

# Assuming the Master's Mantle: The Pedagogue as "Subject Presumed to Know"

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**Abstract:** Allusions to the "decentred subject" can be found in a growing number of educational texts. Yet many of these texts say little about the term's meaning or genesis. What exactly is the "decentred subject"? what distinguishes this postmodern subject of language from the modern subject of consciousness it seeks to displace? what are the implications of the decentred subject for modern pedagogies based on the transference of knowledge? This presentation will trace the origins of the "decentred subject" to 17th Century European thought, drawing upon the work of Lacan and a number of his commentators to elucidate its distinctive features, highlight its distinguishing factors, and investigate its revolutionary implications for the field of education.

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What is unique about the "I" hides itself exactly in what is unimaginable about a person. All we are able to imagine is what makes everyone like everyone else, what people have in common. The individual "I" is what differs from the common stock, that is, what cannot be guessed at or calculated, what must be unveiled, uncovered, conquered.

•Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

## *Three Impossible Professions*

According to Freud, there are three "impossible" professions, three spheres of endeavour that guarantee unsatisfying results, even before engaging in them: educating, healing, and governing. This did not, however, deter Freud from devoting the greatest part of his life to healing and educating. Jacques Lacan, if not Freud's most notable, then certainly his most controversial disciple, has argued that Freud, despite such misgivings, believed he could make a positive contribution to the professions of healing and educating because of a discovery whose full impact is yet to be felt. This discovery, according to Lacan, was that of the unconscious and its corollary the "decentred subject," a find whose implications are no less revolutionary for humanity than that of Copernicus: "it was in fact the so-called Copernican revolution to which Freud himself compared his discovery, emphasizing, that it was once again a question of the place man assigns to himself at the centre of a universe" (Lacan, 1977, p. 165).

Allusions to the decentred subject can be found in a growing number of education texts, especially those focusing on the problematic of identity formation—Britzman's (1991) *Practice Makes Practice*, for instance. Yet while such texts employ the notion of the decentred subject to challenge the assumptions of pedagogies based on the unproblematic transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, few expand on the origins or nature of the notion itself. What exactly is the "decentred subject"? what distinguishes this postmodern subject of language from the modern subject of consciousness it seeks to displace? what are the implications of the decentred subject for modern pedagogies based on the transference of knowledge? This paper traces the emergence of the "decentred subject" through its formulation in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to its origins in the Freudian corpus, drawing upon the work of Lacan and a number of his commentators to elucidate its distinctive features, highlight its distinguishing factors, and investigate its revolutionary implications for the field of education.

### *Reading Lacan*

Lacan, who aspired first and foremost, to be a Freudian liked to present his work as a rebus or puzzle, not unlike a dream that demands deciphering before its inner kernel of meaning is revealed. Writing, for Lacan, is "a factor that makes possible the kind of tightening up that I like in order to leave the reader no other way out than the way in, which I prefer to be difficult" (Lacan, 1977, p. 146). It is, Muller and Richardson (1982, p. 3) suggest, as if Lacan

not only explicates the unconscious but strives to imitate it. Whatever is to be said about the native cast of Lacan's mind that finds this sort of thing congenial, there is not doubt that the elusive-allusive-illusive manner, the encrustation with rhetorical tropes, the kaleidoscopic erudition, the deliberate ambiguity, the auditory echoes, the oblique irony, the disdain of logical sequence, the prankish playfulness and sardonic (sometimes scathing) humor—all of these forms of preciousness that Lacan affects are essentially a concrete demonstration in verbal locution of the perverse ways of the unconscious as he experiences it.

