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CHAPTER 7

Causation and Destitution of a Pre-ontological Non-entity: On the Lacanian Subject

Paul Verhaeghe

'[T]he subject is nothing but the impossibility of its own signifying representation.'

Slavoj Žižek¹

I. Introduction

The concept of the 'subject' is without any doubt one of the most typical and most important Lacanian concepts, through which the entire evolution of Lacan's thought can be studied. Initially, Lacan wrote about the 'I' (*je*), but very soon this was changed into 'subject' (*sujet*).² Both signifiers represent Lacan's attempt to distance himself from the post-Freudian interpretation of the ego and the accompanying conception of the treatment. This attempt resulted in the establishment of a theory of his own.

With the early Lacan, the subject has to be understood in its radical opposition to the ego. The ego belongs to the imaginary order, whilst the subject belongs to the symbolic. The subject is the subject of the unconscious, as described by Freud with his notion of *das Es* (the Id), whilst the ego is a mere concatenation of alienating identifications.³

Until the early 1960's, Lacan focused upon this opposition between the imaginary and the symbolic. Yet there is a shift in attention: instead of the opposition and division between ego and subject, the division and splitting within

the subject itself comes to the fore. Instead of the <165> term 'subject,' the expression 'divided subject' appears – that is, divided by language.⁴

With the conceptualisation of the category of the real, another major shift occurs. From the 1964 *Seminar XI* onwards, the real becomes a genuine Lacanian concept, within a strictly Lacanian theory, and changes the theory of the subject in a very fundamental way.⁵ In this chapter, we will focus mainly on this part of Lacan's development, using three different entrances.

In the first part, we will study the causal background of the subject: how does it come into being? It will be demonstrated that the causation of the subject has everything to do with the drive, and that it has strong links with the status of the unconscious. In addition, the link with Freudian theory will be examined, and reference will also be made to Lacan's theory of causality, thus opening epistemological perspectives.

In the second part, we will discuss the ontological status of the subject, which is radically different from the traditional conceptions. Lacan's ontology is an 'alterology', alienation being the grounding mechanism and identity always coming from the Other. Moreover, the subject has a mere pre-ontological status, which is again closely linked to the status of the unconscious. The ever divided subject is a fading, a vacillation, without any substantiality.

In the third and final part, we will discuss the link between Lacan's theory of the subject and his theory of the aims and goals of psycho-analysis. Here, the central mechanism is separation, as first formalized by Lacan in *Seminar XI* and further developed during the 1960's.⁶

Several studies and commentaries on the subject of the subject have already been published.⁷ Generally speaking, the first topic, concerning the causation of the subject, is the one least commented on, whilst the second has received ample attention. The last topic is the most difficult of all three, as it is very thoroughly marked by Lacan's ulterior evolution.

II. Starting-point of the Process: *La causation du sujet*

Lacan's starting-point, from which he defined the advent of the subject, is significant. In 1964, at the time of *Seminar XI*, Lacan was criticised because of his supposed neglect of the sexual dynamics of the unconscious <166>.⁸ He rejected this critique by referring his adversaries to his elaboration of the drive, although he had interpreted it in a totally different way from the object relations

theorists.

Following Freud, Lacan considered the drive as essentially partial, without there being any global sexual drive comprising a closed reciprocity between two complementary genders with two complementary instincts. The insistent attempt of the drive to reinstall an original situation stresses the fact that this original state is forever lost. Every drive pulsates around an original loss and thus around an irreversible lack, which puts object relations theory in a totally different light.⁹

At this point a very clear line from Freud can indeed be drawn, especially from his ideas on pleasure and unpleasure, and their importance within ontogeny. In order to acknowledge this line, we have to study some of the lesser known and/or more difficult Freudian works, namely the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), the paper on *Negation* (1925) and his metapsychological writings in general.¹⁰

The gist of these ideas can be found in the *Project*. According to Freud, development starts with the loss of a primary experience of satisfaction and the attempt to regain the original homeostasis. The first reaction consists in hallucinating the lost satisfaction (which will return in the character of wish fulfilment typical of dreamlife), but this is not enough. The primitive organism has to venture in the outside world in order to regain the lost satisfaction. From this point onwards, the relationship between what Freud calls the 'undifferentiated vesicle' (*undifferenziertes Bläschen*) and the 'external world' (*Außenwelt*) is developed.¹¹ The primary mental apparatus explores the external world by taking samples from it. The two basic mechanisms involved are incorporation and expulsion, through which the external world is divided into a good and a bad part. What yields pleasure is kept inside the ego; what results in unpleasure is spat out. Later, it will become evident that these two mechanisms of incorporation and expulsion are the precursors of the Lacanian ones. For the time being, it is this starting-point which retains our attention.

Freud assumed that there is an original state of primary satisfaction, which he considered to be a state of homeostasis. The inevitable loss of this state sets the development in motion and provides us with the basic characteristic of every drive: the tendency to return to an original state. Thus, the entire development is motivated by a central loss, <167> around which the ego is constituted. With Freud, and especially with the post-Freudians, the emphasis will be upon the installation of substitute satisfactions, ranging from neurotic symptoms and fantasies to sublimation. Yet these substitute satisfactions are never satisfactory enough. The lack is irrevocable.

Freud's key denomination for this lack is castration, which is his attempt at

formulating the link between the original, pregenital loss and the oedipal elaboration thereof. For several reasons, the Freudian castration theory itself will never be fully satisfying. Freud's focus on the real, that is to say the biological basis of castration, did not help him any further either, and inevitably brought him to the pessimistic conclusion of 1937, concerning the 'biological bedrock' as the limit of psychoanalysis.¹² Freud's theory is quite unidimensional and Freud himself remained remarkably obstinate in this respect. He refused to take other losses than the loss of a penis into account – with one exception, as becomes clear from his affirmation of Aristophanes' fable about the search for the originally lost counterpart.¹³

This one-sidedness was directed by his conviction regarding the universality of the pleasure principle, i.e. of the desire to restore the original homeostasis. Things became more complicated once he discovered that there is a 'beyond' to the pleasure principle, in which yet another kind of drive is at work, also striving to restore an original condition, albeit a totally different one.¹⁴ The duality of life versus death drives opened up a dimension beyond the one-sidedness of neurosis, castration and desire.

