

## Community as speech: beyond the imaginary

Freud, you may recall, corresponded at length with Romain Rolland about Indian mysticism, and in 1931, on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday, the Indian Psychoanalytical Society presented him with a small ivory statue of the god Vishnu.<sup>1</sup> Freud kept it on his desk in much the same way that Erasmus was said to have kept on his desk a figurine of Terminus, the Roman god.

It may seem strange, that I start with references to the gods. But I wish to suggest that these two religious images, on the desks of two great humanists, are more than an aesthetic or a matter of decoration. Furthermore, I do this in the awareness that Freud himself, from the start, articulated psychoanalysis in relation to myth (Oedipus<sup>2</sup>) and biography (the *krankengeschichten*), rather than to science.

In this paper, I will endeavour to reflect on the therapeutic community, by referring back, principally, to the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan<sup>3</sup>, with its intersecting triptych of

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Vaidyanathan and Kripal 1999.

<sup>2</sup> The Oedipus complex is the passage, through a complex sexual dialectic, from the imaginary to the symbolic which occurs between the third and fifth year of life. It is the paradigmatic triangular structure in which the father transforms the dual relationship between the mother and child. Lacan follows Freud in attributing all psychopathological structures to a malfunction in the Oedipus complex. In other words, access to the symbolic order is achieved through confronting sexual difference. Central to this is the child's realisation that the mother is incomplete (because she lacks the phallus), its wish to become the phallus and satisfy the mother's desire. Lacan argues that this is true regardless of the sex of the child. Partial resolution comes through mother's behaviour and words which somehow make it clear to the child that there is a 'law' forbidding it to have sexual access to its mother. Later, the child becomes aware of the father and his role in relation the mother's desire. The child realises there is no point in competing with the father and consequently feels castrated. This liberates the child from the impossible task of fulfilling the mother and allows it to identify with the father.

<sup>3</sup> Psychoanalysis is the foundation and underpinning theory of the therapeutic community (Hinshelwood, 2002; Ward, 2003). But echoing the question raised over twenty years ago by Jean Laplanche, we can legitimately ask 'Which psychoanalysis?' (Laplanche, 1987). With the emergence of competing psychoanalyses after the Second World War, ego psychology - which developed under the influence of Anna Freud and, became the dominant psychoanalytic school in the United States and the Kleinian and object relations schools of psychoanalysis took centre stage in the UK (Michael and Black, 1995). On the whole, continental thinkers have taken Freud's ontology of the unconscious and its philosophical and socio-political implications, more seriously than their Anglo American counterparts. Equally true is the fact that on the continent, writers of note have engaged with those issues that broadly fall under the rubric of context. The philosophical context that is, in which Freud's work is situated and the relationship of Freudian thought to that of other writers (Assoun, 1976; 1980; 1988), including those from antiquity (Santas, 1988; Alford, 1991). To say this is, of course, already to refer to tradition - the tradition of psychoanalysis, not just as if it begins with Freud, but in the sense of its prehistory and its intellectual environment. Although there are notable exceptions (e.g. Frie, 1997; Mills, 2004; Gomez, 2005), something similar can also be said of the divergent course that psychoanalysis has taken in the English speaking

the symbolic (*symbolique*<sup>4</sup>), the imaginary (*imaginaire*<sup>5</sup>) and the real (*réel*<sup>6</sup>), and to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger.<sup>7</sup> In doing so, I aim to avoid, as far as is possible, the arcane features which characterise the language of the latter, as well as the theatrical and baroque usage of the former, all too often mimicked by his followers.

### **Of boundaries and their transgression**

In Hinduism, Vishnu is either worshipped directly or in the form of one of his ten incarnations (the *daśāvatāra*), described in the *Puranabharti*, the most famous of whom are Rama and Krishna. Nine of these have occurred in the past and one will take place in the future, at the end of Kali Yuga, (the fourth and final stage in the cycle of *yugas*, or epochs, that the world goes through). The avatars and their stories show that gods are unimaginable, unthinkable and inconceivable. In Lacan's lexicon, this situates transcendence, and more specifically mysticism, firmly within the real. That is to say, beyond the boundary of the symbolic and thus of language. In this respect, Lacan's view coincides with that of

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world and in Latin countries. While the former has focussed on the empirical and mostly been concerned with clinical evidence, the latter can broadly be described as philosophical and more precisely, concerned with language (Ricoeur, 1970). The prime example of this linguistic orientation is found in the Lacanian corpus (Lang, 1973; von Bormann, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> The symbolic, in Lacan's oeuvre, refers to one of the three orders of the psyche. It is a term largely derived from the structural anthropology of Lévi-Strauss with its emphasis on the exchange of gifts. Lacan describes it as crucial to psychoanalysis as the most fundamental form of exchange is that of communication and because speech functions in analysis to shift the subject's identification away from the analyst. It is also the realm of the Other (radical alterity), of the Law (the universal principles that underpin social interaction – importantly, the regulation or limiting of desire through the law against incest) and of the unconscious which is made up of repressed signifiers.

<sup>5</sup> The concept of the imaginary, in Lacan's thought, has the characteristics of illusion and seduction. It is set in motion during the mirror stage of infantile development and refers to the formation of the ego which is rooted in the subject's relationship to the image of his or her body in the mirror. The principal illusions of the imaginary are those of completeness, autonomy.