And while it is now a commonplace that Lacan's reading of Freud is coloured by the understanding of Hegel he developed as a consequence of attending Alexandre Kojève's seminal Sorbonne lectures of the 1930s—lectures attended by the likes of "Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Lacan, Bataille, Queneau, and a host of existentialists, Catholics, Communists, and surrealists who eagerly awaited the event of Hegel's epiphany" (Pefanis, 1991, p. 11)—it is sometimes forgotten that "Kojève's understanding of Hegel was indebted to Heidegger" (Pefanis, 1991, p. 3). It should come as no great surprise, then, that when Lacan, the *enfant terrible* of

psychoanalysis, sets forth to unearth the origins of the decentred subject, he follows in the footsteps of Martin Heidegger, who traces the emergence of the modern subject—the self-conscious, autonomous monad that exists prior to and independent of the objects of experience—to 17th Century France, where “Descartes found his ‘unshakeable foundation of truth’ in the subject’s awareness of himself in the very process of his own thinking/doubt” (Muller & Richardson, 1982, p. 167).

### *A Genealogy of the Subject*

Lovitt (1977, p. xxv) informs us that for Heidegger, “the work of Descartes, itself an expression of the shift in men’s outlook that had already taken place, set forth that basis in philosophical terms.” According to Heidegger, it was “in the *ego cogito (ergo) sum* of Descartes” that “man found his self-certainty *within himself*,” where “man’s thinking... was found to contain within itself the needed sureness.” From this point on, “man could *represent* reality to himself,” he could “set it up over against himself, as it *appeared* to him, as an *object* of thought. This meant that “he felt assured at once of his own existence and of the existence of the reality thus conceived.” It is the epistemology of Descartes, Heidegger (1977, pp. 126–127) argues, that makes the modern conception science—“science as research”—possible. This new mode of knowledge, “knowing as research, calls whatever is to account with regard to the way in which and the extent to which it lets itself be put at the disposal of representation.” This distinctively modern way of knowing “has disposal over anything that is when it can either calculate it in its future course in advance or verify a calculation about its past.” Consequently, “nature and history become the objects of a representing that explains..., [but] only that which becomes object in this way *is*—is considered to be in being.” Heidegger’s point is that “we first arrive at science as research when the Being of whatever is, is sought in such objectiveness”:

This objectifying of whatever is, is accomplished in a setting-before, a representing, that aims at bringing each particular being before it in such a way that man who calculates can be sure, and that means be certain, of that being. We first arrive at science as research when and only when truth has been transformed into the certainty of representation. What it is to be is for the first time defined as the objectiveness of representing, and truth is first defined as the certainty of representing, in the metaphysics of Descartes. (Heidegger, 1938, in Heidegger, 1977, p. 127)

It is with the advent of modernity, then, that “man, once concerned to discover and decisively to behold the truly real, now finds himself certain of himself; and he

takes himself, in that self-certainty, to be more and more the determining center of reality" (Lovitt, 1977, p. xxvi).<sup>1</sup>

It is Descartes, however, who is "the originator of the modern notion that certainty is the child of reflexive clarity, or the examination of our own ideas in abstraction from what they 'represent' " (Taylor, 1987, p. 469). With Descartes, the traditional notion of subject—"that-which-lies-before (for the Greeks, that which looms up, e.g., an island or mountain)..., the reality that confronted man in the power of its presence" (Lovitt, 1977, p. xxvi)—was radically transformed. Descartes, Lovitt (p. xxvi) notes, "fixed his attention not on a reality beyond himself, but precisely on that which was present *as* and *within* his own consciousness." In this act lies the origin of the modern subject, for "at this point self-consciousness became subject *par excellence*, and everything that had the character of subject—of that-which-lies-before—came to find the locus and manner of its being precisely in that self-consciousness," that is,

in the unity of thinking and being that was established by Descartes in his *ego cogito (ergo) sum*, through which man was continually seeking to make himself secure. Here man became what he has been increasingly throughout our modern period. He became subject, the self-conscious shaper and guarantor of all that comes to him from beyond himself. (Lovitt, 1977, p. xxvi)

