

The Subject and His Desperate Attempts to Regain the Lost Realm of the Real

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Abstract: Jacques Lacan, the French psychoanalyst, is renowned for new findings in psychoanalytic approach whose most famous maxim is the triple model of human's entrance into his subject hood. Lacan points out that the first stage for every normal subject is the Real when the subject is fully governed by his needs. At this stage he tries to keep all his needs satisfied. However, the subject cannot make any distinction between himself and the objects which satisfy his needs. In fact, the subject cannot know himself from the objects which he is provided with. Such a sense brings to home for the subject unity, wholeness, and identity. However, this pleasurable state is ephemeral, and the subject loses it. The subject, as long as he lives, will miss and search the Real, the Eden-like state carved on his mind. The second stage is the Mirror or what Lacan interchangeably names the Imaginary where the he acts based on his demands. For the first time he becomes aware of the existence of the other. Subject at this stage doesn't want to approve the reality of the Other. Not completely aware of the changes in the Mirror Stage, the subject considers his mother and all moving bodies as his own reflection. Having passed the Mirror Stage, the subject enters the Symbolic Order which marks the subject's existence in the world of Father, signs, and language. The Symbolic Order, which necessitates learning language, brings castration which leads to subject's separation from his mother. Through language, the subject thinks he can announce his identity and selfhood. Nevertheless, the paternal function and the luring world of language causes the subject get entrapped in another illusion.

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Introduction:

Jacques Lacan has used the theories of Freud and many other philosophers to organize his own psychoanalytic system. The crucial influences on Lacan come from Freud and the studies he has had on children. However, Lacan has not contended with Freud's findings, and has exerted his own assumptions in his works. Lacan throughout his works endeavors to bring out the illusions which subject faces in whatever he embarks on. In the Imaginary, the subject has based a false totality for himself upon a relationship with his mother. In the Symbolic, subject is deceived by the world of language where he feels he can declare his independence through words and signs (Fink, 1997, p. 42). Nevertheless, the subject once more comes to the reality that he is entrapped and alienated by the very words he has trusted for expressing himself.

Lacan notifies that for every natural subject, there are three stages. The first stage which occurs during the first months of a subject's life is the Real. In this stage, the subject still a baby, begins its existence as something inseparable from its mother. The baby doesn't know any distinction between self and other, in fact, between itself and its mother. The baby is likened to a kind of blob with no sense of self or individual

identity. It doesn't even feel itself a coherent unified whole. It doesn't know where it starts and where it ends (Lemaire, 1994). This baby-blob is driven by its needs. It needs food, comfort, sense of safety, and changing. These needs can be satisfied by an object. However, the baby is not capable of making any distinction between itself and the objects that supply him with pleasure, and satisfaction. The baby is given a breast when hungry, is hugged when scared, and is shaken to get entertained. Nevertheless, the baby doesn't know what is fulfilling all its needs. Due to the fact that it doesn't have any conception of totality, and wholeness, it doesn't know to whom these satisfying objects belong. No one, and nothing for the baby is recognizable just its needs and the objects which satisfy the needs.

However, the baby can not stay in this stage because by getting older, it has to pass the Real, and enter the Mirror Stage. Indeed, the baby, to enter the civilization, should forget the Real Stage (Fink, 1997, p. 180). To form a separate identity, it must separate itself from the mother. Becoming an individual wholeness eventuates in a sense of loss. The baby can no longer undergo that primal sense of unity which it originally had when unified by the mother. Lacan regards this change as a tragic metamorphosis that the baby has to suffer in order

to be permitted to enter the Mirror Stage. In Lacan's opinion, the Real Stage is like the Eden Garden whose sweet memories never can be forgotten (Barzilai, 1999, p. 104). Once dismissed from the Real, the subject unconsciously and unknowingly seeks it, and tries everything to experience that beautiful and complete sense of wholeness he had there. The Real doesn't include any absence, or loss, or lack. It is all fullness and completeness. There is no need that can't be satisfied. Because there is no absence or loss, there is no language in the Real. Everything is provided instantly. Consequently, the baby doesn't require any sign or communication system to transmit its messages. As a matter of fact, the Real is beyond language; therefore, it is irretrievably lost when the subject enters into language.

