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THEORY'S SECOND GENERATION**

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## Psychoanalysis and Desire

Rosi Braidotti and Alan D. Schrift

The relationship between psychoanalysis and philosophy has been fraught with structural contradictions and historical tensions from its very inception. The emphasis placed by Freud on the unconscious as a fundamental aspect of human cognition and understanding, as well as his appraisal of sexuality and desire as vital forces in the constitution of both the subject and of human culture – or civilization – is unsettling for philosophers. The discipline of philosophy and the psychoanalytic theory and practice of the unconscious as a fundamental structure of the subject have historically developed as parallel but divergent discourses that never quite came to a common focus.

Part of the difficulty resides with the vicissitudes of modern history, notably World War II and the Cold War that followed. The history of psychoanalysis is deeply caught up in these events and, in particular, with phenomena such as fascism, Nazism, and the extermination of the European Jews. This historical fact needs to be stressed in view of the amnesia – and the revisionist simplification – that struck post-industrial societies after 1989. The genocide of so many Jewish Europeans also marked a moral and intellectual suicide for Europe,<sup>1</sup> insofar as it resulted in the departure of some of the best and the brightest scholars, scientists, artists, film-makers, and thinkers, including Freud himself and the founding members of the first Psychoanalytic Society, all of whom, except Carl Jung, were Jewish.

Post-war Europe, consequently, was deprived of those very schools of thought – notably psychoanalysis and Marxism – that had been the strength of critical theory in the earlier part of the century. It is in the context of such discontinuities in the transmission of the psychoanalytic legacy and a politically polarized world order that the roads of renewed European interest in critical theory in the 1960s and 1970s lead to France. That it should have been France that acted as the motor for the re-generation of the Continental tradition of critical philosophy<sup>2</sup> has a great deal to do not only with the difficulties of Germany and eastern Europe dealing with its anti-Semitic recent past, but also with the high moral stature of France at the end of World War II.

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\*<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed analysis of this phenomenon, see Braidotti's essay on Europe in *History of Continental Philosophy. Volume 8: Emerging Trends in Continental Philosophy*, ed. Todd May.

<sup>2</sup> Other schools contributed, though to a lesser degree: the post-war Frankfurt School; the Yugoslav schools of Marxism and especially the Dubrovnik school of critical theory; and the Southern European traditions, especially the Italian and the Spanish Marxist schools.

The role of Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir in this regard is crucial, as is their connection to anti-colonial philosophers like Fanon and Césaire.

The philosophical movement of poststructuralism, however, is primarily responsible for the return of psychoanalysis into France and Europe.<sup>3</sup> Louis Althusser and Jacques Lacan in the late 1960s heralded a “return” to the materialist roots of Continental philosophy, via Marxism<sup>4</sup> and psychoanalysis. It was not a straight-forward return, of course, but rather a more complex phenomenon of rediscovering the fundamental texts of Marx and Freud by reading them independently of the official interpretations imposed respectively by the Communist Parties and the International Psychoanalytic Association. This rebellion against the official guardians of the radical texts and their dogmatic attitude coincided also with a change of generations. Also important here is the historical context of the Algerian anti-colonial war and the political and social turmoil that surrounded it, which marked the political coming of age of a generation that had grown up in the long shadow of post-World War II European guilt and that was determined to break the conspiracy of silence.<sup>5</sup>

Psychoanalytic theory is, in many respects, at the core of these developments and the new historical conditions could not fail to affect the ways in which psychoanalysis impacts on the intellectual debates. In some ways poststructuralism writes a new chapter in the long dialogue between Marxism and psychoanalysis and in so doing moves beyond the starting premises of both movements. The question of desire and unconscious identifications and counter-identifications – which is one of the fundamental principles of psychoanalysis – becomes linked directly to the political and ethical concerns for the responsibility of European philosophy in the making of fascism as well as colonialism. This led to an extensive interrogation of the role of European “high” culture in its own and other peoples’ destruction. Whereas the existentialist generation had conceptually sided with rationalism, the poststructuralists take much more seriously the effects and dynamics of the unconscious. They consequently raise a two-fold line of enquiry: first on the limitations of reason as a self-correcting instrument of human liberation; second on the extent to which desire actually shapes the social field, which places the social imaginary and the political unconscious at the center of the agenda.

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<sup>3</sup> It is significant, for instance, that most of the authors who Foucault singled out as heralding the philosophical era of critical modernity (Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Darwin) are the same authors who, with the exception of Nietzsche, the Nazis condemned.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of Marx and Marxism, see the essay by Terrell Carver in *The History of Continental Philosophy: Volume 2*.

<sup>5</sup> For a sharp account of those years, see the two volumes by Hamon, and Rotman, *Generation I and II*.

Lacan famously reconceptualizes the unconscious processes in terms of linguistic mediation.<sup>6</sup> He also connects these processes more firmly, however, to the political economy of power and of symbolic domination that is prevalent in a social order organized around the principle of the paternal metaphor, and thus of a phallogentric symbolic system. In so doing, Lacan triggered a series of polemical debates in the centuries-old discussions of traditional philosophical questions to do with the structure of the social contract, the symbolic structures of social cohesion, the sources of knowledge, the political function of metaphor, and the nature of thought and the mind in structuring both subjectivity and power.

The role of desire as a political factor that constructs the social field is highlighted in the contexts of the events of May 68 and reaches a peak in Deleuze and Guattari's critique of the "micro-fascist" structure of the European subject of knowledge. They raise with equal importance the question of the role of philosophy, science, and intellectual production in paving the road for domination, rationalizing its necessity, and banalizing its consequences. If desire is intrinsically political, it follows that politics begins with our desires. This axiom positions psychoanalysis as a crucial link in philosophical debates about democracy, the state, and the possibility of political resistance.

This essay starts from these premises and explores some of their implications for philosophy. In what follows, we survey some of the most provocative and productive discursive intersections between philosophy and the psychoanalytic tradition in the 1960s through the 1980s in an effort to demonstrate the vitality but also the complexity of philosophical engagements with psychoanalysis in the continental tradition.

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of Lacan, see the essay by Ed Pluth in *History of Continental Philosophy. Volume 5: Politics and the Human Sciences: From Critical Theory to Structuralism*, ed. David Ingram.

## I. The Freudian epistemological break

Freud stated as the fundamental premises of his psychoanalytic revolution the concept of the unconscious and the redefinition of sexuality as *libido*.<sup>7</sup> He also introduces a powerful revision of social theory in the so-called meta-psychological papers,<sup>8</sup> and calls into question the accepted vision of the subject as coinciding with his/her conscious, rational self. This *de jure* and *de facto* equation between subjectivity and consciousness, also known as “conscientism,”<sup>9</sup> is opposed almost structurally to the psychoanalytic insight that declares the subject as an effect of his or her unconscious structures and desires. Freud however was particularly cautious in stating the theoretical impact and ambitions of the new “science” of psychoanalysis. He does draw an analogy between philosophy, or at least metaphysics, and religion, but only in order to stress the delusional aspects of rationality which nurture an illusion of omnipotence and totalizing unity on the part of the subject. Freud is also careful to point out that, by contrast, psychoanalysis is less about producing a counter-theory of the subject than revealing the subject’s structural incapacity to be the master in his own house. Freud thus relegates consciousness to a place and a status that is vital, but not determinant or central; that central place is reserved for the unconscious drives. The aim of Freudian psychoanalysis is to drive home this unwelcome truth and to supplement the theories of the subject with the discovery of the unconscious. The meta-psychology phase produces a powerful analysis of the sexual origins of the social contract, to which we will return below.