### *Representing the "I"*

It was in the process of thinking, then, that Descartes recognized his own awareness of himself, his self-consciousness. This act of reflection involves, "over and above the registration and perception of sensations, an *apperception*: an act of attributing perception to an underlying perceiver" (Grosz, 1990, p. 35, emphasis added). Hence Descartes' dictum: *Cogito ergo sum*; I think, therefore, I am. It was this revelation that prompted Descartes to declare consciousness and subjectivity *coterminous*. It is exactly this notion of the unitary, centred subject that Freud's discovery of the unconscious undermined, however, revealing that "the very centre of the human being was no longer to be found at the place assigned to it by a whole humanist tradition" (Lacan, 1977, p. 114). But it is Lacan who rephrases the question first posed by Freud in a way that is more in keeping with theories of language and

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<sup>1</sup> See Briton (in press) for an extended discussion of the emergence of modernity and the modern subject and their implications for educators.

visual perception—de Saussure’s linguistics, and Lorenz’s and Tinbergen’s *Gestalten*—that postdate Freud’s own work:

Is the place that I occupy as the subject of a signifier [in Lacanese, *the enunciated subject*] concentric or eccentric, in relation to the place I occupy as subject of the signified [*the subject of enunciation*]? (Lacan, 1977, p. 165)

The full implication of this rather cryptic statement will become clearer as we proceed.

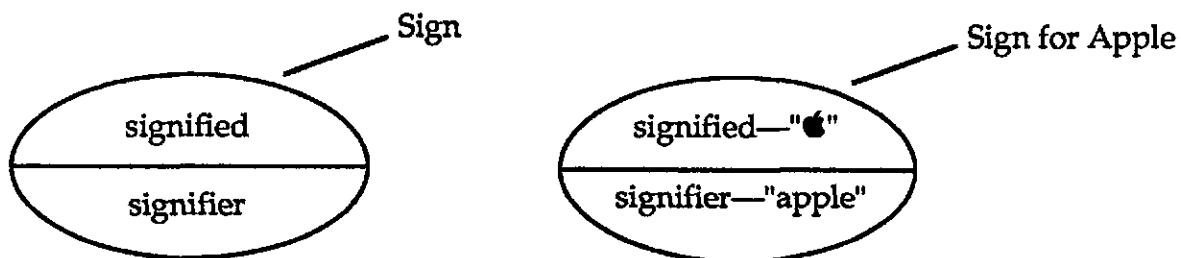
### *Subject as Signifier*

Lacan’s answer to the above question is, of course, *eccentric* or “decentred,” since he is convinced that “if we ignore the self’s radical ex-centricity to itself with which man is confronted, in other words, the truth discovered by Freud, we shall falsify both the order and methods of psychoanalytic mediation...: the letter as well as the spirit of Freud’s work” (Lacan, 1977, p. 171). Following Freud, Lacan contends that the subject occupies different places or locations: one the realm of “signifiers,” of conscious discourse; the other of “signifying mechanisms,” of the unconscious that shapes the “signified” and can, therefore, be designated legitimately as thought. Since this means “the speaking subject is emphatically decentred in relation to the ego” (Boothby, 1991, p. 112), Lacan proposes a reformulation of Descartes’ Cogito:

I think [on an unconscious level, at the level of the “signified,”] where I am not [that is, on a conscious level, at the level of the “signifier”], therefore I am where I do not think” (Lacan, 1977, p. 166)

What Descartes fails to recognize, according to Lacan, is that the concept “I” must be understood as a “sign” comprised of not one but *two* elements, elements that correspond to Ferdinand de Saussure’s (1983) “signifier” and “signified,” to the *material* and *immaterial* elements that comprise each and every sign, to the sign’s extramental and intramental objects.

### Saussure's Sign



While it was Saussure (1983) who first argued that the relation of the material signifier to the immaterial signified, of word to thought object, is arbitrary—that is, established through convention rather than through some natural or preordained connection—it was Lacan who took up and extended Saussure’s metaphor of “two floating kingdoms” to introduce the possibility of slippage between the two domains, arguing vehemently for “the notion of an incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier” (Lacan, 1977, p. 154). In placing the signified *below* the signifier, Lacan privileges the sign’s extramental, material object over its intramental, immaterial object. Lacan then represents the “subject of the signifier,” the ego or subject of consciousness, that which is enunciated through and in language, with the matheme “S”; the “subject of the signified,” on the other hand, the subject of the unconscious, that which *structures* enunciation, is designated with the matheme “s”.<sup>2</sup> For Lacan, the crucial point that must not be overlooked is that “the S and the s of the Saussurian algorithm are not on the same level” (Lacan, 1977, p. 166).

