than the totality is, for Lacan, the basis for the mirror stage. If confronted with an object it cannot have, the subject posits a symbol [11] - and for his identifying the acquisition of language with the origins of primal repression [12].

Thirdly, language provides us with the basis for the understanding of psychoanalytic symptoms, such that 'the symptom resolves itself entirely in an analysis of language, because the symptom is itself structured like a language, because it is from language that speech must be delivered' [13]. Fourthly, language is the basis for the cure by the psychoanalyst [14]. So, 'The unconscious is that part of the concrete discourse, insofar as it is transindividual, that is not at the disposal of the subject in re-establishing the continuity of his concrete discourse' [15]. 'What we teach the subject to recognise [in analysis] as his unconscious is his history' [16].

The acquisition of language

The analogue for language acquisition is, for Lacan, contained in Freud's discussion of the fort/da game [17]. The game involved an 18-month-old child making objects disappear and reappear to the accompaniment of noises, noises similar to the German words for 'there it goes' (fort) and 'here it is' (da). Freud provides four possible explanations for this game. Firstly, the game can be seen to represent the achievement of instinctual renunciation, allowing the child to understand and to deal with the successive absences and presences of its mother. Freud notes an interesting parallel to this game in the child making himself disappear and appear in the mirror. Secondly, the child turned to the game as a means to be active, to control the world. Rather than passively accepting his mother's behaviour, he could control her behaviour through a system of symbols. Thirdly, the child is seen to indulge in the game as a process of defiance, much in the manner of 'go away, I don't need you'. Finally, the game is seen, by Freud, to involve a gain in pleasure (the return) only through an initial unpleasant (the departure). It is this latter interpretation which is, for Freud, the most crucial.

The interpretation of the game by Lacan is related directly to only the first of these explanations: it is the experience of the absence and presence of the mother which institutes the earliest use of language. The child learns language (or rather basic linguistic units, perhaps phonemes), as he learns the renunciation of instincts - he rejects the infinity of desires, and accepts the limited range of demands. At the same time, language learning leads to the development of a distinction between self and others: '... it is in and through language that man constitutes himself as a subject' [18].

However, there is here what Lacan terms a split, between discourse which produces a subject-for-others (an ego), and a subject which is not at the disposal of the subject; what Lacan is inclined to call the discourse of the unconscious. It is, as we shall see later, the revealing of this unconscious discourse which is the real purpose of psychoanalysis.

Process Two - the development of self, other and ego

If the construction built upon Freud's discussion of the fort/da game - that it is the analogue for all language and for the child's entry into the linguistic world - is surprising, then Lacan takes an equally eccentric model for the child's discovery of self, of others and of the ego - what he terms the 'mirror stage' [19].

Self-recognition in the mirror, which precedes language acquisition, occurs for the child between the ages of 6 and 8 months, and occurs in three stages [20]. Firstly, the child confuses the reflection with reality, trying to touch it, looking behind the mirror, and if with an adult confusing the two images. Secondly, the child realises that the image in the mirror is not a real thing. Finally, he realises that the image is of himself, and is different from the images of other people. Linking these processes is how the child deals with other children - he will imitate behaviour, be aggressive towards them, but will also cry if he sees them hurt.

In general, for Lacan, the mirror stage is 'the first articulation of the "I"' [21], and has two roles to play: a positive one of presenting the body as a totality for the child for the first time; but also a negative one of providing an alienation in that the child enters a dual relationship with an 'I' which is not itself - for Lacan, this prefigures the development of the ego, of a self-for-others. Thus: ... this moment of self-identification is crucial ... because it represents a permanent tendency to alienate the individual: the tendency which leads him throughout his life to seek and foster the imaginary wholeness of an 'ideal ego'. [22]

There is, for Lacan, a basic incompleteness, absence and lack in human living which the ego gets rid of spuriously. Lacan's aim in psychoanalysis is to subvert the ego and, in so doing, to reinstate the id.