The relatively humble relationship Freud had established between his empirical findings and the theoretical claims of psychoanalysis gets re-defined in a radical manner in France throughout the late 1960s and 70s. Jacques Lacan’s central thesis that the Unconscious is “structured like a language” indexed the constitution of the subject to a structuralist principle of signification. The primacy of the master signifier – the Phallus – is reiterated as the fundamental law of representation of and by the subject of the desire that constructs this subject while escaping its control.<sup>10</sup> Lacan’s ambition, explicitly stated as the

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\*7 For a discussion of Freud’s work and its subsequent influence on various philosophical movements, see the essay by Adrian Johnston in *History of Continental Philosophy. Volume 3: Bergsonism, Phenomenology, and Responses to Modern Science*, ed. Keith Ansell Pearson and Alan D. Schrift.

<sup>8</sup> These include *Totem and Taboo* (1913); *The Future of an Illusion* (1927); *Civilization and its Discontent* (1930); and *Moses and Monotheism* (1939).

<sup>9</sup> See Pierre-Laurent Assoun, *Freud, la philosophie, les philosophes*. (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> Jacques Lacan, “The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud,” in *Écrits: A Selection*, p. 174.

desire to turn psychoanalysis into the new philosophy of the subject,<sup>11</sup> alters the terms of the relationship between empirical practice and theoretical production, though not always for the better. In the context of the French poststructuralists' re-readings of the status of the philosophical subject, about which more below, psychoanalysis contributes significantly toward de-bunking the pretensions of phallo-logo-centrism that, according to Lacan, have sustained the subject since its Platonic beginnings. The "death of Man," or "crisis of the subject," indicates a serious decline of the self-evidence of the phallic metaphor and hence of paternal authority, for the philosophy of modernity. Psychoanalysis functions in this context as the discourse of the crisis of reason *par excellence*. It targets philosophy as its favorite discourse because this master discipline has historically played the role of upholding a hierarchical systematization of human knowledge, norms, and values. Thus, Lacan on the one hand continues to pursue Freud's insight that philosophy, as the emanation of this spirit of mastery, is delusional. But, on the other hand, he also radicalizes the Freudian project by targeting philosophy as the discipline that most needs to undergo serious psycho-analytic criticism. In this respect, Lacan's much-celebrated "return" to Freud is anything but a loyal continuation of the founding principles of psychoanalysis.

The central psychoanalytic notion is the corporeal roots of human subjectivity, plus the dynamic interaction that the unconscious guarantees between mind and body and the extent to which they alter the terms of philosophical discourse and practice. The revaluation of the feminine, which is central to Lacan's project, is also an effect of the psychoanalytic exposure of the malaise that affects the masculine social and symbolic order, upheld by and as the Law of the Father or the Phallic symbolic. Lacanian psychoanalysis positions very centrally the idea of the necessity of replacing the unitary vision of the subject with a split or non-unitary vision. The fracture is introduced by the instance of the unconscious, which makes it imperative to move away from the transcendent or religious vision of consciousness by integrating the insights, the methods, and the ethics of psychoanalysis. Lacan thinks, however, that as the expression of the phallogocentric symbolic system and discourse *par excellence*, philosophy is incapable of including the dimension of the unconscious, except as its dialectical opposite within the same logocentric logic. This structural incapacity to become de-centered is the tragedy of philosophy and the reason for its necessary downfall. As a radical misunderstanding of the subject, philosophy is locked in an either-or logic of

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<sup>11</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: Encore, On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge 1972-1973*, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), Bruce Fink (trans.) (New York: Norton, 1998).



exclusion of the very unconscious forces that sustain it.<sup>12</sup> Where the rationalist ego used to rule, the unconscious id is the subject to come.

## II. The Hegelian legacy

There is no mistaking the persistence of Hegel's influence in Lacan's thought.<sup>13</sup> The Hegelian legacy within psychoanalysis rests on a number of inter-locked concepts that constitute the core of the psychoanalytic theory of desire. We could sum them up by saying that it concentrates on desire as lack. This entails a negative notion of the mechanisms of desire, which is oppositional in the sense that it works by binary polarizations: be it masculine versus feminine, young/old, active/passive, black/white, or whatever. This binary model of thinking moreover fuels an oppositional logic of confrontation that *de facto* establishes a hierarchical relationship between the terms involved in the dyad. Thus, we have simultaneously a theory about the mutual attraction of the sexual opposites and of their complementarity: we desire the sexual other because through that otherness fulfillment can be reached. Opposites therefore attract and fulfill each other, but also struggle to the bitter end for the upper hand in asserting the terms of their desire. This oppositional view supports the Hegelian dialectics of consciousness and inscribes it as the core of unconscious life. Hence Lacan's claim that "I is another"<sup>14</sup> as indicating both the relation of the ego to the unconscious and as a demonstration of his Hegelianism. The corollary of this conceptual move is that the point of desire is posited as the suppression of the longing for the object that had triggered it in the first place: the drive gets fulfilled by reaching its aim. This entropic theory of desire is central to Freud's theory of the death drive and it inscribes a logic of loss and self-extinction at the heart of the subject. Thinkers like Bataille<sup>15</sup> and Blanchot will subsequently explore this paradox further, in a philosophy of excess and boundary-transgression that captures perfectly the entropy of desire and its bond to death.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> That Lacan has reason to come to this conclusion is evidenced by Sartre's rejection of the unconscious in his famous discussion of Bad Faith in *Being and Nothingness*.

<sup>13</sup> Lacan attended, and was influenced by, Alexandre Kojève's lectures on Hegel at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, which ran from 1933–39.

<sup>14</sup> Jacques Lacan, "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis," in *Écrits: A Selection*, 23.

\* <sup>15</sup> For a discussion of Bataille, see the essay by Peter Tracy Connor in *History of Continental Philosophy. Volume 5*, ed. Ingram.

<sup>16</sup> The degree to which an exploration of the logic of excess and transgression runs throughout their writings explains, in part, the affinity Foucault felt toward the work of both Bataille and Blanchot.

The second element of Hegel's philosophy to enter this discussion, notably through Lacan's complex relationship to the French Hegelians<sup>17</sup> – and especially Alexandre Kojève – is the isomorphism between psychic and social life. This assumes that the structures of the individual psyche are structurally infused by the same forces as the social effects that constitute the social order and regulate its functions. These involve the deployment of desire as lack and hence they locate an oppositional logic at the core of the contractual system that constitutes the social order. There is consequently a Hegelian legacy in the emphasis that is placed on the structural violence as one of the forces that fuels the constitution of the social system. Central to this structural violence is the sacrificial ontology that positions the bodies of women as the object of exchange among warring males and hence as the holders of the keys to social peace. The meta-psychological phase of Freud's work is central to this aspect of a social theory that stresses the productive nature of violence and hence also its inevitability. Psychoanalysis radicalizes the Hegelian dialectical schemes by gendering it: the violence accomplished by the primitive horde against the archaic father is masculine, whereas the pacifying eroticized bodies that seal the social contract are female. A sacrificial ontology is consequently discovered at the heart of the social contract, which founds political authority on ritualized violence, symbolic murder, and interiorized guilt.<sup>18</sup> This political economy of violence also instills the need for mourning and melancholia as binding factors in a community fraught with internal psychic fractures. Both the emphasis on hostility and violence and the sexualization of the opposition are crucial elements in the political theory of inter-subjectivity introduced by psychoanalysis.<sup>19</sup>

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\* <sup>17</sup> For a discussion of Hegel's reception in France, see John Russon, "Dialectic, Difference and the Other: The Hegelianizing of French Phenomenology," in *History of Continental Philosophy. Volume 4: Phenomenology: Responses and Developments*, ed. Leonard Lawlor.

