

Research on Lacan's Theory of Desire

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Abstract: Jacques Lacan was, inarguably one of the most important psychoanalysts to live during the 20Th Century and his ideas surely have reverberated throughout Psychology as well as Philosophy and Literature. Lacan thought of desire as being at the center of his academic work and even went on to say that "Desire is man's essence". This theory becomes especially important in postmodern society, where longing is a key element of consumer culture. Hailing from France, Jacques Lacan was born in 1901. He entered medical school and then psychiatry, after which he pursued a career as psychoanalyst. Lacan was largely influenced by Freud, but he also significantly re-read the theory of him through linguistic and structural interpretations. Lacan, who said that the human unconscious is structured like a language and desire leaves itself marks not only in our minds but also reproductions of culture and clinking symbols. According to Lacan, desire is the primary originating impulse from which all subsequent subjects are constructed; it's the motivational force of what runs a subject. Lacan also argues that like the Libido in Freud, desire is what motivates human behaviour and development of psyche.

Keywords: Lacan , Desire, Ego.

1. Introduction

Jacques Lacan's theory of desire occupies an important position in the field of psychoanalysis, especially his discussion of subject identity and desire formation is particularly profound. In the section on "The Occurrence of Lacan's Theory of Desire," Lacan suggests that the human subject's consciousness undergoes three key phases: the real world, the mirroring phase, and the symbolic phase. There, in addition to those details could obtain some idea of what the desire might then originate from and how it would further grasp its subject along with different phases that interweave or intersect through which subjects are composed. The mirror stage is one of the fundamental stages in the construction of self and desire for a Lacanian subject. However, as opposed to Freud who sees desire just another name for suffering with a result that is less than predictive — Lacan looks upon it as something of higher psycho/philosophical order. He differentiates desire as Need, Demand and Desire. These include need (foods and water). The need — which is the form a fundamentally linguistic demand assumes, simply because it is necessarily made to be heard by someone else and articulated following “It”, what Lacan refers to as The Other in one of its constitutive aspects for human subjectivity (its aspect of pure language)—is nothing other than this material situation or state that must answer towards another's love. Desire is a more specific need and requirements beyond the representation of an infinite subject's inner pursuit. [1]

2. Three Stages of Lacan Theory

2.1. Mirror stage and Self

The first stage in Lacan's theory is the realm of the real, the place where people are when they are born, or during the happiness of their life's best moments, or even in their mother's womb. At this stage, there is no clearly defined sense of self. An individual is one with the outside world that is the other, as it was written above, and the subject has not yet learned to divide the I-oneself and the other. As Lacan puts it, in the realm of the real the subject is nothing else but a natural body in a wild, impulsive, and complete obscurantist state. In the realm of the real, the infant is fully merged with its mother. They don't not know that the mother is a separate personality, and even the breast of his mother is considered by the infant as part of its own body. The subject at this stage is ordinary and natural, their needs and desires are immediate and unformatted. The mirror stage is the second key stage in Lacanian theory and usually takes place when the infant is 6 months old. This stage concerns the formation of human self-consciousness regarding external images. Lacan says, "the infant calls an external image of himself to recognize this image in the mirror." Initially, the infant gets to know the image in the mirror regarding his self-image. It is not only "a revealing of an incomplete picture", but also the first ever beginning of forming its subject. In the mirror stage, a child starts to realize that they are disunited with the mother. The infant starts to realize what the image in the mirror is with it belonging to the infant's body, but it is not his entire body. The whole identification process is developed with a series of complex psychological specifics as well as with the manner of understanding a fragmented self through a view of the outside image. According to Lacan, this identification with the image in the mirror is actually a kind of "false self-error", that is, the subject takes the false image in the mirror as the real self, thus beginning the first step of the subject's self-identification. The false self-identification apparent in the mirror stage is not limited solely to the identification with the body image. The experience of intimacy with the mother comes to characterize both boys and girls in the mirror stage and accounts for a gradual realization of gender differences. At the same time, Lacan comments that "everywhere and always [in this stage], misrecognition is at the root of the dialectic of identification". Evidently, this remark implies that the process of identification involves a good deal of illusion. As such, it is an illusion to think that the subject effectively creates a unified self by identifying with the other through an image.[2]