Process Three - the Oedipus complex, the father and social rules

If Lacan is credible, then we now have language, conceptions of self and others, and the unconscious has been hidden beneath a welter of symbols. What needs explaining now is the acceptance of society and its rules. The Oedipus complex has always been central to Freudianism, and Lacan gives it an especially prominent role. Although the Oedipus complex is defined as 'the Oedipus situation' and the Name-of-the-Father. The Oedipus situation moves the child from a dual relationship with its mother, into a triadic, family relationship involving mother/father/child, in which the father is the law-giver possessed of penis-power! In the Oedipus situation, sexuality is subjected to social rules and restrictions.

For Lacan, 'it is in the name of the father that we must recognise the support of the symbolic function
which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law' [23]. This father condemns the individual to non-satisfaction of desire, legislates for society's rules (for 'demand' in Lacanian terminology), producing a mixture of aggression and subservience (the Hegelian master/slave dialectic).

The development of the Oedipus situation is seen to go through a number of stages: initially, the child desires to do and be everything for the mother, to complete the mother's essential lack of a penis. Subsequently, the father intervenes, depriving the child of his object of desire, and depriving the mother of the phallic object. Finally, there is the identification of the child with the father, which involves a recognition on the child's part that language is the privileged function of the father. Language is the gain for the loss of desire and of the mother; it is the root of the incest taboo.

It is noticeable that for Lacan we are in the world of symbols:

The existence of a symbolic father does not depend upon the recognition of the connection between coition and childbirth.... The father is present only through his law, which is speech, and only insofar as his speech is recognised by the mother does it take on the value of Law. [24]

The child's separation from the mother is, for Lacan, a symbolic castration; what is given in return is language, culture and civilisation - the totality of systems of symbolisation. The Oedipus situation is therefore part of the move from desire to demand: The desire to be the phallus which is lacking in the mother, the desire for union with the mother, is repressed and replaced by a substitute which names it and at the same time transforms it: the symbol. [25]

What Lacan claims to have given us in these three processes is the making of language, of the individual, and the individual's entry into society. Three characteristics of the Lacanian model are already clear: (i) its unclarity; (ii) its rejection of the need for empirical proof; (iii) its stress on the role of the symbol and the process of symbolisation.

Some themes in Lacan's work

1 The return to Freud

Freud's work was only tardily accepted in France, perhaps only fully with the works of Lacan himself. This acceptance produced a massive schism in the psychoanalytical establishment, including Lacan's expulsion from the International Psychoanalytical Association in 1953. Lacan's call for a return to Freud is in the face of many deviations, real and imagined, but including (and especially) American ego psychology. Lacan wishes to reinstate the central concepts of psychoanalysis, seen by him as the unconscious, the drive, transference, and repetition.

Needless to say, the idea of a return to Freud assumes that the starting point is readily identified. However, the nature and import of the originals is far from clear. Ricoeur can see Freud as solely a hermeneutic man [27], whereas Sullivan sees Freud as a mechanism, with the stress on meaning and interpretation as much about the mythology of psychoanalysis as about anything [28]. Both, of course, see meaning and mechanism as alternatives and irreconcilables.

As Robinson suggests [29], both the unconscious and sex have lost attention in much neo-Freudianism, for example in the work of Fromm. What Lacan does is to bring them back, albeit in symbolic form - together with a strong anti-biologism and a clobbering of the therapy-is-adjustment schools, and cements the whole thing together with structural linguistics. Thus there is a strong polemic in Lacan, aimed at two sources: at those who have banalised Freud; and at Freud himself when he fails to live up to his message, as he is seen to do in his early 'scientific' work and his later work on the ego, both of which come for a Lacanian trouncing.

2 The problem of science

Lacan has postulated two distinct discourses which the individual 'uses' [30], a conscious discourse for others, yielding a subject-for-others, and an unconscious discourse, which yields the true subject. This latter discourse constantly interrupts the former. This distinction leads Lacan to approach the problem of science from two directions:

(i) He takes a clearly anti-Cartesian position, in particular over the unity of being and conscious thought. Lacan's Descartes is asserting that 'I think therefore I am' equals 'I am conscious that I think therefore I am' equals 'I am where I do not think' [31], and he presents us with an unconscious view of the cogito asserting that, 'I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think' [32].

(ii) Lacan sees Freud as trying to bridge a gap which science has constructed so strongly, that between rationality and desire. It is clear that Lacan sees the 'I wish' of Freud as equivalent to, and at least as significant as Descartes' 'I think'.