<sup>18</sup> A related engagement with psychoanalysis in the previous generation is provided by Georges Bataille, who initiates in the post-war period a critique of the Freudian sacrificial ontology by showing the intrinsically flawed nature of this violence and its senseless reiteration of loss and mourning. He opposes to it an economy of excess and waste in the pursuit of pleasure, which is equally pointless, but which binds people through qualitatively different and less negative psychic and social ties. See Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy, Volume I: Consumption*, and "The Notion of Expenditure," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-39*, ed. Stoekl.

<sup>19</sup> The persistence of this Hegelian legacy in the political theory of psychoanalysis can be detected today in the thought of post-Lacanian thinkers like Slavoj Žižek, who implements Lacanian views of the signifier in studies of cultural production and the power of transference as a factor in social formations. The ethical philosophy of less belligerent psychoanalytic philosophers like Étienne Balibar contest the negativity of this legacy when he refers to the social repercussions of unconscious processes in terms of "the other scene" of the political (see Balibar, *Politics and the Other Scene*). The limitations and flawed nature of the logic of sacrifice in Freud's thought is central to the social theory of Giorgio Agamben (see *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*), Error! Main Document Only, and also to Jean-Luc Nancy's critique of Bataille's re-elaborations of Freud, to which he opposes the binding force of love and friendship in *The Inoperative Community*.

As Lacan's thought and practice became more authoritarian with the passing of time – witness the expulsion of Irigaray in 1974 from the school Lacan founded and directed and later the careful selection and editing of his seminars by his heir and son-in-law Jacques Alain-Miller – the resistance to his methods grew even in France, where Lacan himself enjoyed star status.<sup>20</sup> Michel Foucault's early work on the history of sexuality can be read as an oblique but consistent critique of the Lacanian premises that desire in our culture has to be subjected to the Law-of-the-Father or master signifier. Foucault's attempt to think sexuality outside the dominion of the phallus, and outside the domain of Hegel, results in a renewed emphasis on the importance of pleasure – rather than desire.<sup>21</sup> It also produced the radical moment in Foucault's thought – his call for making an end to the sovereignty of sexuality and for debunking the notion that there can be such a thing as sexual liberation by the minorities: women, gays, and other “deviants.” This anti-sex liberation moment of Foucault's thought – which included a critique of the Frankfurt School's emphasis on the theory of repression – was partially obscured in the Trans-Atlantic appropriation of Foucault's work as the inspiration for queer theory.<sup>22</sup> More recently, however, this aspect has resurfaced<sup>23</sup> and is casting an interesting new light on what can only be described as a perverse relationship between the Foucauldian project and the Lacanian *corpus*.

The most consistent and explicit philosophical critique of Lacan, and his underlying Hegelianism, is found in the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, who challenged both Lacan's understanding of desire as lack, which designated the function of desire “as *manque-à-être*, a “want-to-be,” and his definition of psychoanalysis itself as being “engaged in the central lack in which the subject experiences himself as desire.”<sup>24</sup> They put in its place an account of desire as productive that drew not upon Hegel but upon Spinoza's *conatus* and

<sup>20</sup> For a historical overview, see: Sherry Turkle: *Psychoanalytic Politics. Freud's French Revolution*. MIT Press, Cambridge Mas. 1981 and Elizabeth Roudinesco: *Jacques Lacan. Outline of a Life, History of a System of Thought*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

<sup>21</sup> See Foucault, Michel (1976) *Histoire de la sexualité I. La volonté de savoir*. Paris: Gallimard. English translation (1978) *The History of Sexuality*, vol. I, transl. Robert Hurley, New York: Pantheon.

<sup>22</sup> See for instance : David M. Halperin: *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*. Oxford and New York : Oxford University Press, 1995.

<sup>23</sup> See, for example, Noys “The end of the monarchy of sex. Sexuality and contemporary nihilism,” *Theory, Culture & Society*, and Braidotti, *Metamorphoses. Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming*.

<sup>24</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, pp. 29, 265. It is interesting to note that, for all their differences, Lacan's position here is very close to Sartre's, who was also influenced by Kojève's interpretation of Hegel, and who identifies freedom, consciousness, and being-for-itself with desire as lack: “The for-itself is defined ontologically as the *lack of being*, and possibility belongs to the for-itself as that which it lacks ... The for-itself chooses because it is lack; freedom is really synonymous with lack. Freedom is the concrete mode of being of the lack of being. ... Fundamentally man is *the desire to be*, and the existence of this desire is not to be established by an empirical induction; it is the result of an a priori description of the being of the for-itself, since desire is a lack and since the for-itself is the being which is to itself its own lack of being” (Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, p. 565).

Nietzsche's will to power. Deleuze's highly effective reframing of desire as plenitude in his own philosophy critiques the emphasis on the Phallus as a specific historical formation and aims to move beyond it.<sup>25</sup> We shall return to this below.

### III Derrida: Deconstructing the Master Signifier

Of all the poststructuralists, Jacques Derrida is the one who entertains the longest and most fruitful dialogue with Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, in what can only be described as an intense and life-long relationship to psychoanalysis.<sup>26</sup> Derrida shares with his generation a deep-seated anti-Cartesianism, which by extension allows him to engage productively with the psychoanalytic criticism of rationalist assumptions in the exercise of philosophical reason. As a consequence, Derrida stresses quite subtly the proximity between the discourses of philosophy and psychoanalysis, as evidenced by their respective emphasis on the same kinds of human experience: desire, emotions, sexuality, life, death, suffering, and ethical relations with the world, culture, and society.

Although Derrida's thought builds on the split subject introduced by psychoanalysis, he also operates a number of disjunctions. Firstly, Derrida approaches the corpus of psychoanalytic texts as an archive in its own right.<sup>27</sup> This removes any sense of orthodoxy from his readings of these texts. This is significant for its implied criticism of the semi-sacred aura acquired by Lacan and the religious zeal with which his texts were received at the time. Derrida questions the very structure of the psychoanalytic archives and deconstructs it accordingly.

Secondly, Derrida stresses that the differences between psychoanalysis and philosophy are just as significant as their similarities: they run parallel to each other, one labouring under the rule of consciousness while the other is devoted to the interpretations of the unconscious. The meeting ground between the two concerns the epistemological structure of what we could call "rational scientific knowledge" – Phallo-logocentrism – and its limitations. Phallo-

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<sup>25</sup> Foucault was similarly, and explicitly, critical of institutionalized psychiatry and psychoanalysis. Like Deleuze, Foucault was heavily influenced by Nietzsche (who influenced Freud as well), and while he adhered to a (post)structuralism that was familiar with the Lacanian extension of signification to the subject, he sought to complicate, rather than contradict, it.

<sup>26</sup> In addition to *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (1980), *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (1995), and *Resistances of Psychoanalysis* (1996), Derrida frequently appeals to Freud in the course of readings of other thinkers.

<sup>27</sup> See Derrida, "To Speculate – on 'Freud,'" in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, Alan Bass (trans.) (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 257–409.

logocentrism designates the dominant image of the subject that, according to Derrida, equates Being with, but also doubles it up into, thought as the self-representation of mastery.<sup>28</sup>

Experiencing the self as coinciding with reason, power, and presence is the phallic delusion Derrida will labor all his life to dispel. Derrida takes the linguistic structure of the unconscious (following Lacan's interpretation of Saussure) to mean that the textual instance is isomorphic with psychic processes. This is not to be confused with the intentional fallacy; the author's psyche is not the point, but the structure of the sign and its psychic traces are. Derrida's point is that philosophy is better equipped conceptually to pursue the critical analysis of the isomorphic relationship between the psychic and the social than is psychoanalysis. In other words, philosophy has the means to both critique the power effects of the phallo-logocentric hold over our psychic and social landscapes and to undo that hold by revealing its limitations.