According to Lacan, the individual’s introduction into language is the condition for the possibility of the modern subject, for the subject’s ability to “unknowingly” represent its own desire to itself. It is “in the unconscious, excluded from the system of the ego, that the subject speaks” (Lacan, in Boothby, 1991, p. 111). As Slavoj Žižek (1992, p. 68) notes: “the Lacanian notion of the imaginary [enunciated] self... exists only on the basis of the misrecognition of its own conditions; it is the *effect* of this misrecognition.” It is not, however, the supposed inability of this self to reflect that Lacan focuses on, “on its being the plaything of inaccessible unconscious forces; his point is that the subject can pay for such reflection with the loss of his [or her] ontological consistency.”

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<sup>2</sup> In his Inaugural Lecture to the Collège de France, Foucault (1970, in Foucault, 1984, p. 108) explicitly addresses his desire to assume the unproblematic position of the spoken subject—the enunciated subject, the subject of the signifier—rather than the highly problematic position of the speaking subject—the subject of enunciation, the subject of the signified:

I wish I could have slipped surreptitiously into this discourse which I must present today, and into the ones I shall have to give here, perhaps for many years to come. I should have preferred to be enveloped by speech, and carried away well beyond all possible beginnings, rather than have to begin it myself. I should have preferred to become aware that a nameless voice was already speaking long before me, so that I should only have needed to join in, to continue the sentence it had started and lodge myself, without really being noticed, in its interstices, as if it had signalled me by pausing, for an instant, in suspense.

### *Enunciated versus Enunciator*

Misunderstandings of Lacan's position are legend, yet for many commentators are readily explicable.<sup>3</sup> A failure to grasp Lacan's distinction between the two subject positions—between "the enunciated subject" and "the subject of enunciation"—is often a source of much confusion. It is useful to bear in mind, therefore, that if the unconscious is the locus of thought—the subject of enunciation—and the conscious subject is the locus of language—the enunciated subject—an irremediable gap between what is *meant* and what is *said* becomes apparent: "Lacan's point is simply that these two levels never fully cohere: the gap separating them is constitutive; the subject, by definition, cannot master the effects of his speech" (Zizek, 1994, p. 13). It is for this very reason that "the implications of meaning infinitely exceed the signs manipulated by the individual. As far as signs are concerned, man is always mobilizing many more of them than he knows" (Lacan, in Felman, 1987, pp. 95–96).

Consequently, the unconscious, the subject of enunciation, is a site of unmeant knowledge that escapes intentionality and meaning, appearing to the conscious subject only in the form of verbal slips and dream images—it is a *speaking* knowledge that is denied to the *speaker's* knowledge. As Boothby (1991, p. 126) notes: "the tendency of discourse to evoke a multitude of meanings—what might be called the essential 'extravagance' of speech—establishes the capacity of language to accommodate unconscious intentionality even in the most apparently mundane and innocent banter"; thus, we witness "in the "multiple reverberations of meaning generated within the symbolic system as a whole by the signifying chain... what Lacan calls the 'decentering of the subject'." The unconscious, then, can be characterized as "knowledge that can't tolerate one's knowing that one knows," and

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<sup>3</sup> Metz (1982, p. 223), for instance, suggests that Lacan's *Ecrits* make no claim to didactic clarity, at least in the ordinary sense (because I think they possess another kind of clarity, profoundly didactic in its own way: blindingly so, to the point that the reader represses it and makes enormous efforts not to understand)." Of Lacan's elusive, protracted style Boothby (1991, pp. 16–16) declares:

The difficulty of Lacan's style is not wholly unintentional. Convinced that the curative effect of analysis does not consist in *explaining* the patient's symptoms and life history, convinced, that is, that the analyst's effort to *understand* the patient only impedes the emergence of the unconscious within the transference and that what is effective in analysis concerns something beyond the capacity of the analyst to explain, Lacan's discourse is calculated to frustrate facile understanding. His aim in part is to replicate for his readers and listeners something of the essential opacity and disconnectedness of the analytic experience. Often what is required of the reader in the encounter with Lacan's dense and recalcitrant discourse, as with that of the discourse of the patient in analysis, is less an effort to clarify and systematize than a sort of unknowing mindfulness. We are called upon less to close over the gaps and discontinuities in the discourse than to remain attentive to its very lack of coherence, allowing its breaches and disalignments to become the jumping-off points for new movements of thought.

it is psychoanalysis that “appears on the scene to announce that there is knowledge that does not know itself, knowledge that is supported by the signifier as such” (Lacan, in Felman, 1987, p. 77).

The point that should not be missed here is that *the very condition for the possibility* of conscious knowledge is the *active* repression of some other knowledge on an unconscious level.<sup>4</sup> Ignorance is not the *absence* of knowledge but the *negative* condition for the possibility of any *positive* knowledge: the gap between knowing and not knowing, consequently, can never be closed. As Felman (1987) notes:

there can be no such thing as absolute knowledge: absolute knowledge is knowledge that has exhausted its own articulation, but articulated knowledge is by definition what cannot exhaust its own self-knowledge. For knowledge to be spoken, linguistically articulated, it would constitutively have to be supported by the ignorance carried by language, the ignorance of the *excess of signs* that of necessity its language—its articulation—“mobilizes” (Felman, 1987, pp. 77–78)

### *Implications for Education*

Of the few who have attempted to investigate the implications of the decentred subject for pedagogy, Felman (1987) offers the most perspicuous account. She notes, that not unlike Plato, perhaps the most eminent pedagogue in the Western tradition, Freud is convinced that teaching is impossible. She asks us to consider, however, whether this claim does not constitute a lesson in itself, noting that while Freud did not formulate psychoanalysis explicitly as a pedagogical practice, Lacan, unquestionably Freud’s most controversial disciple, views psychoanalysis very much through a pedagogical lens. Unfortunately, Lacan’s pedagogical project is often misrepresented or misconstrued due to certain misconceptions regarding psychoanalysis’s critical position.

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<sup>4</sup> It is for this reason that Foucault’s notion of the subject, the subject produced through the process of subjectivization, must be dismissed as lacking. According to Foucault (1982)—see also his account of Bentham’s Panopticon in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977)—the subject is totally determined by the apparatuses of Power. That is, the *only* knowledge the subject possesses is that which the apparatus instills in her or him. This, however, overlooks the fact that *the condition for the possibility* of knowledge is the negation of some other knowledge that must remain hidden to and from the subject of subjectivization. The subject, in fact, can never be totally determined by or transparent to the apparatuses of Power, as is confirmed by the ongoing resistance of subjects to the System, despite the best efforts of the mechanisms of Power—for Althusser (1971), “Ideological State Apparatuses”—to quell such resistance. See Copjec (1989) for a closer analysis of the important differences between structuralist and psychoanalytic accounts of the subject.



Lacan's critique of pedagogies based on the simple transmission of knowledge is often simply rejected as an *antipedagogical* stance—as a desire to forget pedagogy, to give it up as an inconsequential practice that seeks only to undo what has been established through education. But as Felman (1987, p. 72) notes, this reductive conception of Lacan's pedagogical stance as simply anti-pedagogical “fails to see that there is no such thing as an anti-pedagogue: an anti-pedagogue is the pedagogue *par excellence*.” In fact, both Lacan and Freud viewed pedagogy—in their case the education of analysts—to be of the utmost importance.

