



The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-1955

Jacques Lacan , Sylvana Tomaselli (Translator)

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A complete translation of the seminar that Jacques Lacan gave in the course of a year's teaching within the training programme of the Socie'te' Francaise de Psychanalyse. The French text was prepared by Jacques-Alain Miller in consultation with Jacques Lacan, from the transcriptions of the seminar.

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Adam says

What a relief! To know that nothing and no one depend on me to be the lone persuasive English voice exhorting you to read this! I don't have to prove anything, least of all that I have--first--completely understood and--second--can readily illuminate for you every shadowy nuance of Lacan, both within the limits of this seminar and fully historicized within the context of his lifelong development (which everybody expects, naturally).

The seminar has a genial, colloquial feel to it. Lacan is still resplendently gnomic in his speech, but compared to the fierce mercurial strategies undulating through *Ecrits*, he is downright shooting straight here. And--he doesn't know it yet--but he's "early-to-mid" Lacan at this point, making the points that will make his name legendary and naming the legends by which we can make something to point at. "Ego? C'est moi!" Liar, liar, Father can't you see my pants are on fire?!

Lucky for us, we are permitted to do what we must (or avoid it, but that doesn't alter the necessity one bit), and we **MUST** read Lacan and strive to listen to him: he's talking about us more than we talk about ourselves. In fact, the more we listen the better our chances of giving voice to a self who can do more than bloviate and preen. This includes all the theoretical grandstanding of folks who try to steal your enjoyment of productive confusion and replace it with a sterile Understanding of "what Lacan is really trying to say." They probably mean well, at least for themselves, but take Lacan at his word, not theirs. And do not listen to anyone who says Lacan is incomprehensible. I cannot explain the dense, fecund imbrication of the phallus, castration, desire, drive, fantasy, narcissism, the paternal metaphor, jouissance, the machine, formulae of sexuation, ideal-ego, Ego-Ideal, imaginary identification, the unconscious, transference, repetition, foreclosure, and so on and so on, and the fact that I don't have to frees me to find in Lacan what I need to find out about myself and others and Others. Psychoanalysis, the incessant self-critical *Aufhebung* of science, magic, and religion, may be the only reliable way to restrict the spread of the incomprehensible.

The seminar explores four pivotal moments in Freud's work to chart the development of the theory and the practice of the ego:

1895-1900ish: letters to Fleiss collected in the posthumously published "Entwurf" or Origins of Psychoanalysis

1905: The Interpretation of Dreams, with extensive analysis of the schema of mnemic traces and "regression"

1915: NARCISSISM

1920: Beyond the Pleasure Principle

Lacan convincingly elaborates how Freud was moving ever closer to Lacan's own positions which erect upon the metapsychological foundation of id, ego, and superego the triad of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. From the early physiological hypotheses regarding neurons, stimuli, and discharge--the organic-mechanic conceptual basis for the pleasure principle--Freud was increasingly driven to formulate the psychic apparatus in terms of energy, specifically libidinal economy. As Lacan explains:

"Not for us the synchronization of the various stages of Freud's thought, nor even getting them to agree. It is a matter of seeing to what unique and constant difficulty the development of this thought--made of the contradictions of various stages--responded."

Even the positions Freud ultimately abandoned retain their fascination. Several of the lectures here are dedicated to unpacking Freud's tortured efforts to coherently articulate the links between perception, consciousness, memory, motor response, and the nascent, disturbing, restless phenomenon of the unconscious as it emerged in clinical practice. By his own admission, Freud never satisfactorily resolved the question, "Where is consciousness?" This conceptual battle unfolds its full significance in the historical sequence of attempts to situate our old friend, the ego. Although it is no simple matter and Lacan obviously is not prone to simplification, an attentive reading and studious re-reading will clarify not only Freud's lifelong self-critical labors but also Lacan's debt to and difference from his Master.

Celso Rennó Lima says

Com este livro Lacan entra diretamente na discussão da psicologia do Eu, forma que tomou o legado freudiano no pós guerra. Assim ele começa a delinear o salto que propõe na teoria e prática psicanalíticas.

Sergey Kochergan says

Magic of psychoanalysis.