Science is ideological to the extent that it denies the unconscious and to the extent that it reduces wishing to an insignificant place in human behaviour.

3 Conceptual innovations

I would like briefly to consider two of Lacan's major conceptual innovations, each of which contains a triad of concepts: the symbolic, the imaginary and the real; need, demand and desire.

The distinction between need and desire is a fairly straightforward one, in which need denotes the organic drive towards organic satisfaction, and desire the ideational representatives of instincts, which include the whole gamut of experiences, wishes and so on. These ideational representatives are constructed by the play of metaphor and metonymy. Desire might therefore be seen as the active force in the psychic apparatus, as that which sets it in motion, a motion related to a set of drives which are flexible and postponable, orientated in accordance with pleasure and displeasure, and which are limited by demand.

For Lacan, the infinity of desires cannot be realised because of the existence of cultural prescriptions and of a failure in being. Instead, we have the limited and finite set of demands, in which demand becomes a metonymical displacement of desire, an articulation occurring within language. Demand operates as a language of desire, a language in which
the subject is divided, no longer aware of what it really desires(d). The psychoanalyst must 'read' desires below and beyond the metaphorical and metonymies. The imaginary forms the set of conventional symbols of social systems which is assimilated, as in Levi-Strauss, to a linguistic model. The *fort/da* game is the example, par excellence, of the operation of the symbolic, for in this game, sounds come to replace unattainable objects of desire, in this case, the mother. The cure involves a compulsion to language of providing a compromise between 'reality' and absolute desires. The cure (see below) involves an asymptotic approach between the two.

The imaginary is centred upon an identification between consciousness and the subject, and, as such, relates to secondary process thinking and to the ego. If the symbolic involves the search for difference and disjunction, the imaginary is centred upon identity, order and resemblance. This identity is one which is partial and adaptationist: '... the imaginary relation [is] that between the ego and its images' [33]. Therefore, wherever there is a *false* identification, there we are in the realm of the imaginary. The imaginary may be seen as closely linked to the development of science, as the ego is linked to that development for Freud.

Bar sums up the role of the imaginary in the following terms:

- The extent of the Lacanian term 'imaginary' is thus so large that it covers all identificational content, all concrete pictorial thoughts, conscious and unconscious. The capacity of the human mind to think in terms of principles of identity and similarity is especially to be located within the imaginary function.

[34]

The real is more refractory, seeming to relate to that which is lacking in the symbolic order, that is, to that which is extrinsic to signification. Its role for Lacan is a dynamic one, in that it reveals that the symbolic and the imaginary are limited.

4. The practice of psychoanalysis and the cure

Lacan's is an anti-adaptationist psychoanalysis opposed to ego psychology. For ego psychologists, the ego is the site of the real person and his dealings with the world, and, as such, unconscious factors interfere and get in the way. For Lacan, on the other hand, the ego is the site of the self-for-others, which is an alienated and an impoverished self.

This all gives Lacan a specific view of treatment and of cure. Centrally, the only medium for psychoanalysis is speech, for it is 'speech [which] confers a meaning on the function of the individual...' [35]. Psychoanalysis seeks to rediscover history, for 'what we teach the subject to recognise as his unconscious is his history' [36]. As to this unconscious, it is that chapter of my history that is marked by a blank or occupied by a falsehood: it is the censored chapter. But the truth can be rediscovered; usually it has been written down elsewhere....' [37]. The elsewhere refers to dreams, myths, memories and suchlike.

The symptom is linguistic in structure for 'the symptom resolves itself entirely in an analysis of language; because the symptom is itself structured like a language, because it is from language that speech must be delivered' [38]. Language has a very specific function for 'language is not to inform but to evoke' [39], and analysis has a definite goal: Analysis can have for its goal only the advent of a true speech and the realisation by the subject of his history and his relation to the future.

At the start of analysis there is what might be termed an empty word, in which the unconscious constantly irrupts without the patient being able to understand or to talk about these irruptions. At the end of analysis there will be a full word in which the analysand can incorporate unconscious discourse into conscious discourse. Conscious discourse disrupts, whilst unconscious discourse reveals a 'true self,' 'true desires'; psychoanalysis involves a process of release [41]....