It is this dimension that is taken into account by Lacan. Indeed, Lacan's starting-point is also the very idea of lack and loss, but he will recognize a double loss and a double lack. Moreover, the interaction between those two losses will determine the constitution of the subject. The duality also corresponds to the double level of desire and jouissance and it will find its most elaborate formulation within Lacan's discourse theory, in which it will be expressed by means of the two disjunctions (impossibility and impotence) governing each discourse.¹⁵

In *Seminar XI*, Lacan began his discussion of the causation of the subject with something that was already well-known to his audience: the drive, being always a partial drive, revolves around a lack. However, at that point, Lacan surprised his audience by stating that there are *two* lacks.¹⁶ The first one is the lack in the chain of signifiers, the interval between two signifiers. This is the typically hysterical – and <168> thus Freudian – level in which desire can never be fully expressed, let alone satisfied. In Lacanian terms, this reads that the subject, confronted with the enigma of the desire of the Other, tries to verbalise this desire and thus constitutes itself by identifying with the signifiers in the field of the Other, without ever succeeding in filling the gap between subject and Other. Hence, the continuous movement from signifier to signifier, in which the subject alternately appears and disappears. The ensuing alienation is a continuous flywheel movement around the lack in the chain of signifiers, resulting in what Lacan

called *l'avènement du sujet*, the advent of the subject.¹⁷

So far, Lacan's theory is not really new. It could also be understood from a Sartrean or an Althusserian point of view. The innovation begins when Lacan surprises his audience by stating that there is yet another lack, which he calls anterior and real in comparison to its counterpart.¹⁸ Furthermore, the lack in the chain of signifiers is only a retake on this primal lack, the originality of which resides in the fact that it has to be understood in the context of *l'avènement du vivant* (the advent of the living being). This entails the emergence of sexual reproduction in phylogeny, which is repeated with every ontogeny.¹⁹ At this point, the level of *Unbegriff* (incomprehension), beyond the psychological comprehensibility of the previous lack, is reached.²⁰ The anterior lack concerns the price life has to pay for the acquisition of sexual reproduction. From the moment an organism becomes capable of reproducing itself in a sexual way, it loses its individual immortality and death becomes an unavoidable necessity. At birth, the individual loses something and this loss will be represented later on by all other substitute objects.²¹

Lacan tries to depict this primary loss with his myth of the lamella, the object that flies away at birth and that is nothing but pure life instinct. The lamella equals the libido, of which the four forms of the object a are the mere representatives. From this moment in Lacan's thought, there is an essential affinity between drive and death.²² Sexual drive means death drive, as an inevitable consequence of the process of sexualization.²³ Here, Lacan endorses Freud's idea of a *Triebmischung* (a fusion of life and death drives) in *The Ego and the Id*, but he will go much further.²⁴ Indeed, Lacan will formulate a whole new theory of causality, in which he transcends the level of normal science that is only interested in laws, that is to say in regularity and predictability. <169>

Hence, the constitution of the subject is based on the interaction between life and death, between the two different lacks and their overlap. The Other is 'the field of that living being in which the subject has to appear.'²⁶ The subject encounters a lack in the discourse of the Other, in which the desire of the Other 'crawls, slips, escapes, like the ferret,' producing an enigma to which the subject has to produce an answer.²⁷ It is at that point that the subject recurs to the anterior lack which entails its own disappearance. As an answer to the riddle of the desire of the Other, it presents itself and thus its disappearance: does the Other desire me, can s/he afford to lose me? This fantasy, in which one's own death is depicted as a form of testing the limits of the love of the Other, is fairly well-known in adults and children alike: *Veut-il me perdre?*, Does he want to lose me?

The crucial thing concerning these two lacks is that their interaction entails neither reciprocity nor complementarity: 'It is a lack engendered from the previous time that serves to reply to the lack raised by the following time.'²⁸ The overlap is situated in what Lacan calls 'the intersection between subject and Other,' and it is there that the second operation, which is termed 'separation,' takes place. The ever failing interaction between the two lacks also determines the non-existence of a perfect sexual relationship. This will be further elaborated by Lacan in his theory of the four discourses, in which the two lacks receive their final denomination: the lack on the upper level (the level of desire) concerns an impossibility (*impossibilité*), whereas the lack on the lower level (the level of jouissance) concerns impotence (*impuissance*). The four discourses are four ways of coping with these two lacks.²⁹

The elaboration in *Seminar XI* of these two interacting operations, alienation and separation, will bring us to our second point, the onto-logical status of the subject. As we will see, this status is a very particular one, as the main 'characteristic of the subject of the unconscious is that of being . . . at an indeterminate place.'³⁰ Yet before going on to examine this, we should situate Lacan's ideas on the causation of the subject into the more general framework of causality and the status of the unconscious as elaborated in the first part of *Seminar XI*.³¹

Indeed, Lacan's theory of the double lack may not be isolated from his ideas on the status of the unconscious and the accompanying conception of causality. From a Lacanian point of view, the 'Gothic' <170> interpretation of the unconscious is totally wrong. In this romantic conception, the unconscious is viewed as the basement of the psyche, in which all ancient dreads and desires lie buried until the unavoidable day of their resuscitation. Freud's theory, including concepts such as 'the return of the repressed,' 'repetition compulsion,' etc., would be nothing more than the scientific elaboration of this unavoidability. Obviously, such a conception implies a complete determinism, insofar as a human being can only become what s/he already was. This tallies with the mechanistic-deterministic conviction of early twentieth century science, but it does not leave much room for therapeutic hope.

Lacan not only distances himself from this substantiated interpretation of the unconscious, he even subverts it: the unconscious is of the order of the $\mu\eta\grave{\nu}\ \delta\nu$, the 'non-realised,' the 'unborn,' 'limbo' (*les limbes*).³² As a process, it is always situated at the border; in itself, it is a void, an abyss: 'For what the unconscious does is to show us the gap through which neurosis recreates a harmony with a real – a real that may well not be determined.'³³ This abyss is pre-ontological: not

of the order of to be or not to be, but of the order of the not-realised.³⁴ And if this unconscious becomes realised, it always happens in a bungled, failed way. The unconscious formations are 'impediments' (*achoppements*), 'failures' (*défaillances*), whose most typical characteristic is their temporal scansion: the unconscious opens and closes at the same time.³⁵ It is important to understand that this always failing realisation does not take place against a hidden (because unconscious) background of totality or unity. On the contrary, the background is never there. Lacan summarises this subversion with a pun on the 'un' of unconscious: 'Let us say that the limit of the *Unbewußte* is the *Unbegriff* – not the non-concept, but the concept of lack.'³⁶

It is evident that this opens completely different perspectives on the subject of determinism. On the whole, Lacan is much more optimistic than Freud in this respect. 'It is always a question of the subject *qua* indeterminate,' and this has effects on the goal and finality of the treatment.³⁷ But the innovation goes much further, as it also implies a new view on the tricky subject of causality. The novelty resides in the way Lacan puts the lack at the centre of the – indeed – twofold stage. The denominations are provided by Aristotle, but their content is new: *automaton* (αὐτοματον) versus *tuchè* (τυχή).³⁸ <171>

The automaton is the level that is the easiest to understand. It concerns the network or chain of signifiers, in which the 'pulsatile function of the unconscious' is at work. The barred subject (\$) pops up and disappears under these signifiers – 'the signifier represents a subject for another signifier.'³⁹ In this, the subject is indeed determined, as Lacan had demonstrated time and again with his theory on the unconscious as being structured like a language.⁴⁰ The automatic character of this determinism was masterfully demonstrated in his *Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter,'* showing how the chain of signifiers is indeed a chain.⁴¹ This is the level of the law, at which science aims, with its preponderant interest for the *causa efficiens* (efficient cause), and it may convince one of the omnipresence of determinism.⁴² It took Freud until 1920, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, to recognize the fallacy in this reasoning, and thus the hole in the mechanistic universe.⁴³ The hole will prove to be a black one.