The symbolic phase, the third phase in Lacanian theory, in which the subject enters the symbolic systems of language and culture in which he understands and expresses his or her desire. In the Symbolic Phase, the subject's process of identification changes from the visual to the linguistic and is able to construct a self through the relationship of the able and the referent. On top of everything being the bearing instrument of the symbol, language determines the position of the subject and the role of the able reference. It is the existence of language that determines the subject's figural position and role within nature and allows the subject to not be out of place in the family, and culture. In the symbolic period, the subject's expression of desires and the development of a self-identity was determined by the Big Other. The Big Other is the social-cultural order, patriarchy, the order of language, etc., and is the process of alienation in the substitution of the subject's desires. However, through the interaction with the big other, the subject develops a self-identity and the process of desire. This shows the development and interaction of the mirror staged subject within a child and the symbolic stage. The mirror stage functions not only as a process of Libido energy betting, but also involves the formation of the subject's identity and narcissistic identification. During this stage, the infant's self-identity is formed through external images and is complemented by the interaction of the self and the Other. According to Lacan, the process of identification indicates the objective aggressiveness of the subject, i.e. from the moment of narcissistic identification within the subject

there already exists, “the inner malignant substance”, pushes him, her to be identified in another and in the same process identification triggers a reaction of taboo and flight. [3]

Lacan also gives a vivid illustration of the extreme manifestation of this aggressiveness by analyzing the story of Oedipus. It turns out that the subject is only instinctively responding to the desire for self-preservation, while on the other hand, this process of identifying is already a repressive mechanism. It is the repressive mechanism that leads to an increase in desire, to its logical extreme, that alienated through war. For example, Lacan’s mirror stage theory is particularly relevant in modern society. In today’s advanced media society, the subject and expression of desire are identified through media. In other words, the identification of the person in today’s communication society is a far more complex social relationship. In the mirror stage, the subject identifies not only with his or her own psychological level of identification, but also with social interaction and cultural expression. People can thus see that Lacan’s theory shows how the lack and cracks within the subject affect human desire and identification, and these cracks in turn give us an important perspective in understanding modern culture and social structure. Lacan shows through the mirror stage the complex task of how the subject’s identity and desire become “ I, ” as well as the fact that the process of identification causes these subjects to be delusional and misunderstood about their image.

It is necessary to note that in Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory, language is assigned a key position which is believed to play a decisive role in the construction and development of the subject. Lacan notes that by entering into dialogue, the individual ultimately receives and then internalizes socio-cultural rules and laws. “Completing the inauguration of the function of speech, subordinated to the biological development of the child by the instrumental reality of the world of objects around it, the individual arouses in this function the subject that will shape the individual’s reality”. First, it should be noted that language is seen here as a means of communication. On the other hand, language is a way in which an individual can enter the symbolic realm. There is a certain system comprising language and culture. It is at this stage that the individual begins to interpret the world. Thus, the use of language shapes the inner world of the subject. During this stage, it is important that language establishes a connection between the subject and reality. In other words, a person, by learning a system of rules and meanings between the objects of the world understood by them and entering the symbolic system using language, actually separates from their initial system of perceptions and connections.

Lacan uses Fort/Da game to illustrate how language is affecting the psyche of a child. Sigmund Freud's name for a game played by his 18-month-old grandson involving a cotton reel which the boy would repeatedly throw out of his cot, exclaiming ‘Oo’ as he did so, forcing his mother to retrieve it for him, at which he would utter an appreciative ‘Ah’. Freud interpreted these noises as babyish approximations of ‘*fort*’, meaning ‘gone’, and ‘*da*’, meaning ‘there’.[4] According to Freud, his grandson played self-invented Fort/Da game on the spool when his daughter was not nearby. He interpreted the child’s resentment of the mother’s absence in this game. But for Lacan, it is important to see in this game two acts of speech actually. They include “O” in the first case (“O” – the mother departed) and “da” in the second case. A child always thinks that his mother, who left, will be back. Both the emergence of language and the reality of language production are reflected in this game. Instead, the fact that the reality of language generation is reflected in the game means the separation of the language process from the subject’s practical experience. Thus, the subject uses the act of symbolization to enter the reality of symbols, while the construction of subjectivity proceeds through the generation of language. It should be added, however, that in the analyzed case, language is not a medium of the act of symbolization. It should be considered here that language is an instrument for the construction of subjectivity.