### *The Effects of Language*

Misconstruals of Lacan's pedagogy tend to result from a failure to read his explicit statements about pedagogy as “utterances”—as *action* statements that seek not only to describe something but also to bring something about. In focusing on the “locutionary” and “illocutionary” dimensions of Lacan's statements—on the meaning and apparent intent of his words—such readings overlook the “perlocutionary force” of his statements—the *effect* he wishes to invoke in the listener. Unlike the locutionary and illocutionary aspects of language, whose aims are open and can be discerned readily from statements themselves, the perlocutionary aspect is necessarily *masked*, since its meaning is a function of the speaker's desire to achieve a hidden goal or effect. If, for instance, a speaker wished to invoke fear in her listener, for whatever reason, she could not simply declare “I want to frighten you,” to do so would strip the utterance of its perlocutionary force. Lacan, in fact, through his own practice, was constantly exploring how what psychoanalysis teaches could be most effectively taught, and is renowned for deliberately torturing linguistic conventions to create effects that extend far beyond the manifest meaning of his statements. For Lacan, pedagogy entails much more than the mere statement of facts: “it is an utterance. It is not just a meaning: it is action; an action that itself may very well at times belie the stated meaning,” a process of learning that proceeds “through breakthroughs, leaps, discontinuities, regressions, and deferred action” (Felman, 1987, pp. 74–76).

In recognizing that psychoanalysis gives access to knowledge otherwise denied to consciousness, Lacan views it as a way of discovering that which can be learned in no other way. While traditional pedagogy, on the one hand, is based on a vision of intellectual perfectibility—on the premise that learning is a cumulative process, on the assumption that the gap between ignorance and knowledge can be fully closed; psychoanalysis, on the other hand, reveals that “the radical heteronomy that Freud's discovery shows gaping within man can never again be covered without whatever is used to hide it being profoundly dishonest” (Lacan, 1977, p. 172). All attempts to

close this gap through progressive mastery are exposed as futile, because there is knowledge that does not know itself, because meaning infinitely exceeds the signs manipulated by the individual, because the subject of speech is always mobilizing many more signs than she knows.

### *The Desire to Ignore*

The consequence is that ignorance is no longer the antithesis of knowledge—a void to be filled: it is the radical condition for the possibility of knowledge, an integral aspect of the very structure of knowledge. “Ignorance, in other words, is not a *passive* state of absence, a simple lack of information: it is an *active dynamic of negation*, an active refusal of information” (Felman, 1987, p. 79, emphasis added). It is, therefore, a *passion for ignorance*, a *resistance to knowledge* that teaching, like analysis, needs to concern itself with. More properly understood as a *desire to ignore*, the nature of ignorance reveals itself to be more performative than cognitive. As with the ignorance of Oedipus, which Sophocles portrays as more a *refusal* of knowledge than a simple lack thereof, ignorance represents an unwillingness to acknowledge our own implication in knowledge. That this ignorance, can teach us something, that the refusal to know is itself part of knowledge, is the truly revolutionary insight of psychoanalysis; consequently, the crucial questions the pedagogue must address are:

Where does it resist? Where does a text... precisely make no sense, that is, resist interpretation? Where does what I see and what I read resist my understanding? Where is the ignorance—the resistance to knowledge—located? And what can I learn from the locus of that ignorance? How can I interpret *out of* the dynamic ignorance I analytically encounter, both in others and in myself? How can I turn ignorance into an instrument of teaching? (Felman, 1987, p. 80)

Teaching, then, involves not the *transfer* of knowledge but the *creation of conditions* that make it possible to learn, the creation of an original learning disposition. To teach, according to Lacan, is to teach the condition that makes learning possible. But how does the teacher do this? Through the pedagogical structure of the analytic situation.

