

“Psychoanalysis has played a role in the direction of modern subjectivity, and it cannot sustain this role without aligning it with the movement in modern science that elucidates it.

“This is the problem of the foundations that must assure our discipline its place among the sciences: a problem of formalization, which, it must be admitted, has gotten off to a very bad start.

“For it seems that, possessed anew by the very shortcoming in the medical mind in opposition to which psychoanalysis had to constitute itself, we were trying to jump back on the bandwagon of science—being half a century behind the movement of the sciences—by following medicine’s example.”

Jacques Lacan, “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis”
(Ecrits 235, 2006)

The “problem of formalization” to which Lacan here refers is the linguistic problematic par excellence. In a sense it is a question of valid definitions, whose component-words also have to have valid definitions in order for the original definition’s validity to remain intact, and those definitions are also composed of similarly-defined words, and on and on. What we have characterized as a “linguistic” problem is in fact merely a problem of form. Psychoanalysis raises this question of form, of foundation, as a scientific question which calls all science into question. The “problem of foundations” presumes an unfamiliar structure, whose form is de-formation, or rather, it takes an unfamiliar posture, inquiring in a master’s discourse about the validity of the master’s discourse. In other words, psychoanalysis presumes a curious structure whose rule is the rule of the process of transcendence of the ruled-structure.

An ex-structure, the gap or lack beneath the foundations of our ontological and metaphysical edifices, is that which (in its transcendence of the situation) obliges us to inaugurate a discourse. From separation comes speech; but speech already bears witness to this ex-structure (an un-structuring which re-structures)—we hear the voice as a ghost in the machine, the surplus of sociality, already transgression, apology, absolution. What is precisely of interest to us here is the parallax contained here at this very moment, in the subject-language itself. Lacan seemed to believe that most of our personality is a result of the effects of speech upon us; not the least of reasons for this would be the complex role the subject-language plays—how does it avoid the black hole of nothingness upon which it is founded and about which it radiates outwards into infinity? This is already an interrogation; here, we are at the closest and most urgent function of language, as command-to-be-truthful, as fidelity to my interpretation of the event, or more accurately, to that partial-description of a determination of a truth-event which language welcomes even as it attempts to re-integrate the alterity which constitutes the rupture of the event. Even here we must emphasize the hermeneutic, mediatory role the subject-language plays; language calls us to be a third to others as well as to ourselves. The mirror-image is not only a trauma, a horrifying bifurcation of reality which denudes our foundationlessness; we already live in a reflection of life, a non-life which enjoys only ‘speculation,’ embraces normalcy and reproduction. The mirror lies only in its terrifyingly total accuracy...

(c) Fractal Ontology, 2007