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Chapter 1

Introduction: New perspectives on French psychoanalysis

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Chapter 1

Introduction: New perspectives on French psychoanalysis

At the beginning of January 1979, a 23-year old Norwegian philosophy student arrived in Paris. He had completed the journey from Oslo by train, which had been particularly complicated due to a rare cold spell across Europe. The train itinerary was changed constantly to various local trains, so lasted much longer than the scheduled thirty hours. But all these problems did not affect the student much since he had a very specific goal for the trip. The purpose was to gain more insight into the intellectual wave for which Paris had become famous, even in Northern Europe where few had a strong grasp on what was happening. The student had made a quick decision and all he had managed to arrange in advance was a room at the Maison de Norvège at the Cité internationale universitaire de Paris. He had no registration at any university, nor monetary resources other than his own savings – and the length of his stay would only last as long as these savings.

The student's background and motive for going to Paris were complex. One reason was his philosophical interest in exploring the relationship between rationality and irrationality. He was also an amateur musician, and the importance of the topic of rationality was reinforced by his interest in music. Based on this, he formulated the following question: "Why on Earth sing when one can talk?" Hence, the decisive reason he looked towards Paris was to attend a class specifically on French structuralism given a recent experience in which he had gained a completely new way of understanding communication and rationality.

The student had had the good fortune of attending a class by a young graduate student who had just returned from Paris having studied under Jacques Derrida at the École Normale Supérieure. This class represented an exception in Norwegian academia at that time. Some Norwegian students were certainly familiar with Michel Foucault, but few understood the major applicable context. The critical approach at Norwegian universities was dominated by

the neo-Marxism of the Frankfurt School. There was little room for other approaches to critical thinking. The student became aware of this when his plans to travel to Paris were mentioned accidentally to one of the most prominent philosophers in Norway at the time. "Why go to Paris? No, I'll stick to the German stalwart Protestants," the philosopher commented. Five years later, the same philosopher toured Norway with lectures on 'postmodernism'.

The other residents of the Maison de Norvège were not particularly interested in French structuralism either. Most studied literature and languages, while some focused on music or other subjects. But after some research, the student found that the intellectuals he was looking for were primarily located at the Collège de France – an easy Métro ride away from the Cité. Fortunately, the Collège de France is an honorary university where specially selected researchers are required to hold public lectures. There he found notices that announced Roland Barthes would start his lecture series on Haiku poetry on January 6th, in just a few days. In addition, Michel Foucault would begin his lectures on the birth of bio-politics on January 10th. Both these lecture series were followed-up with seminars where students presented their work and received comments from the lecturers. Moreover, it was possible to attend presentations by several other famous academics at the College such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Pierre Bourdieu, and Pierre Boulez. The student decided to attend Barthes' and Foucault's courses.

There were several interesting intellectuals still active in Paris that Spring semester. For example, Jacques Lacan still held his seminars at Place de Panthéon – not far from Collège de France. The young student had admittedly read a bit of Lacan. But even though he had a good insight into Freud and a few years' experience with musical therapy for severely affected psychiatric patients, he had given up trying to make sense of Lacan's writings. Hence, he did not attend Lacan's seminar that spring, but nevertheless obtained a copy of

Écrits (Lacan, 1966) just in case. He also read the small book *Comprendre Lacans* (Fages, 1971), hoping that he might be able eventually to crack the Lacanian code.

Instead, the student sought out Université Paris 8 Vincennes, which that spring was still located in the Vincennes park a few kilometers outside the center of Paris. There he found, among others, Jean-Françoise Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze, both still active lecturers at that time. He attended a couple of their lectures and also mustered the courage to have conversations with both of them. This led to some interesting meetings, particularly his conversation with Lyotard. Lyotard was very responsive and friendly, and was more than willing to discuss one of his articles on Freud and music (Lyotard, 1972).