The primary point of contention between Derrida and Lacan is the primacy of the Phallus and its productive role as master signifier, which is to say, ultimately, the psychic groundings for power formations themselves and the accompanying links between desire and power. Contrary to Lacan, Derrida is skeptical about the logical or moral necessity – let alone the credibility – of a master signifier or privileged term of reference. He sees in this a repetition of the transcendental arrogance of philosophy, that is, the existence of a transcendental point of origin that would somehow organize and govern the process of signification. According to Derrida this idea contradicts the basic Saussurean insight that all signifiers acquire a meaning in their differential relation to other signifiers. This “flat,” or non-hierarchical ontology clashes with the phallo-logocentric transcendence at work in Lacan's thought.

A major point of convergence between Derrida's deconstructive method and the psychoanalytic debunking of rationalistic presumptions is the structural role played by otherness in the constitution of the self. In this regard, Derrida engages with some of the key concepts of psychoanalysis, for instance the primacy of transference, counter-transference, and resistance in the psychoanalytic relationship. Derrida differs from Hegel however less on the emphasis he places on the importance of the other/otherness in the constitution of the subject, than on the apology of violence that is implicit in Hegel and explicitly rejected in

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<sup>28</sup> See for instance: Jacques Derrida: *Marges de la philosophie* 1972, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1982. *La carte postale de Socrate à Freud et au-delà* 1980, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*).

Derrida's work.<sup>29</sup> Rejecting binary oppositions – starting from the false opposition between consciousness and the unconscious – means for Derrida recognizing the radical alterity of the self as an open and process-oriented entity and hence also the subject's debt to the structural presence of others. This dependence upon a structurally necessary other leads Derrida to assert also the elusive and incommensurable, but also positive structure of this other.<sup>30</sup> This theme becomes central in Derrida's later work and will be developed in his cosmopolitan ethics, in a constructive dialogue with both Freud and Levinas. Thus the point of convergence between Derrida and psychoanalysis – the ethics of otherness – also leads to a significant divergence about the possibility of ever reaching a genuinely ethical relation to others. And this, in turn, reveals that Derrida's relation to psychoanalytic theory is deeply political.

In a recent assessment of Derrida's legacy for psychoanalysis, René Major emphasizes the importance of his work on political subjectivity and cosmopolitan citizenship as an extension of the ethical position he articulates in, among other places, *The Other Heading*, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, and *Monolingualism of the Other*.<sup>31</sup> Major is also careful, however, to stress the enduring resistance that Derrida's philosophy offers against any Kantian restoration of a moral universal. The instance of the unconscious, on the contrary, allows deconstructive philosophy to challenge the metaphysics of presence at all levels. This means that any presence is but a process of residual traces and that all appeal to a fixed origin is structurally delayed. This hiatus or deferred action is originary and it implies that everything begins in re-writing, in duplication, citation, and repetition. For both psychoanalysis and for deconstructive philosophy, Major argues, this duplication of traces without originals destabilizes the logocentric pretensions of sovereign reason without however falling into its dialectical opposite. It simply installs a new political economy of meaning in iterability, repetition, and a structural debt to otherness. The political force of deconstruction lies precisely in its critique of both the transcendentalism of the philosophical subject and the coercive power of a Logos that functions through assignments to a subject position, a proper noun, and a steady place.

The Phallus as Law then emerges as an explicit concern for Derrida, whereas it was implicit in previous psychoanalytic debates. Derrida's critique of the transcendent claims of the law and of its structural violence is part of this debate: he stresses both the violence and

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<sup>29</sup> See for instance; Jacques Derrida: Glas, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr. & Richard Rand (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1986).

<sup>30</sup> See for instance: Jacques Derrida *Memoires for Paul de Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

<sup>31</sup> See René Major, "Derrida and Psychoanalysis: Desistential Psychoanalysis.", in: *Jacques Derrida and the Humanities: A Critical Reader*, Tom Cohen (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

basic irrationality of the Law – with reference to Walter Benjamin<sup>32</sup> – but also its resolute and non-negotiable presence. This position can be described as hysterical because it simultaneously asserts and denies the presence of the crucial instance of Phallic power – erasing with one hand what it is writing with the other. This position, which oscillates between recognition and disavowal, draws Derrida closer to the question of the feminine as the trace of writing as the simultaneous – and hence hysterical – assertion and disavowal of the power of the master signifier.<sup>33</sup> Thus, Derrida takes from Lacanian psychoanalysis the emphasis on the feminine and on sexual difference, but he radicalizes them both.

The question of the feminine is endemic to psychoanalysis and it touches upon the question of its very legitimacy as discourse. The indefinable nature of the feminine – its lack of frame, form, and focus – raises the question of the possibility of its re-presentation, that is to say, of writing. Lacan opts to solve the problem by confining the feminine to symbolic absence and hence to un-representability within the Phallic symbolic system. Derrida, on the other hand, argues that the centrality of a master signifier/the Phallus allows for sexual difference to be conceptualized not as a symbolic absence, but rather as *différance*, that is to say, as incommensurably different, but in non-biological terms. The feminine as the effect of a Law of signification that privileges the Phallus and the Logos as operators of meaning paves the way for active deconstruction of the master discourse itself. A woman is, in other words and *pace* Lacan, something other than either the dialectical opposite of a man or that for which there is no possible symbolic representation. She is other, in the full positivity of that radical otherness.

The position of the feminine is a crucial concept in Derrida's work: it is the location of a fundamental erasure or structural hiatus, in relation to the Phallic illusion of presence, without which there can be no thought and no production of meaning.<sup>34</sup>

The discursive strategy proposed by Derrida's deconstruction is to re-trace the steps of this erasure in the texts and systems of thought, which results in a process of writing as resistance against the gravitational pull of the Phallic master signifier. Thus, the feminine as *différance* is the site of fundamental de-structuring without which no affirmative politics is possible. It

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<sup>32</sup> See Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority'." Mary Quaintance (trans.), in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, Drucilla Cornell et al. (eds) (New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>33</sup> See Jacques Derrida, "Le Facteur de la Vérité," in *The Post Card*, p. 444.

<sup>34</sup> See for instance: Jacques Derrida: *Positions*, Paris, Minuit, 1972, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981; *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. Barbara Harlow (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1979 and *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.

consequently is also the precondition for a non-despotic and anti-totalitarian theory and practice of political agency. In this respect, Derrida emerges as one of the sources of inspiration for the feminism of sexual difference and especially for the movement known as *écriture féminine*.<sup>35</sup> Best expressed by Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, this radical movement encourages writing as an experimental method to recover the traces of those subject positions for which there is no adequate representation within the Phallic master signifier.<sup>36</sup>

The central position granted to sexual difference and *différance* as a constitutive element for the constitution of the subject and the anti-essentialist reading of difference are the key contribution of Derrida to feminist thought.<sup>37</sup> And, as should now be clear, this Derridean contribution comes directly through his critical engagement with Freud, Lacan, and psychoanalysis.

#### IV. Feminism and psychoanalysis

Feminist theory provides one of the most productive sites and testing grounds for discussing and assessing the basic tenets of psychoanalysis and its relationship to critical thought. In Freud's time, the problematic of the centrality of the paternal metaphor to the constitution of the social field led to disagreements about whether the libido is one, and masculine, in both sexes – also known as the penis-centered theory of psychic development – or whether there is sexual difference at the unconscious level. The latter results in the hypothesis of the specificity of both female libidinal development and hence of feminine sexuality, which challenges Freud's patriarchal assumptions about the psychic consequences of the anatomical differences between the sexes.<sup>38</sup>

This was a point of vehement debate in the first psychoanalytic society among Freud's early followers such as Karen Horney, Helene Deutsch, and Ernest Jones,<sup>39</sup> who, not

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<sup>35</sup> For an introduction, see Elizabeth Wright, *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: A Critical Dictionary*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

<sup>36</sup> See Irigaray, "Equal to whom?" in *The Essential Difference*. Naomi Schor and Elizabeth weed (eds) (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994).