This brings us to the second level. The unwinding of the associative chain succeeds only to a certain point, something which Freud experienced time and again during his therapeutic work from the *Studies on Hysteria* onwards.⁴⁴ The process of remembering succeeds only to a certain point where the chain stalls and shows an abyss, a gap.⁴⁵ This is what Freud termed the 'primal repressed,' and what he also called the *Nabel* (navel) of the dream and the *Kern unseres Wesens* (the core of our being).⁴⁶ It is at this point that the real ex-sists, the real in

the sense of what cannot be assimilated by the chain of signifiers.⁴⁷ Hence, the always missed encounter, due to the lack of a signifier as meeting-point. This radical lack is conceptualised by Lacan with the idea of *tuchè* and it is understood in terms of absence, abyss and cut, where the law and regularity of the chain are failing. This is also the level of pure causality, where law and predictability fail. 'In short, there is cause only in something that doesn't work.'⁴⁸ Hence, we find ourselves again dealing with two levels. On the one hand, there is the chain of signifiers with the lack between them (Freud: the repressed). This is the level of the *automaton*, of the law and predictability, and thus of science. Underlying this chain, we find a more fundamental lack, concerning the real beyond any signifier (Freud: the primal repressed). This is the level of the *tuchè*, of cause and unpredictability.

With this theory, Lacan solves the classical question about the cause of the cause. The first cause lacks any determination whatsoever.⁴⁹ <172> The interaction between the two levels consists in the never ending attempt of the chain of signifiers to produce an answer to the real. This attempt fails and results in the exact opposite: the more signifiers produced, the further one moves away from this real. Therefore, in *Seminar XX*, Lacan defines the real as 'what does not stop not writing itself.'⁵⁰

What is this real all about? Lacan is quite clear on this point. The real beyond the signifier, functioning as cause, is drive-ridden, and that is why Lacan took the drive as his starting-point. With this aspect of the real, the meeting is always a failed one, because it contains no signifier. In the course of his teaching, Lacan enumerated the various manifestations of the real: the Other of the Other, the sexual relationship, Woman (*La femme*), all of them summarized in the notation of the barred Other.⁵¹ In this respect, the subject is fundamentally undetermined, and that is why it has a possibility of choice, beyond the determination of the *automaton*. This aspect of choice was already implicit in Freud's idea of *Neurosenwahl* (choice of neurosis) and it is made explicit with Lacan's idea of *la position du sujet*: the subject has to take a position.⁵² Which position? A position vis-à-vis the lack of the Other, of the symbolic order; a position vis-à-vis the desire and the jouissance of the Other. It is this element of choice that provides the subject with a possibility of change, beyond the inescapable determination of the *automaton*. This finds an expression in Lacan's ideas on the future anterior: choices made now will determine the future of the subject, which therefore shows in itself a fundamental indeterminateness.⁵³ This provides us with the possibility of change, beyond the ever present Freudian determinism. In this respect, Lacan's elaboration of the goal and finality of psychoanalysis will be different, as

we will show in the last part of this chapter.

Thus, the 'un' of unconscious has to be taken seriously, just like the bar in the subject (\$): it denotes a pre-ontological dimension of non-realisation, of being unborn, within a perpetual process of opening and closing. We must now examine this double process.<173>

III. The Pre-ontological Status: *L'avènement du sujet*

In the first part, we demonstrated how the subject is caused by the primary experience of a lack. The attempt at solving this lack by using signifiers entails a confrontation with another lack, this time within the chain of signifiers. In this second part, we will concentrate on the two constitutive processes within this causation of the subject: alienation and separation. The first one is fully elaborated by Lacan and can easily be traced back to Freud. The second one concerns Lacan's interpretation of the end and the finality of the analytic treatment. His theoretical development in these matters comprises an ever shifting interpretation of this idea of separation.

For Lacan, the advent of the subject takes place in a field of tension between the subject-to-be and the field of the Other: 'The Other is the locus in which is situated the chain of the signifier – it is the field of that living being in which the subject has to appear.'⁵⁴ In Freud's works, this field of tension is situated between what must be regarded as a 'primary ego' and the outside world.⁵⁵ This primary ego is in a state of tension due to the loss of the original state of satisfaction, which obliges it to try to restore this original state. This is of course the basic characteristic of every drive: the tendency to return to an original situation. Initially, the primary ego tries to satisfy itself by hallucinating the original satisfaction, but this proves to be inadequate. The next step brings the primary ego into interaction with the outside world, in order to find there what was lost.

Freud's understanding of this interaction between the primitive organism and the outside world is very instructive if one wants to understand the Lacanian point of view. We have already referred to Freud's ideas on incorporation and expulsion, the interactions between the primitive ego and the outside world through which the external world is divided into a good and a bad part. These processes are fairly well-known in biology and ethology, and to some extent they can even be recognised in infants. A baby explores the world with its mouth. The first good external world, the mother's milk, is incorporated, and along that path a

number of other things will follow. By contrast, the bad parts of the external world are literally spat out. At a further developmental stage, these interactions will make use of perceptual images of the outside world, rather than being carried out literally. Traces of <174> the interactions themselves can be recognised in the language of love and hate: devouring love (the importance of a kiss is to know when to stop – think of Hannibal Lecter), and 'you make me puke.'⁵⁶

This primitive, pre-verbal level suffices to illustrate the fallacy of the idea of two interacting agencies. From a naive point of view, one could consider this process as the interaction of the organism with the world, the 'inside' with the 'outside.' Yet closer examination reveals an unexpected complexity, which destroys the idea of separate entities. The 'inside' is the result of an incorporation of the pleasurable parts of the outside, and the 'outside' is the result of an expulsion of what was considered unpleasurable at the inside. In addition, the real outside is what is unknown in terms of pleasure and unpleasure, and so it simply does not exist for the organism. Thus, the inside is a pleasurable outside, the outside is an unpleasurable inside, and the outside as such is not recognised. This is the reason why Lacan refuses any form of 'two body psychology,' and why he introduces a completely new topology in psychoanalysis, whose basic characteristic is the absence of differences between outside and inside (see, for example, the Moebius strip and the Klein bottle).⁵⁷