The number one role is therefore essential for Lacanian analysis: firstly, that analysis is interminable; secondly, that conscious and unconscious discourses never coincide, but merely approach each other; thirdly, that the role of the analyst is a radically non-interventionist one. The interminability of analysis follows from the second feature, and itself involves a number of concerns: that conscious discourse is essential for survival at the social level; that without such discourse (that is, without primal repression), there would be no subject; finally, that there is a basic 'lack' or 'failure' in being, which is only completed by death. All that seems possible according to Lacan is a certain accord between the conscious and the unconscious, described by Bar thus: Therapy, as practised by ego psychologists, is thus for Lacan a process in which one patient (the analyst) cures the other patient (the subject) by imposing on him his own symptoms.... For Lacan, the patient has to learn to 'introject' the Other. The effect of the progressing cure is that the patient learns to express, instead of repressing, those truths, sometimes grandiose, sometimes horrifying, which relate to his 'true desires.'

[42]

The neutrality of the analyst has a strange root and seems to follow from Lacan's idea that the analyst is as much controlled by his unconscious as is the patient; the analyst is no more autonomous than the analysand and is, perhaps, simply more aware of how the unconscious works. It appears, in fact, that the analyst has three roles [43]: as the representative of the Other, of unconscious discourse - in essence, the representative of the machinations of the unconscious, of metaphor and metonymy; as a representative of society and its rules; and as representative of all the listeners of the patient's past life. It is in the latter role that transference is so important, for it is through transference that the analysand is progressively dispossessed of all the forms of his ego in which he has constructed himself....

Frustration of demand is the only means at the analyst's disposal to provoke the subject's regression from one signifier of his demand to another, and to reach, through this regression, the first unconscious signifier of the desire.

[44]

**Criticism and Evaluation**

The above is an attempt to outline the unoutlineable; to describe as succinctly as I can manage, a body of work that is unparalleled in its confusion and disorder; to bring order to Lacan's unconscious discourse. Perhaps the difficulty is that any body of criticism of Lacan can be said to be based upon misinterpretation, even upon repression. Are there symptomatic and innocent readings? Is any version of Lacan as good as any other? Can there be incorrect interpretations?

However difficult the task, criticism will be attempted, and that by someone who is not an analyst, not even a philosopher, and will focus on a number of
areas: (i) Lacan's style; (ii) the problem of empirical evidence; (iii) the problem of the linguistic model and the stress of symbolisation; (iv) the nature of Lacan's analytic practice and his views on the training of analysts; (v) the relationship between Freud's work and those of Lacan, especially Lacan's notion of a break in Freud.

The Lacanian style

Lacan's works are, in my opinion, without equal for the incomprehensibility; they are very, very difficult to understand, and extremely recalcitrant when it comes to explaining what they mean. It is hard to render them into language which is not Lacan's own and, at the same time, to be sure that you have remained true to the originals. Obscurantism is the order of the day, and one wonders why. Lacan might, if he were before a court of stylistic justice, offer a number of defences of his style:

(i) That it is a reflection of the workings of the unconscious. If this were so then Lacan is offering us psychoanalytic surrealism, when surely a picture of the unconscious at work is not enough. What is required is interpretation - indeed some mechanisms and manuals of interpretation for guidance. What we are given is the infinitely varied play of metaphor and metonymy, which never a contact with some hard, concrete, empirical fact [45].

(ii) That clarity may let in ideology. There is a notion hinted at in the recent 'On Ideology' from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies that unclarity is close to non-ideology. It goes like this: ... Kristeva, Barthes, and, one might argue, Lacan, are concerned to celebrate the impossibility of escape from the prison-house of language. Their writings are conceived as strategies for the constant restating of that impossibility - the least ideological act that discourse can be made to perform being the realization of its own arbitrariness.

(iii) Without entering into the debate on the concept of ideology, it seems equally possible that, short of being able to use language completely randomly, so that the ideological and the non-ideological could occur with equal chance, confusion can be ideological, can let ideology in by the back door. The very unclarity of Lacan's work may serve to take the unwary by surprise, may dupe those seeking the latest in intellectual fashions.