<sup>37</sup> See Grosz, "Derrida and Feminism: A Remembrance" in *differences* 16(3) (2005).

<sup>38</sup> See Sigmund Freud, *Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes* (1925), in *The Standard edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol XIX*, James Strachey (ed.) (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-1974)

<sup>39</sup> Karen Horney (1885–1952), was born and educated in Germany, before relocating to the United States in 1930. A strong critic of the Freudian notion of penis envy, she was the first psychoanalyst to publicly criticize the



unlike Irigaray forty year later, championed the cause of the specificity of female libidinal and psychic structures. Since those early debates, feminist psychoanalytic thinkers in Britain and the United States have picked up on psychoanalytic theories of various stripes: not only Freud and Lacan, but also Self Psychology (based on the work of Heinz Kohut [1913–81]), and the affect theory of Sylvan Tomkins (1911–91) have all received serious attention by, among others, Juliet Mitchell, Nancy Chodorow, Elizabeth Grosz, Teresa Brennan, Jessica Benjamin, and Judith Butler.<sup>40</sup> In France, center stage is taken by Luce Irigaray's work, to which we shall return.

The main themes that feminist philosophers took from psychoanalysis can be organized around the following cluster of ideas. First, a renewed emphasis on "embodiment" in the sense of a post-phenomenological understanding of the intelligence of the flesh. This idea, also rendered by terms like "morphology," positions embodiment as a process, not an essence, which links nature and culture in a new creative manner that contests both biological determinism and naïve social constructivism. Psychoanalysis, through its theory of desire, allows for a process-oriented ontology of the body, which in turn redefines the terms of the relation to memory, cross-generational transmission, and other unconscious productions.

The second crucial cluster of ideas is related to the theory of desire outlined above and the extent to which that dialectical vision renews our understanding of power relations and of their productive function in psychic life and interpersonal relations. Feminists are quick to point out the unbalanced symbolic burden carried by both sexes in the constitution of the social field. More specifically, the role of the female body in the sacrificial ontology that founds the patriarchal social system through the primordial murder of the father becomes the focus of intense debates. Loyal to the isomorphic relation between the social and the psychic,

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psychoanalytic account of female psychological development. She remains highly regarded for her theory of neurosis and her pioneering work in feminine psychology.

Helene Deutsch (1884–1982) was the first psychoanalyst to specialize in women, and her *Psychoanalysis of the Sexual Functions of Women* (1925) was the first book by a psychoanalyst on women's psychology. Born in Poland, she worked closely and remained close with Freud from 1916–35, when she emigrated to the United States.

Ernest Jones (1879–1958), the first English-language psychoanalyst, worked closely with Freud from 1908 until Freud's death in 1939. In addition to being Freud's official biographer, Jones played a crucial role in the establishment of the American Psychoanalytic Association in 1911 and the British Psychoanalytical Society in 1919. He shared with Karen Horney the critique of Freud's view that female sexuality was dependent upon women's recognition of their "inferior body" and, thus, derivative upon male sexuality.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*. Freud, Reich, Laing and Women, reissued as *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis*; Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* and *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory*; Grosz, *Sexual Subversions: Three French Feminists* and *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*; Brennan, *History after Lacan*; and Butler, *Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*; *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*; and *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories of Subjection*.

feminists have also pointed out the prize women play in the ideology of love, the patriarchal structure of the family, and their symbolic absence from the phallogocentric symbolic system. This has generated a rich debate<sup>41</sup> on the structural role of violence in erotic fantasy and social life and on the enormous importance of heterosexual normativity as the implementation of a phallogocentric social and symbolic contract that sacrifices the bodies of women on the altar of transcendental masculinity.

The third central cluster of ideas concerns the role of unconscious identifications, dominated by the phallogocentric symbolic, in the constitution of identity. The notion of imaginary interpellations and their role in constructing the subject are important, but also highly contested. The instance of the unconscious as a structural element in political subjectivity is central to the feminist debates about sexed identities, alternative sexuality, homosexual, lesbian, and queer theories.<sup>42</sup> The philosophical idea they relay is that political change and transformation requires shifts on the deep structures of the self and these cannot be activated by the standard mechanisms and protocols of political life. Another politics is required; one which activates affects and undoes or at least unveils unconscious formations.

Psychoanalytic feminism claims the importance of a theory of the subject to hold together the complex and internally contradictory structures of the self as a social and symbolic entity structured by unconscious processes.<sup>43</sup> Social instances and psychic processes need to be activated together for lasting changes to be enacted in the sexual and psychic life of human beings. This creates the need for a methodology based on psychoanalytic techniques of careful and staged repetition; choreographed re-enactments; positive deconstructions and visionary blueprints for empowering alternatives.

One of the most influential schools of feminist psychoanalysis, however, does not pay any allegiance to Lacan, but rather refers to both Melanie Klein and the British school of Donald Winnicott<sup>44</sup> (1896–1971). “Object relations theory,” as it is known, stresses the

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<sup>41</sup> See Kathleen Barry, *Female Sexual Slavery*; Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will*; Andrea Dworkin, *Our Body: Prophecies and Discourses on Sexual Politics*; Catharina A. MacKinnon, *Feminism Unmodified. Discourses on Life and Law*; Brison, *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of the Self*; Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* and Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider* (Trumansberg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984)

\* <sup>42</sup> For a further discussion of this issue, see Gayle Salamon, “Re-thinking Gender: Judith Butler and Feminist Philosophy” in *History of Continental Philosophy. Volume 8*, ed. May.

<sup>43</sup> See Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*.

<sup>44</sup> Melanie Klein (1882-1960) was born in Vienna, studied with Karl Abraham in Berlin, and was invited by Ernest Jones to London, where she worked from 1927 until her death. Klein was perhaps the first analyst to use traditional psychoanalytic techniques with young children. One of the innovators of object relations theory, she was and remains a significant influence on psychoanalytic technique and theory, especially in Great Britain.

Donald W. Winnicott (1896-1971) was born in Plymouth, England. A paediatrician and psychiatrist, he was trained in psychoanalysis by, among others, James Strachey and Klein. Focusing on infant and family therapy

importance of the relationship to the mother and hence also of the maternal imaginary in the constitution of the subject. Focusing for instance on the primacy of the breast, object relations theory both emphasizes the specificity of female morphology and critiques the penis-centered theory of human development in Freud. The focus on the mother-child/mouth-breast relation, which also proves influential for Deleuze and Guattari, casts a different light on the negative political economy that is central to Freud's later thought. Klein stresses both the relevance of envy and psychological negativity to the process of human development, and also the potential for positivity through the pursuit of gratitude or the acceptance of melancholia as a productive mode of relation to the former object of love.

The popularity of object relations theory among feminists, as testified by the influence of the work of Nancy Chodorow and Jessica Benjamin, among others,<sup>45</sup> is due to a number of factors that stress the need for more philosophical reflection. The first factor is that object relations theory suits the aims and the logic of social constructivist thought. Without falling into a sociological reduction of unconscious processes, this theory nonetheless offers dynamic possibilities for active interaction between social processes of change, for instance in labor relations, but also in models of parenting and alternative family structures, and the psychic life of individuals. Chodorow, for instance, is firm in arguing that different forms of child-caring and parenting by men will necessarily change both gender relations in society and the psychological models of masculinity. This profound optimism about history's capacity to alter the patterns of unconscious repetition stands in sharp contrast to Lacan's psychic essentialism and to the pessimism with which he viewed the possibility of radical transformations.