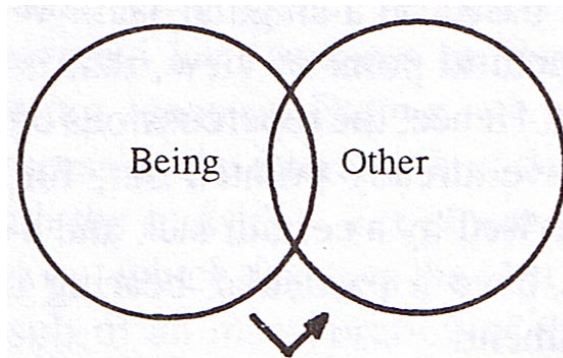
Once the pre-verbal perceptual images are superseded by language, we leave biology and enter the truly human realm. Already at the time of the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Freud paid full attention to words, because language, that is to say the association between a word and a perceptual image, explains the typically human condition of consciousness, and thus also the fact that something can become or remain unconscious. In this human realm, interactions do not take place between 'organism' and *Umwelt*, but between child and parent. Lacan will stress the language aspect in this interaction by using the denominations of subject and Other. The latter comprises the m(Other)tongue that will give rise to a second birth, turning the infant into a divided subject. In Freudian terms, the interaction on the verbal level involves different processes from those on the pre-verbal level. Instead of incorporating a piece of the *Umwelt*, the ego now *identifies* with the pleasure-procuring signifiers of the Other; instead of spitting out the bad parts of the outside world, the subject *represses* these parts. Language acquisition divides the human universe into two essentially interwoven parts: 'pleasure – identification – ego – signifier – consciousness' versus 'unpleasure – repression – not-ego – without signifier –

unconscious.' <175>

This Freudian metapsychology is usually understood from a developmental point of view. Moreover, the pleasure principle involved is a simple one, for it is based on a singular lack. With Lacan, the accent will be put on a structural point of view, that is to say on a structure beyond development. Hence, the repercussions on the ontological level. Moreover, as we have already pointed out, for Lacan there are two levels, each characterised by a certain lack and a certain pleasure. The implications of this have a particular bearing upon on the goals of psychoanalytic treatment.

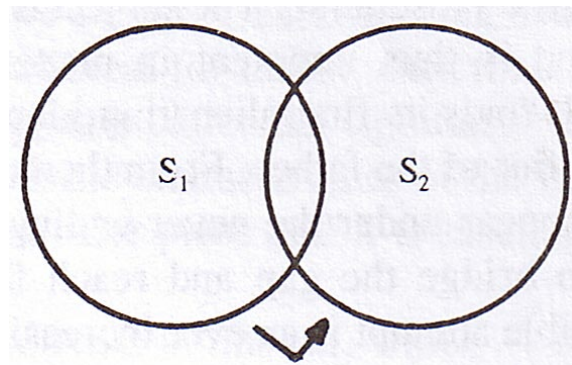
The basic Lacanian mechanism is easy to describe: the subject-to-be identifies with the pleasure-procuring signifiers in the field of the (m)Other and represses the unpleasurable ones. Easy as this may seem, it has a number of far-reaching consequences. Firstly, it confronts us with the astonishing fact that the very kernel of our personality is an empty space: peeling off layer after layer of identification in search of the substantial kernel of one's personality, one ends up with a void, with the original lack. In *Seminar I*, Lacan compares the ego to an onion: 'The ego is constructed like an onion, one could peel it, and discover the successive identifications which have constituted it.'⁵⁸ Secondly, instead of having an original identity, a human being merely consists of identifications with parts of the other. This is the raw meaning of those classical Lacanian formulae, 'Man's desire is the desire of the other,' 'The unconscious is the discourse of the Other,' echoing T.S. Eliot's 'We are the hollow men/We are the stuffed men/Leaning together/Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!'.⁵⁹ No wonder, then, that Lacan coined the basic mechanism in the advent of the subject 'alienation.'⁶⁰

It has already become clear that this process takes place between subject and Other. However, this does not imply a naive two body psychology, as we have seen. This, incidentally, is the reason Lacan stopped using the concept of 'intersubjectivity,' as it reminded him far too much of this two body model.⁶¹ Implicit in Lacan's reasoning, there are two levels in alienation, corresponding to the two lacks mentioned above. The first level concerns the mythical point of origin – mythical because of the very idea of origin – in which *l'être* (being) as such has to make its appearance in the field of the Other, of language. This coincides with what Freud, in his essay on Moses, calls 'hominization' (*Menschwerdung*), the process of becoming a human being.⁶² <176>



Even at this primary level, the effects are quite dramatic: when being makes its appearance on the level of language, it must disappear under that language, it loses the reality of its being. For Lacan, this is a matter of choice, albeit a very special choice, for whatever decision is made, one element is lost forever. He compares this choice to the classical 'Your money or your life!'. Whatever you choose, you will lose your money anyway. The element lost in the process of becoming a human being is being itself, the pure being, the real, the thing without a name, leaving us with a basic lack as a condition for our becoming, which Lacan calls *manque à être* (want-to-be, or lack of being).⁶³ Thus, right from the start, the subject is divided between the necessary loss of its being on the one hand and the ever alienating meaning in the Other on the other hand. The subject chooses the (m)Other in order to regain the lost paradise of the primary experience of satisfaction, and the net result will be an ever more clear delineation of this loss.⁶⁴

The second level concerns the chain of signifiers, the *automaton*, in which the subject continuously appears and disappears in an ever repeated division by the signifiers: '[A] signifier is that which represents the subject for another signifier.'⁶⁵ Here again, the subject can 'choose' its signifiers in the field of the Other, but this choice reminds one of that mentioned by Ferdinand de Saussure in his *Course in General Linguistics*. There he demonstrated the arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified, and the consequences of this for the freedom of choice. Basically, you can pick your own signifiers, but of course the choice has already been made for you and before you, hence his expression: *la carte forcée de la langue*, meaning that language is a 'set-up.'⁶⁶ <177>

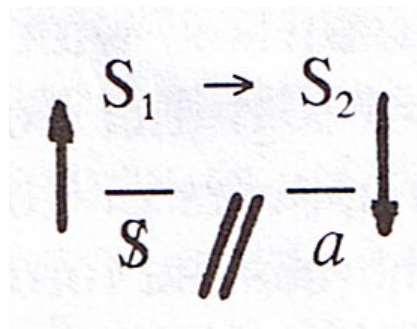


When comparing this Lacanian operation to the Freudian ones, it becomes obvious that alienation comprises both identification and repression. This can be demonstrated with Lacan's definition of metaphor, as 'the substitution of signifier for signifier.'⁶⁷ The subject 'chooses' a signifier, which appears on top of another signifier. The latter becomes repressed, whereas the former entails a new identification for the ego and the subject remains divided between the two of them. In Freudian terms, the ego is nothing but a concatenation of identifications, as a result of the successive object losses. In this line of reasoning, the first level of alienation corresponds to the primal repression (*Urverdrängung*) and the primary identification. Indeed, the primal repression constitutes the kernel of the unconscious as something that is forever lost and can never be verbalised, namely the real of the drive.⁶⁸ The primary identification is for Freud always the identification with the father, and this identification provides the platform from which development, in the form of the Oedipus complex, takes off.⁶⁹ For Lacan, this implies the installation of the S_1 , the master signifier.