(iv) Perhaps psychoanalysis is closer to poetry than it is to science. In fact, Lacan rarely claims quite this - even though it is a fine and respectable get-out clause - preferring to argue that his method is scientific in that it is consistent. This may or may not be a sufficient condition for science - Liverpool Football Club are consistent but we would hardly want to claim that their methods were of the nature of science - but it is frightfully difficult to assess whether or not Lacan is being consistent. He rarely uses empirical data, he does not, as Freud did, give us detailed case studies; all we have are some discussions of Poe's poetry and, beyond that, all is assertion.

Lacan and data

The reliance in Lacan upon assertion may have an important polemical role - he was, without doubt, struggling against real deviations from the Freudian corpus. The Lacanian position on data appears, however, to be other than this, favouring a view that everything is data, that the play of metaphor and metonymy is infinitely varied, presenting us with a forest of symbols from which nothing is excluded. Everything is gist to the mill of the unconscious.

That this is not Freud is quite clear - for Freud there are aspects of behaviour which are not determined by the rule of the unconscious. That we are never given an insight in Lacan's analytic practice is at least inconvenient - whereas Freud's case studies offer us some insight into method, concept and theory, Lacan never gives us such an entry. The analyst, although formally equal to the analysand, is so superior that his methods are secret.

Language, linguistics and the symbolic in Lacan

Clearly, Lacan's work is a linguistic reading of Freud, especially drawn from 'The Interpretation of Dreams', in which condensation and displacement have become metaphor and metonymy. Equally clearly, the linguistic paradigm is with us. Especially in France it has come to dominate anthropology, has made Freud acceptable, and has even begun to invade the treatment of Marx, for example in the work of Goux and Baudrillard [47]. The latter is particularly fascinating, showing as it does the stress upon the role of the symbol so beloved of semiotologists.

For Goux, the commodity form is one mode of symbolisation (dominant, of course, in the last instance), of which writing and sexuality are the other two. In particular, he links Marx's discussion of the development of the money form to Freud's stages of sexual development - barter corresponds to the anal stage, the money form to the genital stage. Goux's whole approach rests on the assumption that 'the opposition between signifier and signified is nothing other than ... [the] split between use value and exchange value' [48], although it is made clear that the 'nothing other' is a matter of homology and isomorphism. Goux goes on to state:

That Marx discovers historically and logically four phases in the genesis of the money form and that Freud is led to distinguish four stages in the development of sexual organisation is no accident.... It is a similar genetic process, it is the same principle of discontinuous and progressive structuration that commands the ascension to normative sovereignty of gold, the father and the phallus. The phallus is the general equivalent of objects, the father is the general equivalent of subjects, in the same way that gold is the general equivalent of products. The elements constituting these wholes are different, but the syntax by which one of these elements ... accedes to power and rules the evaluation of the whole in which it is excluded is identical. [49]

What it boils down to is that 'Goux's whole system ... rests on doing to Marx what Lacan did to Freud' [50]. Essentially, then, semiology rules - if production is the determining factor for Marx, then for Lacan and Goux the determining factor is symbolism. All there is to do is to explore, in a variety of
societies, the processes of symbolisation, and we will likely find that all are isomorphic - plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose! A heavy dose of structuralism in which history and practice vanish, are illusions. For Lacan, the true self is the unconscious operating by and through language, interrupting into all our lives in ways which we may never control. For Baudrillard, we have the claim that the priority given in Marx to labour and to praxis is obsolete, for priority (now?) belongs to symbolic exchange. Exploitation is no longer seen as specific to the commodity form, but to the sign and to the ways in which we symbolise and communicate.

Two aspects of Lacan's dealings with the symbolic and with language I see as especially problematical [51]:

(a) Fort/da games and phonemes

For Lacan, the fort/da game is the learning ground for the phonetic make-up of language, of which the basic unit is the phoneme or minimal sound unit. This might be a convincing idea if it were not for the fact that in linguistics there seems to be little agreement as to what phonemes are or what their function is. Indeed, there seem to be distinct and opposed schools nowhere hinted at in Lacan's work [52]. One is reminded of Mounin's criticism [53] that Lacan, and others who apply linguistic terms in their analyses, more or less always do so without consideration for the original uses of those terms. Mounin is emphatic that Lacan's use of the Saussurian algorithm $S$, which indicates the primacy of the signifier, and is to be the basis of a Copernican revolution in psychology, is simply wrong. What is being said is that Lacan always misinterprets de Saussure in his discussion of the signifier, the signified and the relationships between them. The linguistic analogy is, perhaps, an interesting one, but technically the analogy does a disservice to the original.