Deleuze was not as easy to get to know, so when meeting him, the interesting aspect was Deleuze's appearance. Deleuze had a slightly slouched sitting position in the middle of a somewhat shabby classroom. Students were sitting everywhere, including on chairs, on benches and even on the window sills. The classroom atmosphere had the feeling of being an afterthought of the revolutionary movements behind the student uprising of 1968, but also the powerful scandals that had characterized this newly established university in its early years. This impression was reinforced by Deleuze's wearing an old, black, and perhaps too big overcoat. He lectured without a script, had a beer bottle in one hand, and a lit cigarette in the other. Most particular, however, were his untrimmed fingernails, which were so long that the young student could hardly believe his eyes. Deleuze lectured with great empathy despite, reportedly, having a punctured lung and seeming capable of collapsing at any moment. Nevertheless, it would turn out that he still had many productive years ahead of him.

At this university, the young student also connected well with Nicholas Ruwet who had introduced Noam Chomsky's linguistic theories to a French audience and was particularly interested in music. With Deleuze on one side of the spectrum and Ruwet on the other, this university reflected the tension that has characterized French thought and culture

for several hundred years. There have been, and still are, deep disagreements, but people nevertheless live side by side, confront each other, and engage in enthusiastic discussions.

Collège de France stood in stark contrast to Vincennes University. While the latter had various access restrictions, there was in reality no control. So in practice students could come and go as they pleased, regardless of their affiliation. At Collège de France, however, openness was, and still is, a basic principle. Nevertheless, there were many guards there, who (among other things) made sure that the number of people in each hall did not exceed the number of chairs. The biggest contrast between Collège de France versus Deleuze and Vincennes' universities was probably represented by Claude Lévi-Strauss. Just before his lecture was to begin, one of the guards entered with his lecture notes. They were solemnly and almost ritually placed on the lectern. The then 70-year-old Lévi-Strauss immediately followed with a straight and uptight posture. He had an introverted gaze, which gave the impression that he neither registered, nor cared about, those in the room. He sketched some genealogical and settlement patterns on the board, commented on them, and then discussed them without looking at the manuscript or the audience. Once the last word of his lecture had been uttered, he disappeared out via the staff entrance.

The most popular lecturers at Collège de France that spring were undoubtedly Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. If one wanted to hear them, one had to arrive early. The two were, however, very different. Roland Barthes had a distinguished appearance, with a calmness and a presence that seemed inviting and confidence-building. His appearance stood in contrast to the radical perspective on language and poetry that he drew from his analyses of Haiku poetry. The young Norwegian student also happened to meet him again later at a cello concert one evening. Barthes sat in the back row, a few seats to his right. Barthes was not alone. He was accompanied by three or four boys in their twenties. The young Norwegian student looked at him at first, but then felt how Barthes' gaze fixed on the back of his neck.

He did not look much more in the direction of Barthes at that concert, but certainly continued to follow his lectures and seminars.

Michel Foucault did not show the same composure as Barthes. When Foucault lectured he rarely sat still. He wandered around restlessly, rarely fixing his gaze on the people in front of him. On the contrary, he seemed to look wide-eyed right through them or into the air as a torrent of words poured out of his mouth. In addition, it became impossible to overlook his shiny cranium which made his pointed ears very visible. His appearance was almost demonic. It could also seem as if Foucault himself did not have complete control over his own flow of words. He never got to the topic that had been announced, namely the birth of bio-politics. However, this was that spring that Foucault developed and presented – or perhaps it was in the opposite order – his theories on neo-liberalism. In any case, the effect was powerful, and the young Norwegian philosophy student was not the only one who left deeply impressed. In that room sat a number of professors from different parts of the world who spent their sabbatical right there in the Latin Quarter in Paris that very spring.

With all these experiences, the young Norwegian philosophy student reached his goal. He had not experienced just a *small* piece of the intellectual wave that had crashed into Paris the preceding decades. He felt he had submerged his entire self in its strong after currents. The famous intellectuals were not only still active, but also widely available to anyone who wanted to seek their expertise. He did not just meet them at the universities either. Their writings filled the shelves of bookshops and one could find writings both from and about them in some of the colored magazines sold in the kiosks on the street. But in the bookstores there was also another impression that became etched into the young student's memory. One particular shelf section was often found in the most central part of the stores. It did not contain books by French writers, but instead included writings by three famous German-language authors: Freud, Nietzsche and Marx. Although French thinking was very avant-

garde, these three were nevertheless seen as the intellectual father figures who could not be overlooked, even in Paris at that time.