The second level of alienation corresponds to the Freudian *eigentliche Verdrängung* (repression proper) or *Nachdrängen* (after-pressure), which can be interpreted as a secondary repression and which takes place completely within the chain of signifiers.⁷⁰ Unconscious processes or formations, which are made up from signifying material, take place at the border of the unconscious, as is demonstrated by a slip of the tongue, the forgetting of a proper name, etc. The Signorelli example in Freud's *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* demonstrates both levels in a perfect way. The lost signifiers, due to the secondary repression, can be retrieved by means of free association, but the basic lack cannot be verbalised and is merely hinted at by Freud in his mention of 'death and sexuality' and 'repressed thoughts' at the bottom of his schema.⁷¹

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In Lacan's theory of the four discourses, both levels will be expressed by the master's discourse. The subject is forever barred from the lost object *a* and is thus impotent in matters of and protected against jouissance. It finds its first alienating identity with the S_1 , the Oedipal master signifier of the father. From then onwards, the subject will appear and disappear under the never-ending chain of signifiers, S_2 , in an attempt to bridge the gap and reach for satisfaction. The result of this impossible attempt is an ever increasing production of the lost object *a*.⁷²



The master discourse

The important thing about the divided subject is that it has no essence, no ontological substance, but, on the contrary, comes down to a pre-ontological, indeterminate non-being which can only give rise to an identity, an ego, in retrospect. Difficult as this may seem, it is rather easy to grasp. Just think of what we will call 'the cocktail experience.' You are invited for a drink with a group of people you do not know. You have to introduce yourself, and so you have to produce signifiers. This production of signifiers will never be satisfactory. Furthermore, the more signifiers produced, the more contradictions, gaps and difficulties will become clear. Therefore, the 'Experienced Cocktail Consumer', will stick to the proverbial 'That's me!' and produce a stock introduction.

From a Lacanian point of view, it would be wrong to assume that the difficulty lies in finding the correct signifiers to present oneself. On the contrary, one is *produced by* the uttered signifiers, which are coming from the field of the Other, albeit in a divided way. It would also be a mistake to assume that the subject is identical to the produced signifier(s). The identification with a number of signifiers, coming from the Other, presents us with the ego. The subject, on the contrary, is never realised as such; it joins the pre-ontological status of the unconscious, the unborn, non-realised etc. In this sense, the Lacanian <179>

subject is exactly the opposite of the Cartesian one. In the formula 'I am thinking, therefore I exist' Descartes concludes from his thinking that he has a being, whereas for Lacan, each time (conscious) thinking arises its being disappears under the signifier.⁷³

This explains two basic characteristics of the Lacanian subject: it is always at an indeterminate place and it is essentially divided:

Alienation consists in this *veI*, which - if you do not object to the word *condemned*, I will use it - condemns the subject to appearing only in that division which, it seems to me, I have just articulated sufficiently by saying that, if it appears on one side as meaning, produced by the signifier, it appears on the other as *aphanisis*.⁷⁴

Again, Lacan distances himself from any idea of substantiality. The subject is not an unconscious intention that will interrupt the normal conscious discourse. The interruption or division does not take place between a real or authentic part and a false, external one, but the split defines the subject as such. The subject is split from its real being and forever tossed between eventually contradicting signifiers coming from the Other.

This rather pessimistic view confronts us with the issue of therapeutic and psychoanalytic possibilities. Paradoxical as this may seem, Lacan's point of view is more optimistic than the Freudian one. Freud's theory is by and large deterministic, whereas Lacan leaves an element of choice, albeit a 'forced' choice. It is this element that brings us to the second operation, separation, and to the theme of our final investigation: the goal of psychoanalytic treatment.

IV. The Goal of Psychoanalysis: *La destitution subjective*

The vicissitudes of the subject depend largely on the direction of the treatment and its goal. It is precisely at this point that Lacan will change and revise his theory, with accompanying changes concerning the subject. Generally speaking, the Lacan before *Seminar XI* can be considered as the Lacan of the symbolic and the imaginary, while from <180> *Seminar XI* onwards, these categories will be completed and changed by the introduction of the real. The effect thereof is that the whole previous conceptualisation has to be reconsidered, in a typically psychoanalytical process of 'deferred action' (*Nachträglichkeit*).⁷⁵

Before *Seminar XI*, the idea of alienation already occupied a very prominent place in Lacan's thinking. His paper on *The Mirror Stage* demonstrates that alienation is a necessary operation, which cannot be restricted only to the process of socialisation, for it is precisely what determines this process.⁷⁶ The further elaboration of the mirror stage introduces the alienation into the structural relation between the imaginary and the symbolic.⁷⁷ The primary imaginary alienation is determined by the secondary symbolic one, which relies on the Other. The subject wants to be loved/desired by the Other and models/alienates him or herself on the image of what s/he thinks is desirable for this Other. Here, the goal of psychoanalysis is to recognise this Other and its influence. Separation is understood as a major operation, installed through the paternal metaphor.⁷⁸ It is the function of the father/Other to separate the child and the first (m)Other. The real is never mentioned.

In *Seminar XI*, all this is radically changed. Alienation and separation are linked to the twofold lack and they install the subject in a never ending pulsating process of appearing and disappearing. Alienation takes the subject away from its being, in the direction of the Other. Separation is the opposite process, inasmuch as it redirects the subject towards its being, thus opening a possibility of escape from the all-determining alienation, and even a possibility of choice, albeit a precarious one. The two processes are circular and dissymmetrical. The cause of this continuous movement is the twofold lack. The process of alienation conducts the subject towards the signifying chain of the Other. Inevitably, it will stumble upon the lack of the Other: 'He is saying this to me, but what does he want?'.⁷⁹ Thus confronted with the nameless desire of the Other, the subject will produce a very typical answer: 'Does the Other desire me?', 'Am I the one who can fulfil his desire?'. This implies that the subject answers the lack of the Other by presenting his or her own disappearance: 'Can the Other afford to lose me?'. The lack of the Other, within the signifying chain, is answered by a presentation of the lack at the anterior level, i.e. death as a real loss. Hence, the non-reciprocity and dissymmetry, by which the <181> process topples over into the direction of alienation again. This eliminates the possibility of a perfect sexual relationship.

With separation, the effect is the installation of a void between subject and Other, in which the object *a* makes its appearance. This void permits the subject and the Other to fall apart momentarily, to separate. Just think of the well-known metaphor of *le bal masqué*. When the couple finally meets and the partners remove their mask, they discover their mistake: 'They met in Paris, at the Opera ball. When they removed their masks, sheer terror! It wasn't him, her neither by

the way.⁸⁰ This negativity implies an escape from the all-embracing determinism of the Other and opens a limited possibility of choice. Within *Seminar XI*, this is hardly elaborated. Lacan plays both on the etymological and the homonymical aspect of separation: *se parere*, to engender oneself and *se parer*, to defend oneself, to dress oneself.⁸¹ He demonstrates the necessity of this process by discussing clinical instances in which it is lacking. This is what Lacan calls the 'holophrase,' exemplified by a peculiar relationship between certain mothers and their children within which there is no gap whatsoever between the signifiers of the (m)Other, thus installing a complete alienation without any possibility of escape.⁸² The child is the real obturation of the lack of the (m)Other.⁸³ But for the 'real' elaboration of this idea of separation, we have to turn to Lacan's later work, focusing on the end of the analytic treatment.