A second, less-conceptual factor to explain the success of object relations theory in general is the fact that it is very compatible with the culture of human management and coaching, which has become so prevalent in the post-industrial era. Less abstract than Lacanian psychoanalysis, and less seduced by high philosophical concepts, object relations theory is a very applicable method of re-structuring inter-subjectivity and re-framing violence and aggression. As such it plays a large role in epistemology (Fox Keller and Harding),<sup>46</sup> in

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(among his key ideas are the "good-enough mother" and the "transitional object"), he was a major influence in the development of object relations theory and also an important influence on the "Middle Group" (today the "Independent Group") of the British Psycho-Analytic Society, which developed as an alternative to the competing factions in the 1940s associated with Anna Freud and Klein.

<sup>45</sup> See Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering*, and Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love*.

<sup>46</sup> See Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, and Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism and Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991)

ethics (Benjamin), and in policy-making on gender equality and gender mainstreaming for politics and development.

While the preceding paragraphs indicate that feminist theorists have looked for resources in several different approaches within psychoanalysis, in the feminist debate between psychoanalysis and philosophy, the agenda has been set by the Lacanians. Foremost among them is Luce Irigaray<sup>47</sup> who takes on Lacan's indictment of the feminine as symbolic absence and turns it into a discursive and political strategy. She adopts as her starting premise the notion that the feminine as *jouissance* exceeds representation and that it is an act of Phallic violence to construct this generative force as a lack or a symbolic absence. The feminine falls outside the political economy of utterability in the Phallic system because of her too-much-ness, not because of lack: the problem is her infinite multiplicity, not her silence. Thus, precisely because of her capacity to evoke the necessary grain of unsaid or unspeakable presence, the feminine is for Irigaray the essential premise for the elaboration of alternative symbolic forms of representation.

Irigaray attempts to inscribe the feminine via psychoanalysis into philosophy, by a double strategy: first, not unlike Derrida, she detects the traces of the feminine, in texts and systems of thought, as the site of resistance to the power of the master signifier. Second, and unlike anyone else, she firmly attaches these explorations of the feminine to the lived existence and the embodied experience of women – individual entities embodied female and socialized as such. This strategic form of essentialism is crucial to Irigaray's political project of exploring and creating alternative ways of expressing that which the Phallo-logocentric system has reduced to silence and represented as necessarily absent or silent. It is also the central concept in Irigaray's feminist politics of sexual difference as the enterprise that aims at revolutionizing difference from within and at forcing social recognition of that which is given as devalued, or absent.<sup>48</sup>

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\* <sup>47</sup> Irigaray's work is dealt with elsewhere in this volume; see the essay by Mary Beth Mader.

<sup>48</sup> See Luce Irigaray (1974) *Spéculum. De l'autre femme*. Paris: Minuit. English translation (1985a) *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Transl. Gillian Gill, Ithaca: Cornell University Press; (1977) *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*. Paris: Minuit. English translation (1985b) *This Sex Which Is Not One*, transl. Catherine Porter, Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Irigaray, Luce (1980) *Amante marine. De Friedrich Nietzsche*. Paris: Minuit. English translation (1991) *Marine Lover of F. Nietzsche*, transl. Gillian Gill, New York: Columbia University Press. (1983) *L'oubli de l'air chez Martin Heidegger*. Paris: Minuit. English translation (1991) *The Forgetting of Air in M. Heidegger*; (1984) *L'éthique de la différence sexuelle*. Paris: Minuit. English translation (1993) *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke & Gillian Gill, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press. For an elaboration of this, see Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*.

In the earlier phase of her work, Irigaray defends sexual difference as the principle of non-one,<sup>49</sup> which aims at stressing the a-symmetrical relationship between the two poles of sexual difference – the feminine and the masculine – and hence also their irreversibility. This results, as mentioned above, in a critique of the very conceptual premises of equality-thinking as a reactive and non-creative simulation of the dominant subject position. Whereas the early Irigaray is a thinker of complexity and open-endedness, her later work evolves more in the direction of explorations with ways of empowering and enacting the metaphysical primacy of the heterosexual “Two” – two sexually opposed others united in equality at a profound ontological level. This project aims at redesigning a radical heterosexual politics that would be based on the symbolic equivalence of the two sexes and would reconstruct the world on this radical basis. In her first phase, the challenge is how to express the feminine of women – also known as “the other of the other”; in the second phase of Irigaray’s work<sup>50</sup>, the emphasis falls rather on the utopia of a heterosexual contract that would by-pass and circumvent the sacrificial ontology of Phallo-logocentrism and the symbolic elimination of the feminine that it entails. The conceptual backbone of Irigaray’s formidable oeuvre remains sexual difference as a political project that aims at empowering the virtual potential contained in subjects socio-symbolically constructed as marginal.

This radical reading of Lacan contrasts sharply with the far more orthodox approach to Lacanian psychoanalysis in the work of Julia Kristeva, who unites the semiotic philosophy of language with the psychoanalytic view of the formation of the subject in language. Influenced also by Roland Barthes, Kristeva is very faithful to Lacan’s conceptual premises, but has produced her own account of how thought, affect, and representation come together in the making of the subject. While upholding the Lacanian scheme of the sovereignty of a transcendent Phallic master signifier, Kristeva manages nonetheless to highlight the specific features of the feminine.

The specificity of the feminine is linked to the maternal in several ways: firstly, because the pre-oedipal relationship to the mother is precisely what escapes capture by the sovereign master signifier. Kristeva’s emphasis on the “semiotic” position can be seen not as

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<sup>49</sup> See Braidotti, *Metamorphoses*, especially pp. 46-47.

<sup>50</sup> See for instance: Irigaray, Luce (1987b) *Sexes et parentés*. Paris: Minuit. English translation (1993) *Sexes and Genealogies*, transl. Gillian C. Gill, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press; (1989) *Le temps de la différence. Pour une révolution pacifique*. Paris: Hachette. English translation (1994) *Thinking the Difference. For a Peaceful Revolution*, transl. Karin Montin, London: Athlone Press, 1994 ; (1990) *Je, tu, nous. Pour une culture de la différence*. Paris: Grasset. English translation (1993) *Je, Tu, Nous. Towards a Culture of Difference*. transl. Alison Martin, New York/London: Routledge; (1991) ‘Love between us’ in: E. Cadava, P. Connor, J.L. Nancy (eds) *Who Comes After the Subject?*. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 167-177.

the dialectical opposition to the power of the symbolic, but as the trace of the impossibility of a complete closure of the subject within the phallic signifier. The “chora” indicates for Kristeva the acoustic and pre-linguistic traces of our originary belonging to a material maternal body. The maternal is both foundational and liminal at the same time, in that it traces the structural open-ness of the subject.<sup>51</sup>

Secondly, this is linked to the idea of the maternal as abjection,<sup>52</sup> that is to say, a structural organizing principle that marks the boundaries of representation and thinkability. The maternal is situated in a boundary-zone between life and death, time and space, being and becoming. In some ways it is the location where the fullness of meaning of these dichotomous concepts implodes and they get to co-exist in uncomfortable proximity. This is a more helpful and more feminist position than Lacan’s reduction of the feminine to symbolic absence and structural un-representability. Contrary to radical feminists like Irigaray, however, Kristeva is not aiming at a re-definition of the maternal as a sort of prototype of alternative female subjectivity. She is satisfied with a humbler task, namely, that of re-appraising the fundamental importance of the maternal. Like all traces, this fundamental bond is never fully lost but can rather be retrieved through the work of the poet and other creative spirits who escape total identification with the master signifier.

Striking a cautionary note that becomes more conservative in her later work, Kristeva is concerned by facile utopias that lead the subject to believe that s/he can just step out of the order of the symbolic law. Following the isomorphism between the psychic and the social dear to Lacan, Kristeva argues that the willful elements of many political ideologies are delusional and can be seen both as symptoms of psychosis and as the threat of social anarchy.<sup>53</sup> This approach results in an interesting methodology in Kristeva’s later-work: a sort of psycho-pathological mapping of social events and phenomena. Although this often results in issuing strong warnings about the dangers of radical politics and deep social and psychic upheavals, it also brings to the fore significant insights about the processes of transformation themselves. This position is perfectly ethical for the practicing psychoanalyst that Kristeva has become, and it does justice to the resurgence of symptoms in our advanced societies also and especially among its radical elements.