<sup>6</sup> The notion of the real is one of the most complex – some would say incoherent - concepts in Lacan's entire oeuvre, as the notion of a lack-within-the-real perhaps suggests. In fact, he uses the term in countless different ways and at times in contradictory senses. Most often it does not correspond to reality (*réalité*) but to what cannot be symbolised (put into language) and which stretches all representations and is outside all systems of thought. As such it is only in its traces that it is glimpsed or perhaps more accurately, that its implicit absence is suggested. This has particular relevance in psychosis for two reasons at least. Firstly, because psychosis is described by Lacan as a failure to enter into the symbolic (which includes language and therefore social relations) and secondly because, he argues, what is not symbolised appears in the real (e.g. as hallucinations).

<sup>7</sup> Rorty described Heidegger, together with Wittgenstein, as one of the most important philosophers of our century because of his attempt to construct a theory of representation that was not based on the Cartesian quest for certainty (Rorty 2009, 5). My argument in this chapter at least implies that this has significance both for our reading of Lacan's 'return to Freud' and for our understanding of the deceptive perception characteristic of the psychoses.

Wittgenstein.<sup>8</sup> The *Bhagavad Gita* mentions that the purpose of these incarnations is to rejuvenate *dharma*, by vanquishing those negative forces of evil that threaten *dharma*. *Dharma* may here refer to the laws of nature and this resonance of the law links the avatars to concept of limits or boundaries.

*Terminus* is the Latin word for a boundary stone, and the worship of the god *Terminus*, as recorded in the late Republic and Empire, centred on stones, with which the god was identified. *Siculus Flaccus*, a writer on land surveying, records the ritual by which the stone was sanctified. The bones, ashes and the blood of a sacrificial victim, along with crops, honeycombs and wine, were placed into a hole at a point where estates converged, and the stone was driven in on top. Annually, on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, a festival called the *Terminalia* was celebrated in *Terminus*' honour, involving a yearly renewal of this foundational ritual. Neighbouring families would garland their respective sides of the marker, and make offerings to *Terminus* at an altar. The marker itself would be drenched in the blood of a sacrificed lamb or pig. There followed a communal feast and hymns in praise of *Terminus*.

These rites were practised by private landowners, but there were also related public ceremonies. *Ovid* refers to the sacrifice of a sheep on the day of the *Terminalia* at the sixth milestone from Rome along the *Via Laurentina*. It is likely this was thought to have marked the boundary between the early Romans and their neighbours in *Laurentum*. A stone or altar to *Terminus* was located in the Temple of *Jupiter* on the *Capitoline Hill*. Because of a belief that this stone had to be exposed to the sky, there was a small hole in the ceiling directly above it.

There is some evidence to suggest that *Terminus*' associations could extend from property boundaries to limits more generally. Some ancient writers believed that the *Terminalia*, had

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<sup>8</sup> Wittgenstein's contention in the *Tractatus* is that there is a whole realm of human life made up of the things that belong to the limit of the world – things, that is, that cannot be put into propositions. Language cannot be the whole story and in this sense mysticism signifies the realm of the unsayable. However, *Tugendhat* in *Egozentrität und Mystik* (2003) reminds us that the inexpressible is more than simply that which is not yet said because when we think about the inexpressible we are already engaged in language. He thus describes mysticism as a retreat from oneself, from an egocentric view of the world in which there is no room for gratitude or thanksgiving for that upon which our existence depends. In this sense the mystical could be described in terms of a displacement of the self. 'One can perhaps say – to adopt the terminology of his [Wittgenstein's] later works – that he has given us an instance of one particular language-game, from which already the feeling of something "mystical" emerges' (D'herf 1978: 32). Thus language – and this includes the language of empiricism – always points beyond itself in the sense that 'aspects of things which are most important for us are hidden' (Wittgenstein 1999: 129).

once been kept at the end of the year. Diocletian's decision, in 303 AD, to initiate his persecution of Christians on 23<sup>rd</sup> February, may thus be seen as an attempt at enlisting Terminus, to put a limit to the progress of Christianity.

Here, in classical antiquity, we see a substantive bond between limits and religious myth. Freud would have been acutely aware of this kind of connection - for Oedipus' destiny was first revealed to him, by the oracle at Delphi. This link is also found in the roots of the words psyche and psychosis<sup>9</sup> which lie in the Greek term *psychē*. In the *Phaedo* we see just what an elastic - indeed ambiguous - meaning this word can have (Kirk 1984)<sup>10</sup>. In Xenophon we find *psychē* contrasted with the law, in a passage where Cyrus' mother tells the boy that his father was a free Persian who was accustomed to following the law and not his soul (Xen. *Cyrop.* 1, 3, 18). To follow one's soul is here to turn away from set limits or boundaries, the law (*nomos*), a turning away which in psychosis is at its most radical and amounts, through the failure of symbolic castration<sup>11</sup>, to a fundamental exclusion - Lacan calls this a 'non-

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<sup>9</sup> Although our word psychosis has its foundation in *psychē*, the words used for madness in Greek do not stem from this root. It is only in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the term psychosis starts to be used in English to describe madness. In antiquity the words used to describe insanity are *mania* or *melancholia* (from *melas* meaning black, and *cholos*, bile). The former, *mania* (translated into Latin as *insania*, literally unwell) – from which we get our words mania and manic – is used to describe what we might call ordinary or temporary madness (Graver 2007). Something that can beset anyone, perhaps in response to grief or other emotions. *Melancholia* (*furor* in Latin) on the other hand, more often refers to a deranged state in which a person's capacity for impressions (*phantasiai*) is disrupted leading to a complete darkening of the mind. The person in this state required custodial care. As early as the Hippocratic texts we find certain forms of behaviour being treated as symptoms of exceptional mental conditions. These include hallucinations (*phantastikon*, from *phastasia*, impression). For example, Orestes is chased by furies that no one else sees. For an historical summary of the various early psychoanalytic approaches to working with people diagnosed with one of the schizophrenia spectrum disorders, including Freud, Bleuler, Jung and Ferenczi see Silver et al. (2004). Silver and her co-authors also deal with important 20th century contributions from the UK including Klein, Segal and Bion and from the United States, Rosenfeld and Searles. Regrettably, I have been unable to find a comparable summary of the continental tradition.