Before doing that, it is necessary to stress the shift that has occurred since Lacan's first theory. In the later stages of his conceptualisation, Lacan states *that the Other of the Other does not exist*; it is lacking, separation being the interaction between the lack of the Other and the lack of the subject. The distance between this idea of separation, and the idea of separation expressed by the paternal metaphor, is immense, and entails a crucial shift in the direction of the treatment.

Lacan abhorred the idea of an analysis ending in an identification with the analyst, which would imply just another alienation. For Lacan, the analyst's desire ought to aim at the exact opposite, namely absolute difference.⁸⁴ This brings us back to ontology and ethics. From the point of view of alienation, the subject has no substance whatsoever; it is a mere and, moreover, an ever fading effect of the symbolic order, the Other. At this point, Lacanian theory belongs to constructionism and determinism. Ideas of individuation, self-realisation, and subjective autonomy do not belong to this line of <182> thought. They never will, yet the accent shifts once the real is introduced. Through separation, the subject receives an element of choice. Further elaborations continue to stress the inner difficulty of this idea. The pinnacle of these is to be found in Lacan's elaboration of the 'traversing of fantasy' and the 'subjective destitution,' which replace the original idea of separation.⁸⁵ Ultimately, the choice in all this is an impossible one, insofar as the choice has already been made, taking the shape of a peculiar form of identification.⁸⁶

The first developments of this idea can be found in *Seminar XI*. Instead of the abhorred identification with the analyst at the end of analysis, Lacan suggests the existence of another form of identification, inaugurated by the process of separation, *and thus by the object a*: 'Through the function of the *object a*, the

subject separates himself off, ceases to be linked to the vacillation of being, in the sense that it forms the essence of alienation.'⁸⁷ This idea is not developed any further in this seminar and can hardly be understood here. Separation does not take place through the intervention of the Other and the symbolic; on the contrary, it takes place through the object *a* and the real. Indeed, the Other of the Other does not exist, the Other is inconsistent. The discovery of its inconsistency is the consequence of analysis and results in a mirror effect. If the Other is inconsistent, then the same goes for the subject, and both of them tumble down from their positions. This is what Lacan calls 'traversing the fantasy.' Applied to Lacan's formula of the fantasy, $\$ \diamond a$, this traversing means that the subject crosses the lozenge and identifies with the lost object, i.e. with the cause of its own advent: $\$ \diamond a$. In this way, the subject comes to subjective destitution: it assumes the non-existence of the Other and the non-existence of itself as a subject. With this, we have reached both the end of Lacan's theory and of his theory of the end of analysis. His final conceptualisations can be understood as an elaboration of the idea of separation, albeit from the point of view of the analytical goal.

What is the goal of analysis? At first sight, the answer is strange: a successful analysis brings the subject to the point where s/he can identify him or herself with the symptom. This identification is a special one, because it concerns an identification with the real of the symptom, and thus concerns an identification on the level of being.⁸⁸ This is exactly the counterpart of what the analysand experienced before, namely the identification/alienation with the Other and the accompanying *belief* in this Other, and thus in its existence.⁸⁹ The <183> analytic experience makes clear that this Other does not exist, and hence that the subject does not exist either. This is 'subjective destitution' as the most radical form of separation. The analysand not only has to separate him or herself from the Other, s/he even has to discover the non-existence of the Other. The inevitable consequence is that the subject, as a response to the lack of this Other, does not exist either. This paves the way to the real being of the subject, *son être du sujet*. From that point onwards, the subject cannot be considered a mere 'answer to/from the Other' (*réponse de l'Autre*) anymore; on the contrary, the subject is now an 'answer to/from the real' (*réponse du réel*). Thus, the idea of *se parere*, to engender oneself, as it was announced in *Seminar XI*, is realised after all.

This brings us to another important Lacanian dimension, that of creation. Indeed, in our opinion, the 'identification with the real of the symptom' has to be understood via the idea of creation. The gist of it can be recognised in Lacan's earlier ideas on sublimation and *creatio ex nihilo* in his *Seminar VII on The Ethics*

of *Psychoanalysis*. The subject can 'choose' to elevate nothing into something and to enjoy this: 'The object is elevated to the dignity of the Thing.'⁹¹ Applied to the end of analysis, this means that the subject has created its own symptom in the real and proceeds by identifying with it. In this way, the symptom takes the place of what is forever lacking. Finally, it takes the place of the lacking sexual rapport and furnishes a self-made answer to it, instead of the previous, Other-made ones. Lacan accentuates this shift by introducing a neologism. The subject has to become a *sinthome*, a combination of *symptôme* (symptom) and *saint homme* (holy man): 'On the level of the *sinthome* . . . there is relationship. There is only relationship where there is *sinthome*.⁹² This delineates a before and an afterwards. Previously, there was a belief in the symptom, which yielded a symbolic suppletion for the lack of the Other and which at once located the jouissance within the Other. At the end of analysis, the identification with the *sinthome* is a real suppletion, providing the subject not only with consistency, but also with jouissance.

The paradox is that the entailing 'rapport' inaugurates absolute difference.
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1. S. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London-New York NY, Verso, 1989, p. 208.
2. See: J. Lacan, The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience (1949), *Écrits: A Selection* (trans. A. Sheridan), London, Tavistock, 1977, pp. 1-7; J. Lacan, The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis (1953), *Écrits: A Selection, o.c.*, pp. 30-113.
3. See: S. Freud, The Ego and the Id (1923b), *Standard Edition*, XIX, pp. 1-66; J. Lacan, The Freudian Thing, or the Meaning of the Return to Freud in Psychoanalysis (1955), *Écrits: A Selection, o.c.*, pp. 114-145 and p. 128 in particular.
4. See: J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire V, Les formations de l'inconscient (1957-58)*, unpublished.
5. See: J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1964) (trans. A. Sheridan), Edited by J.-A. Miller, London, The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1977.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 203-215.
7. Due to the recent boom in Lacanian publications, it is impossible to include a complete bibliography of secondary sources on this subject. These are the two most interesting studies, in my opinion: B. Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1995; D. Nobus, *Choosing Sexuality: A Lacanian Inquiry into the Laws of Sexual Diversity*. Albany NY. State University of New York Press (forthcoming).
8. See: J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, o.c.*, p. 203.
9. This had already become clear from Lacan's fourth seminar, *La relation d'objet* (Object-relation), in which he had developed a theory of the lack of object. See: J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre IV, La relation d'objet (1956-57)*, texte établi par J.-A. Miller, Paris, du Seuil, 1994, pp. 9-92.
10. See: S. Freud, Project for a Scientific Psychology (1950c [1895]), *Standard Edition*, I, pp. 295-343 & pp. 347-387; S. Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920g), *Standard Edition*, XVIII, pp. 7-64; S. Freud, Negation (1925h), *Standard Edition*, XIX, pp. 235-239.
11. S. Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, o.c., pp. 26-28.
12. S. Freud, Analysis Terminable and Interminable (1937c), *Standard Edition*, XXIII, pp. 209-253 and p. 252 in particular.
13. See: S. Freud, Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy (1909b). *Standard Edition*, X, p. 8, note 2; S. Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, o.c., p. 57; Plato, *The Symposium* (trans. W. Hamilton), Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990, 189d-193e (Aristophanes' fable).
14. S. Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, o.c. pp. 7-64.
15. See: J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre XVII, L'envers de la psychanalyse (1969-70)*, texte établi par J.-A. Miller, Paris, du Seuil, 1991.