The Mirror Stage starts as the baby recognizes distinctions between its body and everything in the world. Now the baby realizes that there are objects and subjects fully independent from its own being. Such a transmission from the legendary state of the Real into the Mirror is accompanied by the sense of loss and anxiety (Brennan, 1993, p. 64). Gradually the needs of the baby will be replaced by demands. Unlike the needs, demands are not satisfied by objects. A demand is always a demand for recognition from another, for love from another. For the first time, the baby becomes familiar with an external, independent being which incarnates itself as the other. The baby notices that its mother is not in fact a part of it. The baby then grows anxiety and fear because it finds itself split and dismantled. Unknowingly it demands reunion, a return to the Real. It demands to be filled in by the other. It wants to regain its unity with the other. Indeed, it demands the other to disappear. The baby, once more, faces a negative answer, as it realizes that erasing the other from the game is impossible. It tries to promote its demands by crying. It doesn't want to approve that mother is different and separated from it, though mother doesn't grasp what her baby means through crying (Blond, 1998, p. 86).

The Mirror by all its profits and disadvantages for the baby might be taken into account as a middle point between the Real and the Symbolic Order. Another phenomenon that Lacan says occurs in the Mirror stage is the misrecognition the baby has of itself. Lacan believes that between 6 and 18 months, the baby hasn't yet mastered its own body, and doesn't have control over its own movements. As remarked, it doesn't have a sense of its body as a whole; it knows itself as a self or body fragmented or in pieces. The baby in the Mirror, unlike the Real has understood that other bodies exist besides itself. But it is difficult for it to know what

belongs to it or others (Mellard, 1992, p. 72). Lacan asserts that in this period the baby considers others as mirrors in which it searches itself. At first, it doesn't want to accept the fact that the images it sees aren't parts of it. Gradually it realizes that these images are actual bodies coming near, and then leaves it. The baby is deceived by these images and mistakenly regards them as parts of it. Lacan names the realm of the Mirror as the stage of Imaginary because the idea of self and independent body is totally based on imaginary identification with the image in the mirror. The Imaginary portrays a more transparent picture of the baby's complexes resulted from its wishes for completeness. In the Imaginary the alienated relation of self to its own image is created and maintained (Rabate, 2001, p. 28). The Imaginary is a stage on which conscious and unconscious pictures are interchangeably replaced. The Imaginary is a pre-linguistic domain where words have not appeared on stage. Visual perceptions are the dominant meaning-makers in it. Illusions and misrecognitions overshadow subject's entire life.

The Real has something in common with the Imaginary in that both are based on a self-indulgent totality. However, both are somehow merged by illusions; the baby innately has the tendency to and enjoyment from being deceived. This phenomenon originates from its desire for wholeness and identity. The mirror-like relationship the baby maintains in its visual communication with other bodies reflects the desire it has for an "ideal ego", a perfect whole self who has no insufficiency. The baby emphatically internalizes this ideal ego to give rise to pleasurable sense of selfhood and totality. The "I" identity the baby considers for it is made by (mis)identifying with this ideal ego. The baby attempts to establish a totality that doesn't include any lack, and no notion of absence or shortcoming might be felt there (Žizek, 1992, p. 69). The baby unconsciously regrets the total unification once it had organized based on the relationship with its mother. Considering other bodies as its own constituents, the baby wants to sympathize with itself for having lost the original oneness with mother's body during the Real. Nevertheless, the baby has to put away its sense of unity with the body of the mother if it wants to enter the culture. We shouldn't, however, regard the baby's persistence on its not having lack and loss.

Having past the Mirror, the baby (now better be named the subject) steps the Symbolic Order. Unlike what Freud says, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary realms frequently overlap, and at times they coexist. A clear-cut division between these two stages seems impossible. In the third stage of the subject's life the