<sup>10</sup> For the text of *Phaedo* see H.N. Fowler (ed. and trans.) *Plato Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus* Loeb Classical Library 36, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1914: 193-404. *Psychē* is usually translated as soul (*anima* in Latin) and is distinguished, not only from the body (*soma*) - cf. Matt. 10.28 which reads: *to sōma tēn de psychēn* - later we find Epiphanius referring to *psychikōs* as the opposite of *sōmatikōs* (MPG 41.741A cited in Lampe 1961: 1554) - or when described in a pejorative sense, flesh (*sarx*). Aristotle defines *psychē* as that thing, in virtue of which every living thing is alive (*De Anima* 414a. 12). With the Stoics this becomes a subtle form of the spirit (*pneuma*). Translating *psychē* as soul also distinguishes it from *nous* (*mens*, intellect). On this view, spirituality could very generally be defined as a concern for that which is most fundamental in a person and which includes, in some sense, that very self-concern. Following German scholars, who translate *nous* and *noētos* in Plotinus with *Geist* and *geistig*, Hadot consistently renders these terms in French not with *Intelligence* and *intelligible* but with *Esprit* and *spirituel*. He comments that by employing these terms '*afin exprimer du mieux possible le caractère mystique et intuitif de l'Intelligence plotinienne*' P. Hadot, *Plotin ou la simplicité du regard*. Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1973; cf. also A.-J. Festugière, *Personal Religion among the Greeks*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954.

<sup>11</sup> In Lacan's thought this refers to the symbolic loss of the imaginary phallus and he links it to fantasies of bodily mutilation which originate during the mirror stage of development. Castration is crucial to our

inscription' or *Nom du Père*<sup>12</sup>. This reference to the failure to enrol or to enlist - to the negation of writing (*scriptum, scriptura*) and the work of the *scriptorium* and to the non-textual (*scribere*) - alludes both to legal documents (*scriptum legis*) like wills (*testamentum*), and thus to breaking contracts, as well as to witnesses (*testatio* – usually, in antiquity, to the gods), and to sacred scripture. Indeed, Freud in his *Traumdeutung* had referred to the dream as 'eine Heiligen Text'. That is to say, even in the darkened intimacy of sleep, our dreams are always a re-working of a text, which like sacred scripture, is historically bound and written by a specific community.

### **Belonging: an inscription into the discourse of the community**

Lévi-Strauss had described the social world as structured by the laws of kinship and the exchange of gifts. Kinship is, first and foremost, a relational system - something that belongs to communities. That is to say, kinship is the regulation of a network of relationships, involving tribes and clans; male and female; the married and the unmarried, and so on. Underneath these sub-groups are unspoken rules – frequently, only unconsciously observed – in which groups of people communicate a system, down the generations, through custom and tradition. Tradition articulates both what is handed over and interpreted, as well as the

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understanding of the Oedipus complex where it represents the dissolution of the complex. As a result symbolic castration is at the root of psychopathology. In psychosis, the subject fundamentally refuses to limit *jouissance* (pleasure) through a denial of castration. This rejection then generates hallucinations of dismemberment (e.g. the Wolf Man).

<sup>12</sup> The term foreclosure was originally introduced into psychology in 1928, when Eduard Pichon published an article on the psychological significance of negation, borrowing the legal term *forclusif* to indicate things that the speaker no longer sees as part of reality. The publication appeared against the background of the dispute between Freud and René Laforgue concerning scotomization (Mijolla 2010). Lacan first translates *Verwerfung* as foreclosure in Seminar III. In *On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis* (1955) he defines *Verwerfung* as a foreclosure 'of the signifier': 'at the point at which the Name of the Father is summoned...a pure and simple hole may thus answer in the Other; due to the lack of the metaphoric effect, this hole will give rise to a corresponding hole in the place of phallic signification' (Lacan 2005: 558). He specifies that it is the Name of the Father that is foreclosed. If the Name of the Father is foreclosed and the symbolic function of castration is refused by the subject, the signifiers of the father and of castration reappear in reality, in the form of hallucinations. Thus, in developing the concept of foreclosure, Lacan was able to declare, 'What does not come to light in the symbolic appears in the real' (Lacan 2005: 388). Lacan reconceived Freud's hypothesis of an original affirmation as a symbolic operation in which the subject emerges from an already present real and recognises the signifying stroke that engages the subject in a world symbolically ordered by the Name of the Father and castration. In his seminar *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1978), Lacan took up Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud SE 1920) and approached the real in terms of compulsion and repetition. He proposed distinguishing between two different aspects of repetition: a symbolic aspect that depends on the compulsion of signifiers (automaton) and a real aspect that he called *tuché*, the interruption of the automaton by trauma or a bad encounter that the subject is unable to avoid. Engendered by the real of trauma, repetition is perpetuated by the failure of symbolisation. From this point on, Lacan defined the real as 'that which always returns to the same place' (Lacan 1978: 49). Trauma, which Freud situated within the framework of the death drive, Lacan conceptualised as the impossible-to-symbolise real.

process of handing over a teaching or interpreting (Lampe, 1961). Furthermore, tradition can be intellectual or practical, an idea, an understanding or a way of acting or being in the world. Importantly, all these usages imply the existence of a community which receives the tradition, interprets what is received and hands it on through the generations. We could say quite legitimately therefore, that tradition refers to what is transferred, with all the resonance that word has in Freud. Thus, tradition can be described as a kind of historical inheritance, as something realised within the context of *paideia* whether that be understood as culture or education.