(b) The rule of the symbolic

The major departure in Lacan from the Freudian corpus is that Lacan always denies the significance of material factors and the somatic. That the real father of the Freudian oedipus drama becomes, in Lacan, the Name-of-the-father, a mere linguistic symbol, is indicative of this change. Similarly, the fear of castration, derived from Freud - a real fear about the real 'depenising' of the child - becomes again a matter of symbol, a matter of being deprived of language [54].

No-one can doubt that Freud was concerned with interpretation, with symbols, with their meaning and how that meaning was unavailable to the patient. However, it was never the case for Freud that all aspects of the person and his social relationships were of the nature of symbols. One can no more successfully reduce Freud to hermeneutics than you can Marx. When Lacan accuses ego psychologists of ignoring much that is essential in Freud, he might do well to realise what he has ignored - the natural and physical aspects of man - his drives and instincts - the constraints of material existence. All these aspects of the person (and social relationships) would have been dealt with by Freud, symbols which endlessly intertwine with one another, never to reach the real, hard, concrete aspects of life.

Lacan's derealisation of Freud is, therefore, on a par with Baudrillard's derealisation of Marx - in both the linguistic bag of tricks is opened and we find that exploitation has nothing to do with real relationships between social classes but with the fact that man is a symbol-using animal, that fathers are not real, concrete entities but names, symbols, aspects of language. A whiff, I feel, of idealism, and an idealism emanating from the Baudrillardian-Churchian [45]. So Freud and Marx are united, and all we have to jettison is a few inconvenient trifles - history, production, praxis, the drive, sexuality in its physical form....

Psychoanalytic practice and the cure

Freud provides an aetiology and a therapy. Lacan, in ignoring the physical and the somatic, has rid Freudi­anism of the aetiological component, and has left therapy as a profound mystery - remember, there are no case studies. Turkle [56] draws attention to five awkward aspects, as she sees them, of Lacanian analysis and cure: the absence of a training analysis for the therapist; the extreme brevity of training itself; the brevity of the analytic session; the failure to persist with patients who are silent; problems associated with the termination of analysis, which leave many patients dependent upon the analyst.

I would like to give some attention to the issue of training analysis. It is quite clear in much of Freud's work [57] that analysts must be trained, for there are definite and specific methods and concepts with which psychoanalysis is clearly clear that medical training is, for Freud, neither sufficient nor adequate for those wishing to become analysts. The analyst does not need to know the bone structure of the arm in order to study hysterical paralysis, and will need to know much that is not medical - some history, some anthropology.... So there must be a training and that training is specific to psychoanalysis.

Whilst admitting that Freud's position was, in part, a result of the newness of psychoanalysis and the need to have it accepted, Lacan's position seems to both misunderstand Freud and to depart too far from his position. A number of confusions are identifiable: firstly, Lacan uses his rejection of a medical training for analysts as a rejection of all training; secondly, he argues for self-authorisation of the analyst, which provides no guarantee that a particular analyst knows his business; thirdly, his hotly-disputed introduction of 'the pass' [58] provided for a type of legitimisation, but one which does not effect the analyst's right to practice. Lacan's position is that all rules and concepts of psychoanalysis are open to criticism and reformulation and that psychoanalytic institutions make this impossible. The analyst floats freely, nods occasionally toward the master, and offers his services 'freely'.

Breaks in the Freudian corpus

Epistemological breaks are hardly unknown in contemporary academic discourse and it will probably come as no surprise to find that Lacan argues that Freud had one - or more correctly two. Freud is seen to have three phases: an early phase of being 'scientific', even biological [59]; a middle phase that is the true Freud [60]; and a late phase, in which he became an adaptationist [61]. Lacan worships the middle phase, where linguistic readings are so easily arrived at, and exorcises the first and last as heresies, heresies which both he and Freud were eager to follow.