In retrospect, it turned out that 1979 represented a period in which the 20-year reign of French structuralism was coming to an end. Lévi-Strauss' lectures were no longer the most popular. Moreover, Barthes and Foucault's discussions subsequently had almost no traces of Saussure. Instead, a critical post-structuralist breakdown of logo-centrism began to characterize their lecture series. Moreover, both Barthes and Lacan died in the following years. Concurrently, other French intellectuals became so popular abroad that many of them ended up living outside of France for extended periods of time, not least in the United States. A few decades later, the same Paris bookstores gradually carried fewer and fewer volumes on structuralism. Instead, their shelves were filled with new literature on economics and public management.

This heyday of French thinking that the young Norwegian student - of course, the editor of this volume Hroar Klempe - experienced in 1979 is probably difficult to experience by revisiting Paris. Nevertheless, it should still be possible to reflect on what this extraordinary period in time birthed by inviting some of those who were inspired by what was happening in Paris during the Seventies. In addition, such a revisit should focus on something that the thinking of that time was founded on, namely psychoanalysis. To this end, the co-editor Anna Madill, was fortunate to meet Hroar on a staff selection committee and to discover a shared interest in French Psychoanalysis. Anna completed her PhD in the mid-1990s in which she explored changes process in psychodynamic-interpersonal psychotherapy (Madill, 1996). This topic was inspired by a long-standing interest in Carl Jung and new passion for discourse analysis which developed into a deep appreciation for Sigmund Freud and, in recent years, for Jacques Lacan. Hence, she jumped at the chance to work with Hroar to bring together this volume. This is the background for this anthology where we hope to be

able to find viable remnants of this time through the contributions that followed the French tradition of psychoanalysis: contributions which have been reshaped to suit a new time and a new environment.

We have invited 10 scholars, who all have particular interest in French psychoanalysis, and not least in Jacques Lacan. But French psychoanalysis includes several scholars, and not all can be included. However, there is a diverse selection of names that may appear along with Lacan like, for example, Vera John-Steiner, André Green, Sophia Mijolla-Mejor, and René Lew, among others, who demonstrate how both Freudian and Lacanian perspectives are developing. This is a core aspect of psychoanalysis from the very beginning as we see Sigmund Freud developing new perspectives, one of the best known being his changed opinion about the role of hypnosis. Maybe less well known is his rethinking of the relationship between privacy and universals, for example in dreams. In the *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899/1913) one may easily find traces of the search for universals and standardized symbols whereas, six years later, in *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905/1976, p. 238) he states very clearly that a dream is a private phenomenon.

Apparently, Freud may have appeared to be a quite authoritarian and strict person, which is nicely demonstrated in Gordon Allport's report about his meeting with him around 1920 (see, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxtY7YP1cpA>). In line with all the conflicts around him, Lacan's personality may have been similar and possibly reflected in his slogan: "Return to Freud". However, Lacan's psychoanalysis introduces a Saussurian understanding of the role of language, and its relationship to the unconscious, and his thesis of the arbitrary sign dissolve any unchangeable perspectives on language. According to Saussure, not only the single sign is arbitrary, but also the linguistic system itself because it is continuously changing and developing. The latter forms the condition for suggesting the thesis of the arbitrary sign. This said, there is no reason to pursue or search for the 'correct' or 'pure'

Lacanian psychoanalysis. His psychoanalysis went through several changes and this revisit to French psychoanalysis aims to trace some of these changes but also how diverse French-inspired psychoanalysts may appear today.