Thus, the laws of kinship and language – the symbolic - could be described as a way of understanding human culture - or what, in antiquity, was known, in Greek, as *paideia* – and which always carries a resonance of knowledge and the pedagogic process of coming to know.<sup>13</sup> For it is by means of language that we construct, constitute and bring to birth our world – by naming things and, in a whole variety of ways, by drawing boundaries - for every human world is a linguistic one. That is to say, the artefacts of culture - music, painting, sculpture, architecture, and particularly history, literature and poetry, because they are verbal, – are not just the way we express ourselves, but are, more importantly, the way we inhabit the world. In a condensed sense, therefore, the symbolic privileges language as the symbol par excellence. Indeed, even the empirical sciences and philosophy – both of which attempt to take a view ‘from the outside’ - are done in language<sup>14</sup>. According to Michel de Certeau,

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<sup>13</sup> *Paideia* is a term which is hard to translate and it is impossible to give one single equivalent in English, but it includes the concepts of culture and education (Jaeger, 1973). *Paideia* implies a sense of value and refers to an ideal pursued by a community, self-consciously. It is close to what Gadamer calls *Bildung*. Used since the time of Goethe *Bildung* has a number of overlapping meanings in German. As with the Greek word *paideia*, it means equally a culture, an education and a natural formation. Perhaps, for this reason, Rorty prefers to translate *Bildung* as edification or self-formation (Rorty, 2009). Both terms – *paideia* and *Bildung* - comes close, in many ways, to what Lacan meant by the symbolic. Given the link we see here between community and culture, and thus speech, it may not be too fanciful to see in the word edification - at least in the sense that comes from its root in the Latin *aedificare*, to build - a resonance with the notion of dwelling (*habitare*). Heidegger who examines this term (*wohnen*) in some detail, does not just refer to being situated within an architecturally organised space - although architecture is, of course, one of the discourses of culture - but also refers to one’s mode of being and relationship to the world in general and specific locations, including one’s home, in particular (Heidegger, 1990, 1971; Cesarone, 2008). This has a particular relevance for the therapeutic community where a shared living environment is understood to be integral to the therapeutic process (Tucker, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> While much has been written about the way the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan were influenced by his reading of Heidegger, comparatively little has been made of the convergence between the thought of Gadamer and Lacan, although Heidegger himself had suggested to Lacan that he read Gadamer. The exception to this lacuna is a study by Hermann Lang which was, in fact his doctoral thesis and has an afterword by Gadamer himself (Lang, 1997). Gadamer was one of the leading exponents of philosophical hermeneutics and an interpreter of Heidegger (Gadamer, 1975). As such, the starting point for my discussion will revolve around

psychoanalysis, - and by extension the therapeutic community - stands between science and fiction, and the form of knowledge to which it aspires is that of unconscious desire<sup>15</sup>.

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some ideas in Heidegger, drawing particularly on the question of the nature of truth and its relationship to language, understanding and intersubjectivity. One of Gadamer's primary concerns was how truth emerges outside the method of the empirical sciences. Both Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Lacan's re-reading of Freud focus on language as the fundamental basis for all understanding (Lacan's symbolic order) and, I will argue, necessarily involves us in a process of struggling to articulate the unconscious or unsayable. Both concur that the process of understanding involves an engagement with thinking and thus language, that gives a priority to questions over answers and indeed that fundamental questions or questions of meaning are questions for which there are no fixed answers. However, what Gadamer calls fundamental conversation in which we exist and Lacan calls *parole pleine* – a notion itself based on Heidegger's distinction between *Rede* and *Gerede* - full speech (for Lacan, the psychoanalytic conversation), amounts to an authentic dialogue and consequently gives priority to subjectivity and intersubjectivity. This in turn leads us to consider Gadamer's notion of dialogue as an irreplaceable means to self-understanding and how it might form something intrinsic to the analytic conversation, not so much because of its usefulness as a technique but rather because of its ontological reflection (*Mitsein*). Gadamer argues, notably in relation to Husserl, Yorck and Betti, that the written word, unlike conversation, is easily compromised by objectifying tendencies. However, speech is also dominated by what he calls prejudice. Gadamer argues that the Enlightenment placed too much emphasis on method and rejected the notion of thinking within a tradition. Tradition, he argues, is something we cannot free ourselves from in order to investigate the world objectively. He considers tradition to be made up not of the inert, static past, but of experience, thought and language. These three elements are hermeneutic, not only because they are involved in the way we reach understanding, which necessitates an interpretative element but also because they involve what he calls prejudice or fore-conceptions (*Vorgriff*) the 'taken for granted' (*das Fraglos-gegeben*) of Schutz (1967). The analytic conversation, in its attempt to address that which is repressed opens out questions concerning the subject's prejudiced context, although this is not to suggest that reality is somehow underneath language but rather behind the back of our self-deceptive understandings of our experiences. Lacan considers that interpretation functions to destabilise and disrupt these fixed deceptive understandings in which meaning is reified by the interlocutor. Even before we try to understand ourselves as subjectivities our identities are socially formed. Because we are constructed socially within a particular community, our identity reaches back into a cultural past with which we are fundamentally connected. In other words, the past is always present in us and it forms the context in which we understand ourselves. This history is not just our own individual or personal history but the history of the community to which we belong. In fact, because our identity is constructed within the history of a community, it is inaccurate to speak as if we had an isolated individual or personal history which is not culturally embedded. Lacan, I suggest, like much psychoanalytic theory, fails to appreciate the cultural ground of *Vorgriff*. Hermeneutics asserts that we are not subjects observing, grasping and understanding objects in the world. Rather, our being is itself fundamentally, that is in its structure as *Dasein*, engaged in an on-going process of interpretation within a constantly changing tradition. Thus, our understanding is always limited, provisional and in the process of revision. Yet this tradition, while always shifting and on the move, is formed by deep seated agreements. These agreements, which we can say form the canon of tradition, Gadamer equates with a form of solidarity or we might say, with the cultural identity of with-being. Cf. Gadamer, H.-G. (1975). *Truth and Method*. London: Sheed and Ward. [Orig. *Wahrheit und Methode*. Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1960]; Lang, H. (1997). *Language and the Unconscious. Lacan's Hermeneutics of Psychoanalysis* (trans.) T. Brockelman. New Jersey: Humanities Press. [Orig. *Die Sprache und das Unbewußte: Jacques Lacans Grundlegung der Psychoanalyse*. Frankfurt am Main. Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973]; and Schutz, A. (1967). *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (trans.) G. Walsh and F. Lehnert. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press. [Orig. *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt: Eine Einleitung in die verstehenden Soziologie*, Vienna: Springer 1932, 1960 and Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974].