dominance and pressing power of the Symbolic upon the Imaginary is apparent. To become a meaningful and autonomous existence incarnated in "I", the subject has to enter the Symbolic which is structured by language. In the Symbolic, we can designate who we are through being named, and through expressing our ideas. The reason why the Symbolic, and the Imaginary can coexist appertains to the fact that the projection of the self onto an image, or a self-admitted identity expressed in saying "I", is in reality Symbolic features functioning as a facade for the imaginary sense of an independent wholeness, and being an other not relying on someone or something else (Harasym, 1998, p. 41). To put it differently, the Symbolic is a platform on which the subject can represent his internal imaginary identity through words and signs. In the Symbolic, the subject has come clearly to the understanding that the ideas of lack, of loss, and of absence really exist. Unlike the Imaginary, the subject no longer denies or doubts the presence of the other. Now he confirms that he has stepped into the realm of the Other who is the master and predominant figure of the Symbolic Order. The Other is in charge of the Symbolic; he has constructed and defined it through his language, a symbolic and systematized communication structure provided by the Other for enabling the subject to express himself. The subject owes his symbolic existence to the Other and the language system he has put forwards. The subject gradually becomes notified of the fact that the Other is the center and nerve-keeper of the Symbolic. He realizes that the Other has been there before him, and has conquered whatever existing in the Symbolic (Brennan, 1993, p. 92). Indeed, the subject understands that the Symbolic ultimately belongs to the Other who permits the subject to enter his realm.

As mentioned earlier, the subject in the Mirror, for the first time, realizes that there exists an omnipresent body named the other. Then he attempts to regain the ideal perfect state he had in the Real through erasing or ignoring the other. However, in process of time he notices that all his attempts are abortive and fruitless. The subject in the Mirror starts demanding the other to recognize him, to consider him a total self, though still regretting his missed unity with mother (Lemaire, 1994, p. 96). The strategy he chooses in the Mirror is finding him through looking at others. This is done exactly like a child watching itself into the mirror. The subject still feels fragmented and disintegrated so he aims at completing himself through uniting with moving bodies surrounding him. The child demands to be recognized, although the totality he sustains for it is the illusionary melting of the other into it. Despite the false and imaginary completeness the subject contents with, he expects the other to respect his independence as

an integrated whole. That is what the subject wishfully searches and strives to make the other convinced of. In the Symbolic Order, the Other is the king, the center, and the source of everything recognized. The subject now struggles to merge with the Other. He has got exhausted by the alienation and disintegration between the self and the Other since he has left the Real. He aims at surmounting the center, of the system of the Symbolic and/or of language. The subject finally confirms that unification between the self and the Other never happens.

Jacques Lacan remarks stepping into the Symbolic has simultaneous profits and disadvantages for the subject. For the first time, the subject conceives that the pre-designed structure of language magically facilitates his access to completeness and selfhood. Through words, the subject "I" identifies himself as a unique and separate body, what he has longed for since his separation from the Real (Brennan, 1993, p. 118). He expresses his beliefs, joys and grieves. Before this, he had to cry, to suffer, and to gesticulate to express, though hard to understand, himself. Consequently, the subject's access to the social communication codes generates rejoices and pleasure.

However, that is not the whole story. Approaching Symbolic Order can give rise to a series of complexes that, unlike the Mirror, are permanent and lifelong. Suddenly a sense of Lack and despair overshadows the subject and his wishes to dominate the language. Why and how? Lacan comments that the grave and crucial position of the Other, as the founder of the Symbolic, engenders a never-ending lack, a Desire in the subject which is the desire to undermine the Other. The subject appreciates the Other's state, and wishes for his place, the subject entrapped in the binary-oppositions of the Symbolic is not satisfied by his own place, instead, he dreams about taking the center, the core, the omnipresent referent of all concepts, to wit, the Other. In the Symbolic, the subject is governed by his desires the most significant of which is for the central state of the Other. However, this desire can not be fulfilled. It is not a desire for some object (which would be needed) or desire for love or another person's recognition of oneself (which would be demanded), but a desire to be the center of the system, the center of the Symbolic, the center of the language itself.

During the Mirror stage, the most important person to the subject is the mother. The subject, still a child not gaining its proper identity, wants to merge with its mother. Indeed, the child needs to wipe away any obstacle standing between it and the mother. Growing up and entering the Symbolic, it tries regaining its mother in many different ways. In childhood, the

primary caretakers are important to us. We are intensely dependent to them. We make demands on them; they, in turn, demand that we behave in certain ways and meet their expectations (Fink, 1997, p. 82). In the Symbolic, we learn many things from them; to speak their language and to regulate our needs for nourishment, warmth, excretion and, so on in accordance with their schedules. They are our primary source of attention and affection. The better we perform their orders, the more attention they pay to us. The more completely we satisfy their wishes, the more love we are likely to win from them. However, at times we face difficulties in deciphering what they desire. Naturally, we desperately try to know what makes them happier and more satisfied with us.