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16. Of course, this idea was not completely new. In *Seminar IV*, Lacan had already described two periods in the relationship between a mother and her child: a first one, characterised by a 'primitive identification' (*l'identification freudienne primitive*) in which

the child fills the lack of the mother, and a second one, in which the child offers its own lack, which will form the basis for every later infatuation. See: J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre IV, La relation d'objet*, o.c., pp. 174-178; J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o.c., pp. 204-205.

17. J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o.c., p. 205.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 197-199.

23. Due to the nature of science, this truth cannot be expressed by it. Therefore, one has to turn to art and jokes. In the realm of art, we refer the reader to Bataille's *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*. As far as the jokes are concerned, the following selection might suffice: i/Patient: 'Doctor, if I quit drinking alcohol, restrict myself to vegetarian food and leave women for what they are, will I live longer?'; Doctor: 'I don't know whether you will live longer, but I am pretty sure about one thing: you will have the impression that it takes much longer.' ii/A gerontologist wants to answer the question as to why some people live much longer than others do. He interviews a number of people in a home for the elderly. A seventy-year-old assures him that he owes his health to macrobiotic food, an octogenarian adds physical exercise, and a ninety-year-old declares never having touched a woman. At that point, our gerontologist sees what he considers to be his perfect object of study: a man who must be at least a hundred. He asks the man whether he was also particular about his food. Man: 'Indeed I was, only the best was good enough - no margarine for me, cream and butter, that's the thing!'; Gerontologist: 'And what about your drinking habits? Did you restrict yourself on that point?'; Man: 'Of course, I only consume the truly good wines - at least a *grand cru* - and my daily bottle of whisky has to be a single malted one, I don't like the blended stuff, that's pure poison.'; Gerontologist: 'And women, what about women?'; Man: 'Oh, don't ask me about women, I used to do it at least twice a day, but these days I don't get a hard-on that easily anymore.'; Gerontologist: 'But for God's sake, how did you manage to get that old?'; Man: 'Old, old! Let's not exaggerate, my dear chap, twenty-seven is not *that* old!' See: G. Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality* (1957) (trans. M. Dalwood), San Francisco CA, City Lights Books, 1986.

24. See: S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id* (1923b), *Standard Edition*, XIX, pp. 1-66 and pp. 40-43 in particular.

25. J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o.c., pp. 204-205.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 203.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

29. See: J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre XVII, L'envers de la psychanalyse*, o.c., pp. 202-208.

30. See: J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o. c., p. 208.

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31. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-64.

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 22 & 23.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-64. For Aristotle's notions, see: Aristotle, *The Physics* (trans. P.H. Wicksteed & F.M. Cornford), Cambridge MA-London, Harvard University Press, 1929, 196a 36.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
40. See, for example: J. Lacan, *The Seminar. Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1959-60) (trans. with notes D. Porter), Edited by J.-A. Miller, New York NY-London, W.W. Norton & Company, 1992, p. 32 & pp. 44-45.
41. See: J. Lacan, Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter' (1956) (trans. J. Mehlman), *Yale French Studies*, 1972, no. 48, pp. 39-72. This translation does not comprise Lacan's three appendices to his original article ('presentation of the sequel,' 'introduction' and 'parenthesis of parentheses'). For these texts, see: J. Lacan, Le séminaire sur 'La lettre volée' (1956), *Écrits*, Paris, du Seuil, 1966, pp. 11-61.
42. For 'efficient cause,' see: Aristotle, *The Physics*, o.c., 198a.
43. See: S. Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, o.c., pp. 7-64.
44. See: J. Breuer & S. Freud, Studies on Hysteria (1895d), *Standard Edition*, 11.
45. See: S. Freud, The Dynamics of Transference (1912b), *Standard Edition*, XII, pp. 97-108; S. Freud, Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II) (1914g), *Standard Edition*, XII, pp. 145-156.
46. See: S. Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams (1900a), *Standard Edition*, IV, p. 111 (navel of the dream); *Standard Edition*, V, p. 603 (core of our being); S. Freud, Repression (1915d), *Standard Edition*, XIV, pp. 146-158.
47. Lacan borrowed the notion of *ex-sistance* (ex-sistence) from the French translation of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, in which the German *Ekstase* and the Greek *ekstasis* (standing outside) were translated as *ex-sistance*. See: B. Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, o.c., p. 122.
48. J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o.c., p. 22.
49. See: P. Verhaeghe, La psychanalyse et la science: une question de causalité, *Quarto*, 1994, no. 56, pp. 73-78.
50. J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre XX, Encore* (1972-73), texte établi par J.-A. Miller, Paris, du Seuil, 1975, p. 87.
51. See: J. Lacan, The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious (1960), *Écrits: A Selection*, o.c., p.311 (Other of the Other); J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre XX, Encore*, o.c., p. 35 (sexual relationship) & p. 68 (Woman).
52. For the term *Neurosenwahl*, see: S. Freud, The Disposition to Obsessional Neurosis: A Contribution to the Problem of Choice of Neurosis (1913i), *Standard Edition*, XII, pp. 311-326. For Lacan's *position du sujet*, see: J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o. c. , pp. 246-247.