<sup>15</sup> The Standard Edition translates Freud's *Wunsch* as wish, whereas Freud's French translators use *désir* rather than *voeu*. In Lacan's lexicon the notion of desire comes closer to Hegel's *Begierde* - the relationship between

To a large degree, the symbolic indicates what Heidegger describes as Being-in-the-world. Indeed, Lacan refers explicitly to the symbolic as a universe - the realm of the Other (the locus in which speech is constituted<sup>16</sup>) and of the law which regulates desire. This means that human existence – everything that it means ‘to be’ (*einai* in Greek; *esse* in Latin) – can never be separated from the place and time in which a person lives<sup>17</sup>.

Of course, in a very obvious sense, psychoanalysis takes place in language – that most fundamental form of social exchange. This is because the patient and the analyst do little else than speak to each other. More fundamentally, however, Being-in-the-world ‘expresses itself as speech’ (SZ 161)<sup>18</sup>. That is say speech is more than our utterances<sup>19</sup>. It is the condition that makes any utterance possible.

In a therapeutic community, community can be understood - in Heidegger’s terms – as a mode of Being-in-the-world. As such it reveals our structural connectedness to others in a shared world - what Heidegger calls *mitsein* (Being-with) - because there can be no language without, to use Wittgenstein’s phrase, a community of language users. This does not just refer to jargon, to the way in which each group or discipline has its own lexicon - though there is that - but more fundamentally, to the experience of belonging or what Lacan calls inscription.

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consciousness and the self - than to Freud’s *Wunsch*. On Lacan’s appropriation of Hegel’s *Begierde* as distinct from *Wunsch* or *Lust*, see Roudinesco (1986).

<sup>16</sup> According to Evans the introduction of the term ‘other’ (*autre* in French) by Lacan is dependent on his reading of Hegel. Lacan distinguishes between what he calls the big Other (designated by a capital A for *Autre*) and the little other (designated by a lower case *a* which is always italicised). The term *objet (petit) a* (object little *a*) or just *objet a* (object *a*), which Lacan insists should not be translated, appears in Lacan’s work from 1955. Unlike the big Other, which denotes a radical and irreducible alterity, the little other is coupled with the ego. Cf the recent discussion by Stijn Vanheule (2011) *The Subject of Psychosis: A Lacanian Perspective* 125-48. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, writes Keller, ‘rejects the whole idea that a human being has an essence, in the Husserlian sense of a whatness that Heidegger associates with the traditional philosophical notion of essence or *essentia*’ (Keller 1999: 121).

<sup>18</sup> Speech (*Rede*) is Heidegger’s third structure of Being-in-the-world. Its function being to articulate understanding. Thus in *Sein und Zeit* we read that ‘[t]he fundamental “*existentialia*” which constitute the disclosedness of Being-in-the-world, are attunement and understanding...*Existentially equi-originary with attunement and understanding is speech*’ (SZ 160-1).

<sup>19</sup> The concept of utterance (*énonciation*) has been developed by a number of French linguists over the last thirty years. It addresses the way in which linguistic subjects appropriate the languages available to them. See Benveniste, E. (1974), *Problems in General Linguistics* (trans.) M. Meek, Miami: University of Miami Press. Lacan began using the term from the mid 1940’s to describe psychotic language and later to locate the subject of the unconscious.



At its most fundamental, this belonging-to-the-symbolic refers to the exchange, in language, which links human beings to one another. It is always from a particular community that we receive language, and in a specific community that we participate in language, and in which meaning is located. Because the world to which I belong is always a specific world (in time and place) this inscription signifies those inside the group, and implies that there are others who do not belong – those located on the outside. That is to say, meaning is always restricted or limited by the historical group to which we belong. Within a therapeutic community, this means that belonging equates with an inscription into the community's discourse or conversation. Within that conversation the interlocutors will adopt different, shifting, positions. Now disagreeing with one, arguing with another, challenging or agreeing and supporting a variety of views on everything that makes up the life of that specific community. Here, the changing position that the subject adopts in relation to the discourse of the community, takes on a primary significance because its relation to the past.

### **Appearances are always deceptive and hide the truth**

The symbolic realm of the community – community understood as a social body of meaning - is both separated by a limit, a boundary, from other ways in which community is experienced. Particularly, from the imaginary or idealised community. As soon as we use the words 'inside' and 'outside' the community, we cannot fail to hear a resonance of that first world we inhabited, the body – with its skin and visible scars, and its internal, invisible organs.