Language is one of the core factors in Lacan's rereading of Freud. However, how to understand the nature of language forms another open question. One of the reasons for why Lacan is so difficult to read is that he built his theories on different theories of language. Nevertheless, he merged them into a complicated, but united, network of theories and used this to explain many aspects of conscious and unconscious functioning. This complexity is the topic Raffaele De Luca Picione writing in chapter 2. In contrast to Freud, Lacan was highly influenced by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, who developed the tenet on the arbitrary sign by highlighting the radical distinction between the signifier and the signified. The arbitrary connection between these two aspects of a sign opens up for slow changes in the development of the uses of languages. This counts for all other types of symbolic sign systems in sounds and figures. The Czech linguist Roman Jakobson also influenced Lacan. The latter criticized Saussure for making a sharp and definite distinction between the actual (*in praesentia*) and latent (*in absentia*) aspects of language. Moreover, Saussure argued that, in language, it is only possible to articulate one sound at the time. Jakobson challenged this by saying the also the latent aspects of language must be present in our daily use of language. De Luca Picione argues also for the importance of the tripartition of the sign that the American pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce introduced. This process may well form all systems of symbols, and De Luca Picione demonstrates how Lacan turns all these aspects of language into an integrated culturally-oriented psychoanalytic theory. Furthermore, De Luca Picione's essay helps to clarify how in Lacan's theoretical and clinical thought there is not only an exclusive tendency to show the processes of symbolization and signification, but also the recognition of an ever-present drive towards non-sense, to the

impossibility of knowledge, namely an area of absolute contingency and impossibility of human experience which takes the name of register of the Real.

In chapter 3, Anna Madill grapples with the interspace of Lacanian psychoanalysis, discourse analysis, and methodology rigour through an analysis of a carefully transcribed, watched, and listened to piece of TV programming. Demonstrating the reach of Lacanian ideas into the study of popular culture, Madill considers the applicability Lacanian theory for understanding the reality paranormal genre which has been popular since the early 2000s. This is done by analysing a sequence from an American television mini-series from 2016 called *Deadly Possessions*. Focusing on the story of supernatural events related to a mirror, Madill explores the relevance of the Lacanian mirror stage for understanding disturbing, yet recognisable, psychic mechanisms functioning in everyday life experiences. She draws on other Lacanian concepts, such as the *objets a* and the staging of fantasy, to explore how the ordinary objects come to haunt us and how these stories are enhanced for uncanny effect through the use of cameras, sound, lightning, colours, etc. Different layers of oneself and one's relationship to the other is revealed as an interdependency between the two, and the Lacanian terminology helps us to understand some of the nuances in this process.

This understanding of Lacanian psychoanalysis as relevant for the way we deal with entertainments in everyday life is followed up by Brendon Nichols in chapter 4. Instead of TV programming, reading and literature are at stake in Nichols' chapter. By means of the South-African author Bessie Head and her novella *The Cardinals*, Nichols brings us into the core of how metaphors may produce an overwhelming pleasure in reading. Specifically, he applies a Lacanian understanding of the Möbius strip to argue that a metaphor is not necessarily applied for making the meaning deeper. Rather, metaphor may be considered through the Möbius topology to bring meaning back to the initial terms for both author and reader. That is, through being captured in the circuit of the single-sided Möbius strip, the

reader as well as the author have an editorial function. The novella *The Cardinals* is an excellent example of this circulation of topologically-entrenched signs, because it references cases on which Bessie Head reported as a journalist within its fictional content. On this basis, Nichols challenges the reader's conception of the role of metaphor in literature.

Literature is also a core aspect in chapter 5, as Marcela Antelo makes an analysis of feminine *jouissance* by letting the poetry of the British Romantic poet Percy Shelley (1792-1822) form a point of departure. However, the main aim in this chapter is to demonstrate the big difference between Freud's and Lacan's understanding of feminine *jouissance*. What Shelley and Lacan have in common is, according to Antelo, that they both unveiled some of the mysterious secrets around feminine *jouissance*. Whereas Freud regarded women's sexual needs to be just mysterious, Lacan meant that a study of women's sexual enjoyment is an entrance to understand the core of *jouissance* in general. Thus, feminine *jouissance* is to be understood as a label for enjoyment for both women and men, existing beyond, and reflecting the borderline between, the symbolic and the real.