Lacan asserts that in the Symbolic, the subject understands the importance of the Other; as a result, he attempts to know how he can keep the Other interested in himself. He desires to metamorphose himself into what makes his mOther happy most. He indeed wants to become what the mOther desires, and aims to become the desire of the mOther (which means both the child's desire for the mOther and the mOther's desire) (Silverman, 2000, pp. 59-60). These key concepts from Lacan represent two matters. First, the child still desires his mOther, and wishes to amalgamate with her. He still suffers the nostalgia resulting from the ideal realm of the Real. In this direction, nothing can stop the child. Second, this concept means that the child cajoles his mOther into considering him as what she really needs, what she becomes happy with, and what wipes away all her lacks. Through deciphering what mOther desires, the child, Freud believes, wants to become a "penis", what his mOther lacks and enjoys most (Blond, 1998, p. 76). There emerges an incestuous desire in the child to copulate with his mOther. He aims at perfecting her by filling her up with his penis.

By the way, the child's conspiracy to have sexual intercourse with his mOther is nullified by Father's role in the Symbolic. Father indeed is the structuring principle of the Symbolic order where he is the supreme Other telling the last word (Smith, 1991, p. 65). He guards everything related to the Symbolic, and he is the organizer of the language. The child so soon becomes jeopardized of losing his penis if he used it to seduce his mOther. Father threatens the child to stand as aloof as possible from his mOther. This imposed separation Lacan calls symbolic castration by which the child is kept away from his mOther. But father is not the agent that imposes this relationship between the child and the mOther. Indeed, language is responsible for it, and even father himself becomes a function of the linguistic structure. In other words, the product takes the place of

the producer. Father, rather than being a person, becomes a structuring principle of the Symbolic Order.

The father and the language at times are mentioned interchangeably. Father, Lacan says, appears as the Name-of-the-Father or the Law-of-the-Father the child should be obedient to the father and his laws one of which is rules of language. Wanting to become a speaking subject, you have to be subjected to the language. Lacan results that the rules of language are the rules of the father, and they function as an entry into the Symbolic. Lacan replaces the law of the father by the term Phallus. A phallus is what symbolizes the father: it is the center to which everything in the Symbolic returns. The phallus stabilizes the whole structure. It anchors the chains of signifiers which unconsciously are unfixed and floating, always sliding and shifting. As said, the subject in the Symbolic longs for approaching the centre manifested into the phallus. The subject desires to become the phallus to dictate his dominance on the whole system (Lemaire, 1994, p. 92).

Although the term phallus designates the penis, they are used differently in Lacan's words. In Freud, the subject talks of a real phallus, but Lacan by it means the Paternal Function, the law of the language and the Other. Penises belong to individuals; the phallus belongs to the structure of language itself. Phallus points out the big Other. It governs the whole structure; it is what everyone wants to be. Indeed, no element of the system can approach the center. Lacan says the root for such an attempt is desire, desire for taking the place of the Other. But this desire never gets satisfaction.

The boys often think that they potentially are capable of becoming the phallus, and taking power and standing at the top of the hierarchy of power. They go toward the phallus where there is no lack. Girls for not having penises, reasonably count themselves less fortunate to attain the phallus. That is why girls may in the words of Freud suffer phallus envy (Zizek, 1992, p. 29). However, Lacan says the center or the phallus structurally is unattainable. Girls as well as boys face problem when aiming at the phallus. Why? As said, the phallus is the ideal place in the symbolic circle: it doesn't have any lack and imperfection, and no subject disregarding the matter of gender can approach it. Because of its innate perfection, no language exists in the state of the phallus. It justifies the reason why speaking subject as a lacking element in the symbolic can not get close to the phallus. Though phallus equips the subject with language, he is not still strong enough to get the center.

As seen, Lacan tries to show how difficult is for us to regain the pleasant realm of the Real once we have

dwelled in. throughout our lives we try many things to perfect our imperfections. We refuge many people for providing us what we need, and what we think we can gain total happiness with. Lacan beautifully represents that the world we have stepped in is innately imperfect, and nothing and no one can give us the pleasurable state we had in the Real. The Real becomes an unspoken complex in our unconsciousness. We talk of it unknowingly: we show our desire for it in our behavior. But Lacan concludes that this is where we have come to, a world full of lacks where people wrongfully consider a paradise for finding or all the things they have lost or have been deprived of. Man is a pitiful creature whose tragedy by no means could be written.

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