For Lacan the imaginary realm is founded in the mirror's reflection. The bodily image that I see in the mirror is, in some sense unreal, a kind of mirage that I am deceived into imagining is me. The deceptive quality of what I see, together with the relationship I strike up with my own image, a relationship which is necessarily restricted to two elements – me and my reflection – are the foundations of the imaginary. Let me try to put that another way. There are three things that form the basis for the imaginary realm – that I see things in the world; that these things – because they are observable - are misleading and illusory; and that these things, these objects, are characterised by dualism.

The dualism which we indicate, when we refer to concepts like 'inwardness' or my 'inner world', are illusory because they indicate reciprocity - a homogeneous, rather than

heterological representation of the world<sup>20</sup>. Something reminiscent, perhaps, of Descartes<sup>21</sup>. But also because it suggests a ‘deeper’ level - the unconscious - which implies that there is a

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<sup>20</sup> According to Heidegger’s critique of the representationalist theory of perception and the lack of objective detachment that this implies, mental experience can be described as fundamentally transcendent (Critchley, 2008). In other words, when we perceive we are not separated in that perception from the objects of perception but rather our intending and that which we intend structurally belong together. The intending self, that is, is embedded and constituted within the world of things. The kinship between intending and the intended object reveals the fundamental characteristics of mental activity as ‘a movement of transcendence’ (Critchley 2008: 16), a stepping beyond that forms a kind of relationship of being. “...we are sometimes assured that we are certainly not to think of the subjects “inside” [Innen] and its ‘inner sphere’ as a sort of ‘box’ or ‘cabinet’. But when one asks for the positive signification of this ‘inside’ of immanence in which knowing is proximally enclosed, or when one enquires how this ‘Being inside’ [“Innenseins”] which knowing possesses has its own character of Being grounded in the kind of Being which belongs to the subject, then silence reigns. And no matter how this inner sphere may get interpreted, if one does no more than ask how knowing makes its way ‘out of’ it and achieves ‘transcendence’, it becomes evident that the knowing which presents such enigmas will remain problematical...” (Heidegger, 1990: 87).

<sup>21</sup> We may note that Lacan’s reading of Descartes was, like his reading of Freud, idiosyncratic and often less precise than imaginative. Roudinesco refers to Lacan as Descartes’ ‘[*l’]ils légitime’* (Roudinesco 1993: 198). Roudinesco (1993) concludes: ‘[C]ette *magnifique opération théorique, par laquelle Lacan dotait la doctrine psychanalytique d’une théorie “cartésienne” du sujet...*’ (Roudinesco 1993: 358). For a critique of Lacan’s thinking on Descartes see Badiou’s magnum opus *L’être et l’évènement* (1988). See principally his *Ecrits* (2006). But in Seminar III (1993), Seminar IX (2002) and in Seminar XI (1977) he commented further. Seminar III is of particular significance here as it deals with the psychoses. Lacan’s assertion that psychoanalysis cannot be founded on the cogito was probably not really intended as an attack on Descartes at all but on ego psychology ‘*et aux annafreudiens*’ (Roudinesco 1993: 264). When Lacan turned to Descartes, the status of psychoanalysis as a science was under fire. It was a challenge which was set to remerge in the 1950’s, more vehemently this time, and again in the 1990’s. Throughout the various phases in the debate, Lacan remained fundamentally ambivalent, describing psychoanalysis both in empirical and hermeneutic terms (Bouveresse 1995). Despite his interest in language, he seems to have been reluctant to embrace fully the critique - implicit in the exegetical approach to meaning associated with hermeneutics - of the application to the mind, of scientific rationalism (Sharpe 2004). The ‘scientific self-misunderstanding of psychoanalysis’ as Habermas came to describe it (Habermas 1972: 214), amounts to the belief that psychic processes adhere to the principles of cause and effect (Sulloway 1979). This contrasts dramatically with the hermeneutic perspective in which psychoanalysis is understood as a form of discourse, rather than as an observable science (Ricoeur 1970). As such it is a form of interpretative understanding concerned with significance, where the mutilations in the text of the subject bear the weight of meaning. The relationship between language and understanding is not causal (Wittgenstein 1990). On Freud’s theory of mind see Wollheim, R. and Hopkins, J. (1982), *Philosophical Essays on Freud*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. With Descartes, epistemology became the major preoccupation in philosophy. This includes our attempts to justify our beliefs – and religious beliefs of course, as with other kinds of belief, presuppose the possibility of mistaken belief. Paradoxically, rationalism was the heir to gnosticism despite the latter’s deeply religious roots. For the Cartesian revolution in knowledge (*gnōsis*) amounted to a replacement of the ambiguous uncertainties of faith with the demonstrable certainties of reason. Behind this sea change lies a belief in the possibility of accounting rationally for all truths. According to this view, while the *res extensa* provides us with little assurance of the stuff out there, we can be certain of the existence of the mind and therefore of being. In Shepherson’s view, for Lacan (contrary to Descartes), ‘thinking and being will never coincide...[because of the] constitutive rupture between the symbolic and the real’ (Shepherdson, 2003: 121). Thus Cousineau comments that ‘Lacan’s theory of the rift between the two “I’s” leads to his celebrated reformulation...[Thus] Being begins where thinking leaves off, in the region of the unconscious where the real has been preserved.’ (Cousineau 1984: 226). However, hermeneutics is directed towards being precisely because it is concerned with language. As Tugendhat has argued, this is where the phenomenology of Heidegger and linguistic analysis, represented by thinkers like Wittgenstein, converge. In fact, he demonstrates this reconciliation in reference to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* where what is expressed by *pollachōs legetai* is the basis on which the question about being as being is raised (*Metaphysics* iv, 1004b15). Lacan’s analysis of Descartes’ search for ontological certainty led him to the implications of castration anxiety, disavowal and the splitting of the ego. This in turn enabled him to develop Freud’s late work on the narcissistic origins of conflict within the ego. On Tugendhat see R. Bubner, *Modern German Philosophy*, Cambridge:

surface in which the unconscious is not apparent. This dyadic particularity concerning my grasp of the world is pre-oedipal in origin, in that it stems from the time before the assimilation of a third term. Lacan conceives that the infant's recognition of himself in the mirror, and subsequent identification with that reflection, is not as a developmental stage – something to be got through – but a turning point in the structuring of subjectivity. It is a paradigm, in other words, of the way in which the human subject is permanently caught up in and captivated by a libidinal relationship to itself. A relationship which is necessarily conflictual.