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53. For the time-structure of the future anterior. see: J. Lacan, *The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*, o.c., p. 86.
54. J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o.c., p. 203.
55. In his metapsychological papers, Freud uses different denominations (vesicle, primitive organism, early ego, primitive mental apparatus) to underscore the primary character of the mental apparatus. See: S. Freud, *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* (1915c), *Standard Edition* XIV, pp. 117-140; S. Freud, *Negation*, o.c., pp. 233-239; J. Lacan, *The Four fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o.c., pp. 240-241.
56. For the character of Hannibal Lecter, see: T. Harris, *Red Dragon* (1981), London, Arrow Books, 1993; T. Harris, *Silence of the Lambs* (1989), London, Arrow Books, 1991.
57. For Lacan's critique on the 'two body psychology,' see: J. Lacan, *The Seminar. Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique* (1953-54) (trans. with notes J. Forrester), Edited by J.-A. Miller, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 11, 205, 220, 227 & 261; J. Lacan, *The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*, o.c., p.90. Lacan introduces the topological figures of the Moebius strip and the Klein bottle from his ninth seminar onwards: J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire IX, L'identification* (1961-62), unpublished.
58. J. Lacan, *The Seminar. Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique*, o.c., p. 171.
59. J. Lacan, *The Seminar. Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique*, o.c., p.146 ('Man's desire is the desire of the other'); J. Lacan, *The Seminar. Book III The Psychoses* (1955-56) (trans. with notes R. Grigg), Edited by J.-A. Miller, New York NY, W.W. Norton & Company, 1993, p. 112 ('The unconscious is the discourse of the Other'); J. Lacan, *The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*, o.c., p. 71 (*The Hollow Men*); T.S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men* (1925), *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, London-Boston MA, Faber and Faber, 1974, pp. 87-92.
60. This is not only the basis of suggestion, but of identity as such: *Je est un autre* (I is an other). In this sense, Lacan extends Freud's ideas to their very limits. What Freud describes in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* concerning the individual members of a group taking their identity from the leader in the position of Other, is generalised by Lacan to identity as such. Hence, the possibility of brain-washing, whereby a particular set of signifiers, belonging to a particular other, is replaced in the subject by another set of signifiers. This is the neurotic counterpart of the 'as if'-personality, described by Helene Deutsch. See: J. Lacan, *The Seminar. Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis* (1954-55) (trans. S. Tomaselli, notes J. Forrester), Edited by J.-A. Miller, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 7 (I is an other); S. Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921c), *Standard Edition*, XVIII, pp. 65-143; H. Deutsch, *Über einen Typus der Pseudoaffektivität, ('als ob')*, *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*, 1934, XX, pp. 323-335; H. Deutsch, *Some Forms of Emotional Disturbance and their Relationship to Schizophrenia*, in J.D. Sutherland & M. Masud, R. Khan (Eds.), *Neuroses and Character Types: Clinical Psychoanalytic Studies*, London, The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1963, pp. 262-281.
61. See: J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre VIII, Le transfert* (1960-61), texte établi par J.-A. Miller, Paris, du Seuil, 1991, pp. 20-22.

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62. S. Freud, Moses and Monotheism (1939a [1934-38]), *Standard Edition*, XXIII, pp. 75 & 113.
63. J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o.c., p. 29.
64. *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.
65. J. Lacan, The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious, o.c., p. 316.
66. F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (1906-1911) (trans. with notes and introduction W. Baskin), Edited by Ch. Bally and A. Séchehaye in collaboration with A. Riedlinger, London, Peter Owen, 1960, p. 71. Baskin has translated *la carte forcée* as 'the stated deck'. In the more recent translation of Saussure's work by Harris, *La carte forcée de la langue* is rendered as 'the linguistic Hobson's choice'. See: F. de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (1906-1911) (trans. with notes R. Harris), Edited by Ch. Bally and A. Séchehaye in collaboration with A. Riedlinger, London, Duckworth, 1983, p. 71.
67. J. Lacan, The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud, *Ecrits: A Selection*, o.c., p. 164.
68. For the notion of 'primal repression,' see: S. Freud, Repression (1915d), *Standard Edition*, XIV, pp. 141-158.
69. See: S. Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, o.c., pp. 105-110.
70. S. Freud, Repression, o.c., pp. 141-158 and pp. 148-149 in particular.
71. S. Freud, The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1901b), *Standard Edition*, VI, p. 5.
72. See: J. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre XVII, L'envers de la psychanalyse*, o.c., pp. 11-13.
73. For Descartes' formula, see: R. Descartes, Discourse on the Method (1637 [1636]), *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. I (trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff & J. Murdoch), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, pp. 125-127. For Lacan's reading of Descartes, see for example: J. Lacan, Science and Truth (1965) (trans. B. Fink), *Newsletter of the Freudian Field*, 1989, no. 3, pp. 4-29 and p. 13 in particular.
74. J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o.c., p. 210. The *vel* refers to a process of forced choice, whereas *aphanisis* indicates a fading of the subject.
75. On *Nachträglichkeit*, see: S. Freud, From the History of an Infantile Neurosis (1918b [1914]), *Standard Edition*, XVII, p. 45.
76. See: J. Lacan, The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience, o.c., pp. 1-7
77. See: J. Lacan, Remarque sur le rapport de Daniel Lagache: "Psychanalyse et structure de la personnalité" (1960), *Ecrits*, o.c., pp. 647-684.
78. On the paternal metaphor, see: J. Lacan, On a Question Preliminary to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis (1957-58), *Ecrits: A Selection*, o.c., p. 200.
79. J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o.c., p. 214.
80. 'Ils se rencontrèrent à Paris, au Bal de l'Opéra: lorsqu'ils ôtèrent leur masque, horreur! Ce n'était pas elle, lui non plus d'ailleurs.'
81. J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o.c., p. 214.

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82. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

83. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 276.

85. For the 'traversing of the fantasy,' see: J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o.c., p. 273. For 'subjective destitution,' see: J. Lacan, Proposition of 9 October 1967 on the Psychoanalyst of the School (1967) (trans. R. Grigg), *Analysis*, 1995, no. 6, pp. 1-13 and p. 8 in particular.

86. This reminds us of the already mentioned 'forced choice' at the basis of language, as described by de Saussure in *la carte forcée de la langue*.

87. J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, o.c., p. 258.

88. J. Lacan, Le Séminaire XXIV, L'insu que sait de l'une-bévue s'aile à mourre (1976-77), texte établi par J.-A. Miller, *Ornicar ?*, 1977, no. 12-13, pp. 6-7.

89. See: J. Lacan, Le Séminaire XXII, R.S.I (1974-75), texte établi par J.-A. Miller, *Ornicar ?*, 1975, no. 3, p. 109.

90. J. Lacan, L'étourdit, *Scilicet*, 1973, no. 4, p. 15.

91. J. Lacan, *The Seminar, Book VII The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1959-60) (trans. with notes D. Porter), Edited by J.-A. Miller, New York NY, W.W. Norton & Company, 1992, p. 112.

92. J. Lacan, Le Séminaire XXIII, Le sinthome (1975-76), texte établi par J.-A. Miller, *Ornicar ?*, 1976, no. 8, p. 20. Our translation.

1. Introduction: The Non-Empirical Nature of the Ontological Arguments. It is worth reflecting for a moment on what a remarkable (and beautiful!) undertaking it is to deduce God's existence from the very definition of God. Normally, existential claims don't follow from conceptual claims. If any of the properties that are conceptually essential to the notion of God do not admit of an intrinsic maximum, then Anselm's argument strategy will not work because, like Guanilo's concept of a island, the relevant concept of God is incoherent. But insofar as the relevant great-making properties are limited to omnipotence, omniscience, and moral perfection (which do admit of intrinsic maximums), Anselm's notion of a greatest possible being seems to avoid the worry expressed by Broad and Guanilo.