If these breaks mean anything they mean different views of man. In the early phase, Freud's work is claimed to be dominated by a mechanistic, even biological, viewpoint. In the 'real' phase, the unconscious is seen as the site of the true person, and the analyst seeks to reveal this to the analysand through the intermediary of language. In the final phase Freud goes off the rails again in seeing man in terms of adaptation and adjustment.
Two questions may be asked: firstly, are such phases identifiable in Freud's work? Secondly, are the so-called phases irreconcilable? To neither of these will I provide a full and complete answer, merely a sketch. If there are phases, then they overlap. Freud's concern with biology does not end in 1900 with the publication of The Interpretation of Dreams, for Institute and their Vicissitudes was published in 1915; his concern with language and interpretation does not evaporate with the works on dreams, jokes and even dreams published between 1900 and 1905, for it continues in the later sections of the 1915 paper on the unconscious [62].

Now this may seem trivial, evidence that Freud was inconsistent, that ideas we do not like are not once-and-for-all abandoned by Freud himself. However, there are two alternative hypotheses:

(i) that although Freud did abandon his early emphasis on a neuro-physiological basis for biology [63], the rest of his work is consistent in that it moves from the study of what is repressed, for example, in dreams, to the agencies of repression, such as the super-ego, culture and suchlike. It seems clear that the latter is not necessarily to be seen from an adaptationist viewpoint.

(ii) that, as Sullivan argues, Freud was always a biological reducer, and that the suppression of rhythm as displacement rather than the 'usual' condensation.

Footnotes

1 The 17th-century Spanish poet Luis de Gongora y Argote developed a style marked by deliberate obscurity.

2 In particular, see Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, On Ideology, Hutchinson, 1979, p.225. It is clear when we note the clear and limpid prose of Descartes, Rousseau or Nietzsche, that stylistic unclarity is not a necessary part of any attempt to develop new ideas and to break out of old modes of discourse. Linguistic hermeticism is no greater guarantee of truth than is clarity; the former may act to exclude from the sect, the latter at least allows evaluation.


9 In fact, in both Freud and Lacan, there are more than these two processes at work. It does seem in Lacan's case that all are reducible to metaphor as displacement rather than the 'usual' condensation. The role of the analyst in frustrating the unconscious may be terribly wrong), it is clear that his strongly anti-adaptationist and anti-biological views are suitable for only one result, a product of language.

10 The above, as an introduction, may be flawed, in that there appear to be many Lacans. In the absence of the real Mr Lacan appearing, I offer this homologue. The role of the analyst in frustrating the analyсадs is a crucial one for Freud. Perhaps if I had thrown up my hands in horror and burnt the works of Lacan out of frustration, then Lacan himself would have been able to say 'at last, you understand'.

Conclusion

I would like to make four observations by way of a conclusion:

(1) Even if we do not understand Lacan (this paper may be terribly wrong), it is clear that his strongly anti-adaptationist and anti-biological views are suitable for only one result, a product of language. That such a unification has, in many cases, seen the aboliption of class and of praxis, is warming enough.

(2) that, as Collier argues: [Lacan's] is not a new position; there have always been those who wanted to find a romantic irrationalism on psychoanalysis, treating the unconscious as the authentic self and source of deeper wisdom.

(3) That Lacan's attempt to provide a symmetry between analyst and analysand, that he must refuse to be 'the subject who is presumed to know' [66] is doubly flawed, for (a) what if the patient wante knowledge, and (b) isn't there an asymmetry in the monetary tie between analyst and analysand?

(4) That there is a tendency in Lacan, and many others [67], to take a particular position concerning language. Lacan's view is clear: language does not provide an analogy for the study of the unconscious; rather, it is the only way in which the unconscious can exist, can be known. So 'there is no structure except of, or by means of, language' [68]. Man is not, therefore, one who structures, but one who is structured; he is a result, a product of language.