It is here, Lacan argues, in the mirror stage, that the ego starts to be constructed. In its reflection, the baby sees itself coordinated and whole. This sense of completion contrasts dramatically with his experience of himself as fragmented and uncoordinated. Thus the mirror stage is closely related both to narcissism. Like Narcissus the infant falls in love with its own image.

Lacan criticised existing psychoanalytic theories of his day, because of their emphasis - over-emphasis - on the dual relationships of mother and baby, and analyst and patient. The former, he insisted, never fully exists. The infant is never fully alone with his mother. But in the pre-oedipal stage the third element is an imaginary object – the phallus. The implication being that triangulation, for the infant, revolves around its perception of the mother's lack of completion – and, by implication, her longing or desire for that fulfilment that can never be<sup>22</sup>. The heart is indeed restless, to paraphrase Augustine, until it rests in the Other.

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Cambridge University Press, 1990 esp. p.69-103. In 1936 Lacan advocated the need to turn to Descartes in order to understand the causality of madness (Sharpe 2004). Surprisingly, this turning to philosophy for a foundation to understand the psychoses is almost unique amongst writers on psychoanalysis. As Lacan must have realised, Descartes was not just any old philosopher. He was the philosopher, par excellence, associated with rationalism. Before Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* was published in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there was not much idea of human beings having an inside and an outside. It is an idea that paves the way for what has been described as the extraordinary conviction that one's own subjectivity somehow belongs fully to oneself (Elias 1978). While intimations of this dualism can certainly be found in a variety of forms in earlier writers like Plato, the Greeks did not draw a fundamental distinction between events in an inner private life and events in an external world (Matson 1966). The renaissance tended to lump together the various and divergent forms of dualism that we find in antiquity and treat them as if they were the same. According to Rorty (2009), they were very different from the Cartesian vision.

<sup>22</sup> Hegel defines self-consciousness simply as desire itself (*Begierde überhaupt*). As he saw it, the self depends on the object of desire to fill its lack and it was the notion of lack that was to become one of Hegel's major contributions to Lacan's thought (Williams 1992). It represents a development of Husserl in that it underscores the way in which intersubjectivity is constructed. It is a lack of being (*manque de l'être*), Lacan suggests, that

## Pedagogy and not-knowing

Lacan in *Seminar I* to Plato's *Meno* saying that the 'art of conversation' of Socrates in the *Meno* is 'to teach the slave to give his own speech its true meaning' (Lacan 1988: 278). 'In other words, the position of the analyst must be that of an *ignorantia docta* [an ignorant teacher]' (Lacan 1988: 278). This idea about ignorance is crucial. We must avoid the trap of guessing some imaginary hidden meaning in the client's words and fitting what he says into some preformed theory. That is why he constantly insists that we have to forget what we know, when listening to the client (Lacan 2006: 349). What he suggests is that we must interpret 'as if we were completely ignorant of theory' (Lacan 1953: 227). 'The less you understand, the better you listen' (Lacan 1991: 141). The point he is trying to make in all these warnings, is to get us to really listen to what the client says and not imagine we understand it too soon, or too easily.

Lacan's idea of the *subject supposé savoir* (subject supposed to know), is related to this notion of ignorance. For Lacan, at some point – maybe not always right away – the client will have feelings about the analyst in which his fantasy is that the analyst really understands him, knows all about his problems and how to help him work through them. It is not the same as saying that the analyst does not have any knowledge of the client, but distinguishes between the real knowledge of psychological processes and psychotherapeutic technique - which the analyst does really need to have - and the transference feelings and fantasies about the analyst's knowledge of the client. Of course, part of this will be what we call positive

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lies at the heart of the analytic experience (Lacan 1977). In part, this may be because psychoanalysis brings the practitioner face to face with difficulty in terms of the resistance of the patient. Here, both the difficulty experienced by the practitioner and the gesture of resistance itself, can be described as ascetical, that is, as a kind of withholding (Harpham 1987). Hence Lacan refers to the 'the asceticism of psychoanalysis' (Lacan 1988: 126). Thus self-consciousness and desire are closely linked to an existential reticence and indicate an inability for human beings to be satisfied. But as well as being based on Hegel, Lacan derives his concept of lack, almost certainly, from Heidegger's analysis of *Mangel, Mangelhaftigkeit* (Heidegger 1990). For Heidegger, absence of being is the experience a person has of the void or nothingness at the centre of her or his own consciousness. It is an absence of a foundation to the self which springs from the fact that while consciousness can perceive objects, it is unable to perceive itself except as if it were an object external to itself. Heidegger describes this in terms of an inherent conflict between 'the necessity of saying the truth of being' and 'the incapability of saying being' which results from what he calls the 'silent call of being' or 'being's occurrence as withdrawal' (Taminiaux 1989). The distinction that Heidegger is making is between being (*Sein*) as it has traditionally been understood in the history of western philosophy to indicate the hidden, enduring, metaphysical ground of existence and a dimension of the meaning of life which has not previously been articulated. *Sein* (being) suggests an elusive element in what is currently happening (Scott 2001). This is not a description of worlds-behind-the-scene but of a beyond that fundamentally marks the limit of the contained and thus signals that which cannot be unravelled. Thus lack-of being refers to the other and to the limits of knowledge. But not just the limits of our present understanding, rather of limit as the essential structure of non presence (Levinas 1961).

transference, and recognise as essential to the formation of the therapeutic alliance. But it is important that the analyst is not seduced into believing he or she really does have this kind of knowledge of the client. This forms the basis for what Rappaport referred to as the flattened hierarchy.