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<sup>51</sup> See Julia Kristeva, *La Révolution Du Langage Poétique: L'avant-Garde À La Fin Du Xixe Siècle, Lautréamont Et Mallarmé*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia UP, 1984); (1980) *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*, Paris: Seuil, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez New York: Columbia UP, 1982. [AS] For a discussion of Kristeva’s terminology, see the essay by Sara Heinamäa elsewhere in this volume.

<sup>52</sup> See Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*.

<sup>53</sup> See Julia Kristeva, “Women’s Time,,” Alice Jardine and Harry Blake (trans.), *Signs* 7(1) (Autumn 1981).

This results in due course in significant social and cultural analyses of depression, mourning and melancholia as aspects of the increasing friction between the psychic and the social in advanced capitalism.<sup>54</sup> They are the price one must be prepared to pay for engaging in radical processes of resistance against the dominant norms. On the affirmative side, Kristeva also develops an original methodology to assess the specific contribution of more moderate women to culture in general and to philosophy in particular. This becomes evident in her trilogy about female genius<sup>55</sup> and by the rather surprising *rapprochement* to the egalitarian politics of Simone de Beauvoir, which is surprising in light of the very radical positions originally taken by Kristeva on feminist politics in her Maoist youth,<sup>56</sup> a position which had made her dismissive of all egalitarian politics.

Very prolific as a writer and firmly established in the English-speaking academic world, Kristeva remains an influential thinker. The growing normative dimension of her work, however, which stresses the ethical component of the psychoanalytic experience and cautions against political change, shows clear signs of political conservatism. This is made explicit in her firm stand against the decline of the paternal metaphor, the crisis of the traditional family, and the rise of gay parenthood. This position, compounded by her increasing nationalism and anti-Islamic militant secularism, makes Kristeva's approach to psychoanalysis problematic for many contemporary feminists.

#### V. Deleuze and Guattari, or the Unconscious in the Third Millennium

The single most important conceptual critique of psychoanalysis in itself, and also in relation to the institutional and disciplinary practice of philosophy, is elaborated by Deleuze and Guattari in a series of texts that constitute the most incisive contribution to the contemporary debate in this field. Taking their distance from the linguistic turn, the theoretical arrogance of the Lacanians, as well as the Hegelian legacy of their thought, Deleuze and Guattari enact a genuine conceptual return to Freud, Klein, and the early psychoanalytic insights. They do so by stressing both the corporeal – rather than linguistically mediated – structure of the self; by dis-engaging the body from any suggestion of inert matter, and by attacking the notion of desire as lack. We shall refer to these

<sup>54</sup> See Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun. Depression and Melancholia*, Leon S. Roudiez (trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

<sup>55</sup> See Julia Kristeva, *Female Genius: Hannah Arendt*, Ross Gubermann (trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) *Melanie Klein*, Ross Guberman (trans.) (New York: Columbia University press, 2001), and *Colette*, Jane Marie Todd (trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

<sup>56</sup> See Julia Kristeva, *About Chinese Women*, Anita Barrows (trans.) (New York: Urizen Books, 1977).

respectively as: transcendental empiricism, nomadic embodiment, and the positivity of desire or “epistemophilia.”

As suggested above, Deleuze and Guattari take issues with the Hegelian legacy that highlights the structural function negativity plays in our psychic life. The Freudian theory of the libido harnessed the drives back onto a system that indexes desire on a dialectical structure of competing consciousnesses in the pursuit of recognition and their respective libidinal fulfillment. This admittedly does inscribe alterity – the structural presence of others – as a necessary and vital presence, but it also marks it as the limit or necessary threshold of negativity at the core of the desiring subject. This negative view of otherness and the dialectical struggle of competing consciousness – which Jessica Benjamin has articulated so eloquently as “the bonds of love” – produce insights into the rationality of domination and its ruthlessly logical function in the political economy of love and hate in the Western world. Central to this is the notion of the death drive, which Deleuze and Guattari analyze not only as a major concept in psychic life, but also as a political concept that explains the self-destructive logic of capitalism. Coherent in their pursuit of the isomorphism between the psychic and the social, but opposed to the dualistic logic of oppositions, Deleuze and Guattari turn to Spinoza’s philosophical monism in order to undo this constitutive violence. The theory of the death drive<sup>57</sup> has a number of important implications. First, that the libidinal drive or energetic charge is neutral in terms of normative content: it merely marks a quantitative level of energy. Second, the death drive functions by withholding or subtracting energy. It does not dispose of any libidinal energy of its own, but merely prevents, deviates, or defers the libido itself. Hence the need to bring in forms of mediation that account for that which becomes subjected to the negativity of the death drive. It is important to note, here, that the libido or life force is the one genuine vital force, whereas the death drive disposes of no energy of its own. Third, the entropic curve, or the idea that the function of desire is to fulfill itself and then get extinguished. The drives only aim at self-fulfillment, but paradoxically their fulfillment means returning to the zero level of energy, that is to say, emptying out. This is consequently the primary definition of the death drive: returning to the zero degree of energy. Fourth is the emphasis on repression, denial, or psychic defense as a major category of human sexuality. The active desire is transposed by the subject into the

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<sup>57</sup> See Sigmund Freud: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (*Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, 1920) The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, translated from the German under the General Editorship of *James Strachey*. In collaboration with *Anna Freud*. Assisted by *Alix Strachey* and Alan Tyson, 24 volumes, Vintage, 1999



fantasy of his/her being seduced. This shift from activity to passivity not only relinquishes the subject from his/her responsibility, but also prevents an adequate account of sexuality itself.

Deleuze and Guattari argue in *Anti-Oedipus* that, while Freud “discovers” the productivity of the unconscious (and desire), his conservatism leads him to withdraw from the productive potential of this insight and trap desire in the Oedipal drama played out on a stage of representation, rather than playing out in terms of vital forces. Accordingly, confronted by the evidence that sexuality tends to be experienced as an invasion or a violation, as a disruption of the order guaranteed by the ego, and that it aims at self-extinction by consuming the object of desire, Freud reinvests the model of rational consciousness as the organizing principle of order, unity, stability, and cohesion of the self. The theory of the drives is indexed on the centrality of the ego and the necessity of positing the authority of a willful subject. Deleuze and Guattari argue that we are confronted here by a lasting paradox: on the one hand, with a notion of the libido as that which aims at its own death and, in opposition to it, the ego as that which longs for life and self-preservation. The paradox is that sexuality, which circulates through both, shares in the characteristics of the former rather than in the opaque stability of the latter. The implication is that the pleasure principle is not a vital, but rather a dissipative structure, a zero approximation machine that aims at shedding the very memory traces or ideational contents that it travels through. Sexuality is a perfect vampire, if you wish, or a viral infection that destroys the site that incubates it. Thanatos equals Eros via the flow of the Libido.

Taking a stand against Freud’s and Lacan’s political conservatism, Deleuze and Guattari draw a very different set of conclusions from the psychoanalytic evidence that desire and death are tied together by a double knot in the Western psyche and its culture. Whereas Freud concludes from this the necessity of reasserting the biological organism as a necessary mediator, a store of energy ruled by the ego, Deleuze and Guattari resist both the humanizing affect and the humanistic influence of normative reason. They state that Freud downplays the far more forceful fact that this coagulation or stratification of forces that get bundled up as an organism, a self, an individual, or an ego, is merely a wrapper. There is a principle of anti-life, a force that is both vital and dissipative. The death drive is the constitutive principle of libidinal circulation within the subject. In opposition to this binding force, the libido, operated by the death drive, aims at reaching the state of pure movement discharging its affects as it goes, moving within the chain till it is completely spent. Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari (1972a) *L'anti-Oedipe. Capitalisme et schizophrénie I*. Paris: Minuit. English

translation: (1977) *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. New York: Viking Press/ Richard Seaver; translation by R. Hurley, M. Seem and H.R. Lane.