Chapter 6 also deals with *jouissance*. Here Marcelo Veras elaborates on Lacan's statement that "The woman does not exist" and position that 'woman' is the Other sex for all speaking beings. Veras argues that no gender can be characterized as coming from Venus: we are all from Mars. This is in fact a following up to Antela's discussion about the mystical aspect of *jouissance* in the sense that ultimate sexual *jouissance* may never appear together with a partner, as some unrelieved drops of drives always will remain. In line with this, drives are canalized in other bodily aspects, and not least how it is presented in a public sphere. This is exactly what Veras exams in this chapter, namely how the construction of a body, which may apparently not be incorporated in the Lacanian symbolic field. As many Lacanians will support, Veras underlines the body's symbolic function. By developing a symbolic order, which may include the construction of the body, Veras explains how surgery more or less can

be regarded as being “the new sex”. The body style as the new sex is illustrated by pointing at Lady Gaga as an example.

From a focus on ‘enjoyment’. in chapter 7 Tania Zittoun moves us into, what Freud would consider to be, the opposite to the territory of the reality principle: i.e., that of ‘pleasure.’ Specifically, Zittoun concentrates on a highly ignored type of pleasure, namely the pleasure of thinking. In fact, Freud was occupied by this aspect of pleasure and tried to develop an explanation from a psychoanalytic perspective. Freud’s writings about this from the 1890ies form a good starting point for this investigation as he connects thinking and problem-solving to interactions between bound and unbound cathectic energy. Although Lacan does not explore this type of pleasure, two of his younger associates in French psychoanalysis, namely André Green and Sophie de Mijolla-Mejor, provide a substantial contribution on this topic. Zittoun broadens the discussion even more, arguing for five different modalities of the pleasure of thinking using cultural psychology alongside psychoanalytic theory.

One of the most challenging aspects to grasp in Lacan’s psychoanalysis is his understanding of the real. This is the main topic taken on by Sergio Salvatore in chapter 8. Although the Lacanian conception of the real can be understood as beyond philosophical understanding, Salvatore argues that there exists a connection here. A traditional metaphysical position posits a clear distinction between what is the result of thinking, and the facts that exist in the external world. This perspective is almost unimpededly accepted in psychology as we apply the term ‘representation’ as if ideas in our minds just mirror objects in the world ‘out there’. Salvatore argues that this cannot be accepted as a valid ontology. Even Kant, he suggests, did not accept this metaphysical position. Kant posited time and space to be a product of the transcendental mind, although it is an open question how transcendental, in fact, is the human. Salvatore argues that time and space form examples

that, rather than based on substance, existence consists of interchangeable relations. On this basis, Salvatore argues for a processual ontology which implies that existence is not dependent on an entity's substantial quality, but is a result of how we are dealing with this entity. Salvatore refers to a banknote as an example. As is true for currency in general, the value of a banknote is just a result of how stakeholders relate themselves to it and it is only on this basis that money functions as a holder of value. Similarly, for Lacan, reality is created symbolically through the signifiers of the Other.

What language is, or is not, is also a matter for interrogation. There are of course several angles from which this discussion can be addressed. One of these is by way of logic, and this is the path pursued by the Chilean-Danish psychoanalyst Osvaldo Cariola in chapter 9. Lacan's teachings, searching to give Freud's metapsychology a formal determination, have therefore themselves ended up in the ontologising Freud's heirs had turned psychoanalysis into. Since the 1980s, the French psychoanalyst René Lew (1946-) has worked to give the doctrine of the signifier the formalisation that Lacan called for by deducing the logic of the topological conditions on which psychoanalytic experience is based. This has led, among other things, to a reading of Lacan that is reminiscent of Lacan's own reading of Freud, a clarification of the foundations of psychoanalysis and a closer examination of the specific conditions that characterise the function of the signifier. All this through a reformulation of the basic problems of psychoanalysis and in a discussion with standard logic (as established by logical positivism), considering the insights of psychoanalysis itself and the latest developments in the 'deviant' logics (hypothetical, temporal, modal, derealistic, etc.) to which Goodman, Hintikka, Girard and others have given us access. The key concept here is *signifiance*, which delineates the peculiarity of the signifier-function and whose conceptualisation has consequences for all aspects of psychoanalysis (technical, clinical, metapsychological, political, ethical, etc., etc.). Cariola has chosen to concentrate in his text

on the epistemic consequences of such considerations, to point out that the rationality of psychoanalysis is not to blame when judged by the parameters of the impredicative sciences.