### **Pedagogy and psychoanalysis**

While Lacan says that ‘pedagogical procedures belong to a completely alien register to that of the analytic experience’ (Lacan 1991: 85), he also sees psychoanalysis aiming at a kind of knowledge. In *Seminar II* he says that analysis is not just a question of teaching patients things, like a psychologist might teach someone cognitive strategies and he says it is a bit odd to describe analysis as an apprenticeship. Incidentally, Heidegger may well be Lacan’s source here but Lacan argues that the kind of thing that is learnt in psychoanalysis is a special kind of knowledge (here he uses again the French word *savoir*, in contrast to *connaissance*, to describe it). It is symbolic knowledge – knowledge of something unknown. Or more precisely, something the client does not know he knows. What analysis does is to uncover ‘the fundamental, radical discordance of forms of conduct essential to man in relation to everything which he experiences’ (Lacan 1991: 85-6)<sup>23</sup>.

Psychoanalytic treatment aims at a progressive revelation of this knowledge to the subject that goes on in irregular leaps and bounds (Lacan 1988: 86). Fundamentally, this symbolic knowledge is knowledge about the truth of one’s desire. Here a person is brought to recognise and articulate his desire.

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<sup>23</sup> Angelika Rauch-Rapaport (2003) has suggested that Gadamer’s notion of prejudice corresponds to *méconnaissance* in Lacan, but it may, like the concept of tradition, be more similar to the idea of the unconscious, at least if we understand the unconscious not in topographical terms but as the possibility of another meaning, ‘a meaning the ego does not mean’! (Eggington 2007, 27). For both tradition and prejudice, which speak to us of the history of an individual from the background to the subject’s engagement with the world. Prejudice conditions all judgements. That is to say, we form our opinions and take our view of things not just based on neutral reason or on a logical, detached analysis but “on a set of pre-reflective involvements with the world that stand behind judgements...a whole interpreted world is silently, unreflectively, absorbed by the individual” (Lawn 2006, 38). Unconscious prejudice is something we are largely unaware of and something which we can never fully get outside. We are embedded in it, as it were. Our views are formed within it and it reveals our history. And it is precisely because it reveals and illuminates our past that it is more significant than our judgements. In other words, it is not rationality which is fundamental but those irrational elements which determine our point of view and govern our reason. That is to say, our perspective on the world is always part of an interpretive making sense of what is out there and never an unmediated picture of the way things really are, because the way things really are is, in a sense, an illusion. This is because we are wrapped up inside the world we seek to understand and the gap that is commonly thought to exist between subject (knower) and object (known) is not something fixed and rigid but an indistinct, overlapping and uncertain, ever shifting relationship.

### **The symbolic knowledge embedded in the community**

It is within the relationships in the community – and that means between all members of the community, staff as well as clients, as all are involved in each others' treatment, that the truth about desire – or knowledge of the unconscious - is to be found. In other words, it is thoroughly Lacanian to see a special kind of knowledge, the process of getting to know the unconscious, coming about within a community of relationships. Here we are not a million miles away from the idea of the community as doctor.

### **Conclusion**

The gods indicate, as myth, that which escapes symbolisation - the real according to Lacan's lexicon – that is to say, the region of the unimaginable, unthinkable and inconceivable. Yet even to enunciate this is itself a discourse. The discourse of the Other.

Culture (which always refers to a certain kind of knowledge and learning) and language in particular - the symbolic, in Lacan - is the realm of therapeutic community. It is here, in the network of relationships, that meaning emerges. The boundary of the community is one of inscription, in which belonging refers to participation in the discourse of the community. Fundamentally, this discourse concerns unconscious desire. This is not a desire for this or that object, but the reason why we want anything at all, and importantly, why we are never satisfied when our desires are fulfilled. In other words, the kind of education that takes place in a therapeutic community, means coming to understand and speak about one's experience of lack. It is a 'true education' because it is 'orientated to the unknown' (Rickman 2003: 198).

Therapeutic community theory and practice was developed primarily by psychoanalysts e.g. Bion, Foulkes, Rickman and Bridger, and psychoanalysis is the 'founding idea of therapeutic community' (Hinshelwood 1999). Indeed, I have tried to go further and argue that without a psychoanalytic element, there can be no therapeutic community. This does not mean that other kinds of community living cannot be helpful. Of course they can. But I do not think it accurate to describe these communities as therapeutic communities. Because, in order to be a therapeutic community, the work must be directed beyond the illusion and the lure of the imaginary. In other words, it must position itself, in relation to the community, beyond the lure of the idealised community.

Just as, for Lacan, the psychoanalyst must penetrate beyond the imaginary and function within the symbolic, in the therapeutic community we must use all our cunning to avoid the enticement of homogeneity. In a regulatory and health care context, in which treatment is measured in simplistic terms of success or failure, staying with imperfection, with an only partially functioning community, and with fumbling uncertainty, becomes all the more of a challenge. But if the therapeutic community understands itself as a symbolic community, it learns to tolerate its lack of completion or perfection, and understand it as a lack of being.

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