. Thus, the death principle that Freud says cannot be represented is relocated at the heart of the unconscious and hence of the subject, so as to become its most radical expression. By choosing to re-embrace standard morality, Freud leaves us a mixed legacy, because the "Life" which this morality venerates is in psychoanalytic terms the denial of the very libidinal force that is the source of the subject's vitality. Deleuze and Guattari, on the other hand, re-assert the primacy of "Life," not as a logo-centric "bios"-power, but rather as the raw force of "zoe," the non-human or post-human otherness that stands for the un-assimilable outside of the human.<sup>58</sup> Thus, a dynamic, non-essentialist form of vitalism comes to replace the mechanisms of the Freudian drives, the psychic essentialism of the Lacanian formulas, and their mutual Hegelian legacy.

The next step in Deleuze and Guattari's argument is the shift of emphasis towards affirmation, which takes the form in *A Thousand Plateaus* of a switch to a Spinozist, rather than Freudian-Hegelian political ontology. Such a shift of paradigm means, among other things, that less emphasis is placed on dialectics of consciousness and more attention is paid to issues of relationality, processes of rhizomic interconnections, and an ethical project based on positivity and the critique of the negative. The background to this shift is political: by the end of the second millennium in Europe, Freud's metaphysics of death and desire, which inscribes loss and mourning at the heart of the human subject, came to be seen as a dated vision of the subject position and by extension of the shape of contemporary capitalism.<sup>59</sup>

Renewed stress is placed on the link that advanced capitalism has forged with hyper-individualism and the ego-indexed political economy of consumerism that goes with it. In different ways, political theory and cultural criticism turn their backs on the glory of the ego, the pathos of the ego, the obsession with "me, myself, and I" and hence also the binary "me-you/ self-other/ west and rest" that are constitutive of our social and symbolic space.

Contemporary thinkers echo Deleuze's rhizomes and Guattari's molecular politics in arguing for forms of social interaction by desiring subjects that are nomadic, not unitary;

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<sup>58</sup> See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1991) *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?* Paris: Minuit. English translation: (1992) *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press; Deleuze, Gilles (1995) 'L'immanence: une vie...', in: *Philosophie* nr. 47, pp. 3-7. For a different perspective, see also Agamben, Giorgio. (1998) *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press and Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics*.

<sup>59</sup> See especially chapter 3 of Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari (1972a) *L'anti-Oedipe. Capitalisme et schizophrénie I*. Paris: Minuit. English translation: (1977) *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. New York: Viking Press/ Richard Seaver; translation by R. Hurley, M. Seem and H.R. Lane.

multi-relational, not phallo-centric; connective, not dialectical; simulated, not specular; affirmative, not melancholic; and relatively dis-engaged from a linguistically mediated system of signification. If we look at recent figurations of several major theorists and thinkers, they all attest to multi-layered relationality: Negri's multitudes; feminist critiques of scattered hegemonies by Grewal and Kaplan; diasporic belongings by Avtar Brah; Haraway's cyborgs; Gilroy's conviviality; Nancy's hospitality; Butler's queer subjectivity, and Braidotti's nomadic subject.<sup>60</sup> This shift of paradigm from classical psychoanalytic hermeneutics to more multi-layered neo-materialist approaches, however, should not be allowed to obscure the relevance of psychoanalysis to contemporary concerns, but rather testify to its enduring legacy.

Contrary to the Hegelian tradition, alterity is no longer seen as a structural limit to the deployment of desire and hence to the constitution of the subject. It has rather become the condition of expression of affirmative, i.e., non-reactive, alternative modes of desire. The other is, for Deleuze and Guattari, both a human and non-human threshold of transformative encounters<sup>61</sup>. The "difference" expressed by subjects who are especially positioned as "other-than" – that is to say, always already different from – has a potential for transformative or creative becoming. This "difference" is not an essential given, but a project and a process that is ethically coded. This position in favor of the positivity of desire as complexity promotes consequently a triple shift. First, it emphasizes the radical ethics of transformation in opposition to the moral protocols of Kantian universalism. Second, it shifts the focus from unitary rationality-driven consciousness to a process ontology, that is to say, a vision of subjectivity propelled by affects and relations. And third, it disengages the emergence of the subject from the Hegelian logic of negation and attaches subjectivity to affirmative otherness – reciprocity as creation, not as the re-cognition of Sameness. This emphasis on affirmation, or the critique of the negative, results in affirmation as the politics of life itself, as "zoe," or generative force.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> See Negri and Hardt, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*; Grewal and Kaplan, ed., *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*; Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*; Haraway, *Modest Witness@Second Millennium. FemaleMan<sup>©</sup> Meets OncoMouse<sup>TM</sup>: Feminism and Technoscience*; Gilroy, *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?*; Nancy, **Error! Main Document Only.** *The Inoperative Community*; Butler, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship between Life and Death*, and Braidotti, *Transpositions*.

<sup>61</sup> See especially chapter on "Becoming" in Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari (1980) *Mille plateaux. Capitalisme et schizophrénie II*. Paris: Minuit. English translation: (1987b) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Translated by Brian Massumi.

<sup>62</sup> See Ansell Pearson, *Germinal Life: The Difference and Repetition of Deleuze*. (London: Routledge, 1999).

Thus, the Deleuzian critique of the transcendental fallacy of Lacan's work brings psychoanalysis back to its more political edge. Desire is the driving force that constitutes the subject, in a constant process of social and symbolic negotiations with the dominant or majoritarian structures. Discourses about affectivity, desire, and self-other relations are therefore positioned at the center of social theories about the social contract, the constitution of the social field, and the possible evolution of democracy. More importantly perhaps, by stressing a process ontology instead of a metaphysics of presence, nomadic philosophy develops the conceptual tools provided by psychoanalysis so as to help us refine our understanding of how power works through invisible *apparati* of capture/identification. It also renews our capacity for, and innovates our powers of, resistance accordingly.

## VI. Conclusion

Squeezed between the trivialization of popular culture and the disdain of academia, the legacy of psychoanalysis remains a formidable historical and intellectual factor that continues to affect our understandings of the structures of subjectivity. The evidence is overwhelming to prove that mental distress, depression, stress, pathological behavior have not at all disappeared, but their symptoms have shifted. What sex-driven hysteria was in the 19th century, today is an epidemic of anorexia, bulimia, and eating disorders mediated by visual culture.<sup>63</sup> This points to the necessity of stating that the patient and rather humble task of coming to terms with the complexities of the unconscious processes and of connecting them to broader social phenomena contrasts with the hasty and often instrumental ways in which contemporary societies tend to deal with both psychic suffering and disorders and with issues of desire. Psychoanalytic insights can offer an alternative to the relief of psychopharmaceuticals on the one hand and the formidable advances of neuro-sciences on the other. They can also add both complexity and dignity to discussions about the structures and aims of desire as a fundamental human passion. The question of the lasting influence of psychoanalysis after the critical revisions brought upon it by the poststructuralist and feminist generations and the refocusing they induced on some of the insights of psychoanalytic theory remains therefore high on the philosophical agenda.

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<sup>63</sup> See Susie Orbach, *Hunger Strike: The Anorectic's Struggle as a Metaphor for Our Age* (London: Faber, 1986), and *Fat is a Feminist Issue II: A Program to Conquer Compulsive Eating*. (New York: Berkley Books, 1987).