Footnotes

24 From ensite, quoted in Lemaire, op.cit., p.65. My emphasis.
26 Lemaire, op.cit., p.67.
29 de Saussure, F.-J., Cours de Linguistique Générale, P.U.F. 1971, p.60. One wonders if the history is 'his' in any meaningful way.
38 This notion of release provides a strong link between the work of Lacan and Heidegger.
40 This notion of release provides a strong link between the work of Lacan and Heidegger.
41 This notion of release provides a strong link between the work of Lacan and Heidegger.
44 Lemaire, A., op.cit., p.517.
46 Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, On Ideology, Hutchinson, 1979, p.99.
51 There is an empirical difficulty associated with the link between language acquisition and the Oedipus complex. For Lacan, the acquisition of language is determined by the Oedipal drama, and yet language is, in fact, acquired several years before this drama is generally agreed to arise.
53 Lemaire, A., op.cit., p.517.
54 Lemaire, A., op.cit., p.177.
55 Lemaire, A., op.cit., p.177.
58 Lemaire, A., op.cit., p.517.
59 Lemaire, A., op.cit., p.177.
60 Lemaire, A., op.cit., p.177.
61 Lemaire, A., op.cit., p.177.
Crucially, linguists do not agree.

54 See above, ‘Process Three - The Oedipus Complex, the Father and Social
   Rules’.
55 Identified by, amongst others, E.P. Thompson.
57 For example, Freud, S., ‘The Question of Lay Analysis’, Standard Edition, 
   Vol.2.
59 For example, Freud, S., Pre-Psychoanalytic Publications, Standard Edition, 
   Vol.5.
60 For example, Freud, S., The Interpretation of Dreams, Standard Edition, 
   Vol.5.
62 The relevant dates and works are as follows (all by Freud): The Interpretation 
   of Dreams (1900), Standard Edition, Vols.4-5; Institutions and their
   Vicissitudes (1915), Standard Edition, Vol.14; The Interpretation as a Whole 
   (1923), Standard Edition, Vol.19; The Ego and the Id (1933), 
   Standard Edition, Vol.19. A unity between so-called phases 2 and 3 is 
   provided by Neuroses and Psychoses, Standard Edition, Vol.19, where the 
   neuroses are classified in terms of the relationship between id, ego, super-
   ego and the external world.
63 As contained in Freud, S., The Project for a Scientific Psychology, in 
64 Sulloway, F., op.cit., pp.419 and 488. To reject the biology is, it is 
   clear, to abandon a great deal of Freud’s ‘non-adaptationist’ work.
   Sociology, 1980, 2/7, pp.21-73.
68 Bowie, N., op.cit., p.351.

Objectification and Alienation

in Marx and Hegel

Chris Arthur

Hegel sees ... self-objectification in the form of self-alienation and self-estrangement as ... the final expression of human life which ... has attained its own essential nature.

(Marx 1844)

Introduction

The object of this paper is to reassess the relationship between Marx and Hegel as it is exemplified in Marx’s 1844 manuscripts which include a brilliant series of jottings on Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit. In particular I want to investigate the claim, first made by Lukács, that Marx’s criticism of Hegel amounts to the charge that Hegel equates alienation with objectification [1]. I endorse this point of view but I explain that the matter is by no means as simple as it might appear. A subsidiary section of this paper will take up another common theme in the literature, namely the claim that the central site of the discussion of objectification, or of alienation, or of both, is Hegel’s discussion of ‘Lordship and Bondage’, and that this discussion profoundly influenced Marx in his theory of alienation [2]. This latter claim I will argue is entirely groundless; the famous Master-Slave dialectic is of no importance to Marx, either in his praise of Hegel (which is considerable) or his criticism (which is damning).

Before we can assess the significance of these claims it is necessary to remind ourselves of how the various categories are introduced in the texts in question. I will first summarize the central section of Marx’s 1844 Manuscripts - that on ‘estranged labour’. After a recapitulation (very schematic) of Hegel’s Phenomenology, I will then turn to the last section of the Manuscripts, in which Marx makes his assessment of Hegel’s dialectic on the basis of it, and try to explain what I take to be Marx’s meaning.

Along the way it will be necessary to give the results of certain philological investigations I was forced to take up.

Marx’s Theory of Alienation

‘Objectification’ (Vergangenheitsbildung) is an important category for Marx because in and through its objectification in the world humanity comes to be what it essentially is. This process is, of course, for Marx, primarily a question of labour, of material production, and its result is a product. ‘The product of labour’ says Marx, ‘is the objectification of labour.’ [3] Through this process the labourer realizes his potential as a producer; but it is important to stress here (because we will have to come back to it when we make a comparison with Hegel) that this is possible because there exists external material with which to work. Marx says: ‘the worker can create nothing without nature, with-