2.2. The unconscious in relation to language

Furthermore, Lacan advanced Freud's theory of unconsciousness, saying that the wordpress to the unconscious and language is a close one. Freud thought that the unconscious mind is the area of the mind where our desires and urges have been suppressed. Those suppressed desires somehow manifest themselves as dreams, slips of the tongue, and so forth. However, through the whole edifice of structuralist linguistics, it turned out that the operation of the unconscious is susceptible to the same rules as the metaphors that look inevitable in their ability to turn a thing into another or to create an analogy and the metonymies of language which designate one thing by another. Freud's own definition was that the unconscious is structured like a language, by which he meant that it is created not by the subject but by the outside order of the language that bequeaths to him outlets of self-expression. Thus, it is Lacan's statement that "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other." Even our unconscious desires are, in other words, organized by the linguistic system that Lacan terms the symbolic order or "the big Other." [5] The unconscious is the product of something else, namely, the ordered system of signs and symbols.

Lacan explicates the relationship between the unconscious and language on the basis of two propositions: one, "the unconscious is structured like language" and second, that "the unconscious is the discourse of the Big Other". In the first proposition, viewing the two split domains – the energetic and the referential in Saussure's linguistic formulas through a cycle of re-writing. Lacan argues that the unconscious operates by rules similar to the two mechanisms of language – metaphorical and metonymic. Metaphor tends to create new meanings by placing able referents, whereas, on the other hand, the referents are placed in chains of the able in metonymy and the unconscious desires are expressed in both ways. In the second proposition, influenced by structural anthropology, Lacan views the symbolic systems which form the socio-cultural structures as constitutive of subjectivity. Furthermore, the unconscious pierces the confined embodied discursive consciousness of the subject and hence belongs to an important part of its discourse, yet, it cannot be under the control of the subject's consciousness. Accordingly, When the functioning of the linguistic structure allows me to communicate an idea, it is the linguistic structure, the symbolic order, the Other or the unconscious, which allows me to communicate the idea, and my presence or existence as a speaking subject is negated. [6]

Freud argues that the human psyche goes through two internal and external differentiations dominated by pleasure. In the first, the subject tends to associate itself with as an object of pleasure and to view the external world as an object not related to pleasure. In the second, people internalize the pleasure and project the unpleasantness of unhappiness on the external objects, in order to stay congruent to the pleasure. Lacan developed this theory further and proposed that the unconscious is not a naturally differentiated agency, but created by the external linguistic/symbolic systems. He relied on structuralist linguistics and demonstrated that the rules governing the operation of representations in the unconscious are the same that govern the rules of metaphor and metonymy all languages possess. [7] Lacan also made a significant contribution by arguing that the mother's desire is an important factor in the formation of the unconscious. The mother satisfies the needs of the individual through language and the symbolic, but this satisfaction always remains incomplete and leaves the desire open. So, this satisfaction and the incompleteness are the propellant for the beginning of the child's desire. According to Lacan, it is the mother's desire that initiates the child's desire in the name of the "biological necessity". So, Lacan argues that the formation of the unconscious has nothing to do with biology, but is a creation of language and symbolic systems. This turn in Lacan's theory made the psychoanalysis closer to humanities/social sciences away from limiting biologism and underscored the determinative role of sociocultural elements in the construction of the

psychological. So, in this way, Lacan furthered his understanding of the unconscious, and gave a broader application and theoretical depth to psychoanalysis.