Although logic is intimately related to the dichotomy rational/irrational, these terms can be replaced by the terms predicative/impredicative, i.e. to what extent an outcome is predictable or not. This replacement of terms subverts ontology as a factor in this discussion, and opens up instead the aspects of interpretation. And this is what the meta-psychological project is supposed to be about: namely, to what extent psychoanalysis does offer the proper tools for achieving prosperous interpretations. This said, Cariola demonstrates how modal logic provides a proper *organon* for psychoanalysis as it may point at different interpretative strategies by means of the square of opposites.

One of the missing factors in most discussions about psychoanalysis is the role of music. Most likely, Freud himself might be the reason for this given that he said openly that he disliked music. Nevertheless, some aspects of music and sound in psychoanalysis is the topic Sven Hroar Klempe pursues in chapter 10. To make a smooth connection between psychoanalysis and music, Klempe refers to an amateur painting from 1948 which, allegedly, was an outcome of a dream the painter had about a concert with a symphony orchestra. The painting demonstrates very well the Freudian dream processes in terms of condensations and replacements. Furthermore, it demonstrates how sound is embedded in the metaphoric and metonymic features of the painting.

Lacan implicitly argues for the importance of sound in dreams, as he highlights the role of the signifier over that of the signified. Roman Jakobson also underlined the importance of the sound in language, as he developed the phonology. Roman Jakobson influenced Lacan, and his phonology emphasizes that each phoneme in language does not represent just one sound, but several articulated at the same time. The sound of a phoneme is comparable with a chord or musical counterpoint as musical harmony and polyphony means

that different tones are sounding simultaneously. Thus, the idea of language as being linear does not reflect any actual uses of language. Moreover, it may not reflect our thinking either. Klempe argues that this is in line with the position of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky who made a sharp distinction between the use of language and the process of thinking. The former appears as linear, whereas the latter appears as condensed units of complex meanings. To be understood by others, thinking has to be translated into sequential verbal utterances. Although Vygotsky was not a psychoanalyst, the author concludes that there are anyway some connections here.

All the chapters point in several and quite different directions. Nevertheless, they are all united by sharing some important common factors. One of them is of course that Sigmund Freud represents a direct point of departure for all of them. This is natural and even obvious when psychoanalysis is at stake. As mentioned, Freud can easily be experienced as an authoritarian scholar, and very many of his followers have understood him to be so. However, the contributions in this compilation point rather in another direction, namely that Freud's investigations and reflections represent an inspiring source for free creative thinking in approaching and investigations of the human mind. Already at the beginning of the twentieth century, he inspired not only psychiatrists and psychologists, but also artists who felt that Freud opened new ways to understand the human nature. This had huge consequences for how morality is to be understood as well. In many ways, Freud's psychoanalysis gave flesh to the Nietzschean program saying, *Umweltung alle Werte* – all values turned upside down. This process has continued, and French thinking in the sixties and seventies represent maybe some of the clearest peak points in these types of intellectual efforts.

This is not only the most inspiring aspect of Freud and French poststructuralism in general, but maybe even more by the thinking of Jacques Lacan. The reception history of

Jacques Lacan demonstrates very well that the understanding of him has been extremely polarized. He is either presented as a genius or a charlatan (Matthews, 2020). However, this compilation aims at presenting both him and other scholars in French psychoanalysis as neither. The extreme formulations and thoughts that characterized French poststructuralist thinking from the sixties and seventies can easily be misunderstood if they are taken literally, and not least if one is searching for a consistent moral or rationality. On this background, one may quite simply say, that not only scholars in the U.S., but also in the Protestant Europe may have misunderstood parts of French thinking (Liu, 2010, p. 13). The key to correct this is not only to remind about Nietzsche's analyses of morality, but also to point at Lyotard's analysis of the conditions of postmodernism, namely that the big and consistent narratives in sciences have collapsed (Lyotard, 1979/1984). This was probably what Lacan demonstrated when he scandalized everyone at MIT in 1975 in a meeting with Noam Chomsky by answering the latter's question about thinking with: "We think we think with our brains; personally, I think with my feet" (Matthews, 2020, p. 6). French psychoanalysis may represent boundary-breaking thinking, and it should inspire everyone to do the same, yet not necessarily loosing one's mind completely.

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