3. Desire and others

At the crossroads of linguistics and psychoanalysis, Lacan replays Saussure's theory of language, revealing the complex mechanisms by which language works through the concepts of permutation and metaphor. He complements these linguistic concepts with Freud's psychoanalytic theories to model the expression of desire. The sketch will be divided into three attempts: Lacanian waves of Saussure, the rules by which language is spoken, and the relationship between metaphor and condensation, permutation and displacement. Saussurean linguistic theories represent the linguistic sign as a bivalent structure of signifier and signified, that is, the sound image associated with it. Say to the slave, a sound that is called a slave. According to Saussure, the signifier is a sound image or writing; the sign is what is referred to as an apple. The author reminds us that Saussure also drew attention to the fact that the relationship between the sound image and the element it denotes is unfounded and agreed upon by physical groups. That is, the sound of the word tree will be drawn from the plant not naturally. There will be a contract of a social community. [8]

Lacan built on Saussure and redefined the relation between the energetic and the referential. He claims that the relation between the energetic and the referential is not simply parallel or direct, but repressive. As a result, People cannot identify what will be constructed by reference. Therefore, the referential is informed by the action of the energetic reference. The first aspect is the "repressive wall" Lacan, which is essentially a barrier between the energetic and the referential. The function of the barrier is two-fold: the repression of the referential by the energetic and the resistance of the unconscious of the subject toward the conscious and the onslaught of the referential. According to Lacan, the network of energetic reference is infinite and ever-changing; however, it is only through this network that People can grasp the referent in the unconscious.

Lacan's thesis about meaning is that meaning is generated only when the energy refers to its object. Lacan does not assert that the referential actualizes the referent: the notion that the relationship is always based on the actual is implausible. Instead, he suggests that the flow and substitution of the energetic referents are the exteriorization of the unconscious. In the reading of Freud's interpretation of dreams, Lacan concludes that the Ideas of the unconscious are expressed through a chain of energetic referents, and the expression is always indirect. This theory is decidedly not Saussurian, as it suggests that the referential is informed by the action of the energetic reference.

In linguistic operations, commutative metaphors and metaphors are two basic mechanisms that correspond to two different ways of symbol manipulation. Metonymy is a symbol-to-symbol transfer of meaning based on contiguity or association between two symbols. For example, 'White House' refers to 'U.S. government' and 'red scarf' refers to 'elementary school students'. The center of metonymy is substitution, that is, the relationship between the two symbols is such that one is exchanged for the other. In Lacan's theory, metonymy corresponds to the mechanism of displacement in the unconscious. Displacement is the expression of an implicit in a dream by a shift or transformation, e.g., an implicit thought that is not directly related to itself and therefore does not turn into it, is expressed in something else. Metaphor is the transfer of meaning to a word closer to another word in both similarity and dissimilarity. Metaphor is the use of a word or expression to refer to another object or concept with which it is similar in properties and characteristics. For example, a "peony flower" may refer to "richness," referring to the similarity of a peony flower to richness. Metaphors are used in Lacanian language, and metaphor in Lacan's theory corresponds to the mechanism of condensation in the unconscious. Condensation is a process where several unconscious contents are compressed into one and formed a symbolic imagination in the dream images. For example, another latent image in one dream image is an image expressing, for simplicity's sake, many

various and complex emotions and memories that confluence and condense into one simple image where the expression is an event or a photo.

According to Lacan, both commutative metaphors and metaphors are not only the mechanism of language but also an essential way for the unconscious. Wishes and longing in the unconscious are often expressed through permutation and metaphor. The permutation and metaphor are subtle and rhetorical. On the one hand, the object of desire is constantly changing in permutation, which leads to a situation that can never be satisfied. On the other hand, metaphor expresses deeper desires by gracefully avoiding social taboos. Lacan makes use of Freud's psychoanalytic theory and explores the links between metaphor and condensation and between permutation and displacement. The process of metaphor is to replace one already used for reference with another, accompanied by the creation and change of meaning. Freud believed that the mechanism of condensation in the dream is that it is the combination of multiple unconscious objects into one significant symbolic phenomenon with sufficient intensity in the dream. Consider the following dream: In an image, there are extremely numb feelings that do not consciously feel ashamed. A dream about this numb event indicates that there may be a shocking catastrophe. A sophisticated and extremely elusive device is a trap that ensures the survival of the animal and the trapper. There are many complex emotions and memories hidden in the dream, but only such a clear and very simple numb thing and related images and episodes can substitute for it. The process of metaphor is very similar to the mechanism of condensation. It can be condensed in one or several objects in the unconscious into an image with hints and dreams, and metaphor creates a brand-new meaning. In condensation, there is a place for metonymy, which allows the already used reference to the object of desire to bypass social foreshadowing and act as a surrogate. Permutation is substitution and transfer through proximity between symbols. The transposition occurs when the unconscious content is expressed in the dream through transfer or transformation. Freud mentions that the mechanism of transposition in the dream is to replace and transform important emotions and thoughts into either a second or irrelevant thing. There are also such dreams: The wide-slapped sinkable mud is nearly impossible to clean, and even then it is not filthy, but slightly dirtied. In the dream about the slightly dirty and mud-stained front door, there are emotions about this box where more at ease than at home, and not have to take off my dirty shoes when I go in, only clean my feet. The clean front door wipe off every week, externality to people. The dreaming front door is an expression of the door where more relaxed and at ease. Disgusting of lint and dirt is an internal thing that don't want anyone to know. The slight dirt may come across to others. The clean lint contains the desperateness and air. The process of transposition is very similar to the mechanism of displacement. It is the displacement of one specific reference to another. In the dream, a dreamer who dreams of riding a bicycle down the street and has a dog chasing him and noticing the heel of his shoes actually declares his love of the woman he has chosen. In other words, the dreamer's subconscious transfers his emotions and thoughts to the dog and the old ladies through transposition and displacement.

4. Conclusion

According to Lacan, desire can never be satisfied because it always refers to some type of lack. Language and other cultural symbols enable people to represent their desire, but they can never fulfill the emptiness. In postmodern society, consumption is not a primary mode of satisfying needs but an important way to express desire and construct identity. This is because goods and services in consumer culture do not only have use value but also another type of value called symbolic meaning. As such, they give addition pleasure because they refer to the signified, which is why modern consumer goods such as Coca-Cola 's taste involves the determinant that you are drinking soda . This type of pleasure goes beyond the taste of the products into a symbol itself. This means that the lack represented by the object is unsatisfied. Lacan's theory of desire is effectively represented in

postmodern society. In modern society, consumption is used a mode of expression, and shopping, leisure, and entertainment activities and socializing are ways to satisfy the desire. However, as Lacan stressed, because of the stringent definition of desire, such activities can only temporarily fill the void and unnourished the subject. Therefore, desire becomes inextricably linked with dissatisfaction in the form of a paradox where the subject is both desiring and not desiring it during the process of obtaining residual pleasure. The representation of the taste of Coca-Cola is an example of this paradoxical emergence. As such, modern society does not merely engage in the Western cultural equilibrium signified through several consumer activities, but it is also the object of desires in several ways.

Lacan's theory of the unconscious is to some extent an elaboration and break ahead of Freud's theory; first, he abandoned Freud's reliance on biology and stressed the use of language and symbolic systems. When explaining sexual urges and psychic structures, Freud often began with biological assumptions: the physiological basis of sexual urges & cetera.. However, Lacan believed that the occurrence of the unconscious and forms of psychic structures does not come from biological needs. Still, it is conditioned by symbolic systems and linguistic interactions. In other words, the newborn subjective "feels" an unnamed dissatisfaction of the life environment that occurs after birth. This dissatisfaction does not occur because the baby is hungry, for example, having definite dissatisfaction of non-interaction with the mother; the mother satisfies the individual's needs with the help of language and other symbolic systems. However, this satisfaction occurs only partially, and the person's desire ensues. The fact that desire cannot be satisfied and the interaction of symbolic systems form the basis of the unconscious.

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