### *The Dynamic of Learning*

In the analytic situation, the analysand/learner speaks to the analyst/teacher, whom she attributes with the authority appropriate to one who possesses such knowledge—knowledge of precisely what the analysand/learner lacks. This is the beginning of what Lacan describes as “transference.” As Žižek (1992, p. 56) points out, “this knowledge is an illusion, it does not really exist in the other, the other

does not really possess it, it is constituted afterwards, through our—the subject's—the signifier's working"; however, the act of transference "is at the same time a necessary illusion, because we can paradoxically elaborate this knowledge only by means of the illusion that the other already possesses it and that we are only discovering it." It is imperative, however, that the analyst/teacher recognize that she does *not* possess the knowledge the analysand/learner attributes to her—the teacher's knowledge, according to Lacan, resides only in textual knowledge, knowledge derived from and directed toward interpretation. But since each text has its own peculiar meaning and demands, therefore, a unique interpretation, such knowledge cannot be acquired or possessed once and for all. Analyst/teachers, according to Lacan, are "those who share this knowledge only at the price, on the condition of their not being able to exchange it" (Lacan, in Felman, 1987, p. 81). This crucial point bears repetition:

Analytic (textual) knowledge cannot be exchanged, it has to be used—and used in each case differently, according to the singularity of the case, according to the specificity of the text. Textual or analytic knowledge is, in other words, that peculiarly specific knowledge which, unlike any commodity, is subsumed by its *use* value, having no exchange value whatsoever. (Felman, 1987, p. 81)

Lacan is singular in his insistence that knowledge derived from the analyst/teacher's previous engagements with other texts cannot simply be exchanged with the analysand/learner, it has to be *used*—and used differently, according to the particularity of the case—to create the conditions for the possibility of learning. There is, however, one very important thing the teacher/analyst must know: how to ignore what she knows, to suppress what she learned from previous engagements with other texts.

Considering each pedagogical engagement as a new beginning, The analyst/teacher, in coming to the rescue of the analysand/learner's ignorance, is pulled into ignorance herself. Unlike the analysand/learner, however, who is ignorant of simply her own knowledge, the analyst/teacher is *doubly* ignorant: pedagogically ignorant of her own deliberately suspended knowledge and actually ignorant of the knowledge the analysand/learner presumes her to possess. To make learning possible in this situation, the analyst/teacher must first situate, through dialogue, the ignorance—the place where her textual knowledge is being resisted. It is from this resistance, the analysand/learner's desire for ignorance, from the statements of the analysand/learner that always reveal more than she knows, that the analyst/teacher gains access to the unconscious knowledge of the

analysand/learner—that knowledge which cannot tolerate its own knowing. The analyst/teacher must return the signifiers that express this a-reflexive, obfuscated knowledge to the analysand/learner from her own nonreflexive, asymmetrical position as the subject presumed to know, as an Other. Consequently,

contrary to the traditional pedagogical dynamic, in which the teacher's question is addressed to an answer from the other—from the student—which is totally reflexive, and expected, "the true Other," says Lacan, "is the Other who gives the answer one does not expect."... Coming from the Other, knowledge is, by definition, that which comes as a surprise, that which is constitutively the return of a difference. (Felman, 1987, p. 82)

It is to the unconscious of the analysand/learner, to the subject of enunciation, that the analyst/teacher must address her question, then; not to the analysand/learner's conscious ego, the enunciated subject. Only then will she be fulfilling her role as Other. To express the truth, the analyst/teacher must first be taught by the analysand/learner's unconscious. By structurally occupying the place of the analysand/learner's unconscious knowledge by making herself a student of that knowledge, the analyst/teacher assumes the only truly pedagogical stance, making accessible to the analysand/learner what would otherwise remain inaccessible to her.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

For Lacan, knowledge is always already there, but always in the Other. Consequently, a pedagogical stance of alterity is indispensable to the articulation of truth. Knowledge, then, is not a substance but a structural dynamic that cannot be possessed by any individual. It is the result of a mutual exchange between interlocutors that both say more than they know: "dialogue is thus the radical condition of learning and of knowledge, the analytically constitutive condition through which ignorance becomes structurally informative; knowledge is essentially, irreducibly dialogical" (Felman, 1987, p. 83). Knowledge, therefore, cannot be supported or transported by an individual. The analyst/teacher, alone, cannot be a master of the knowledge she teaches. This means the analyst/teacher must do much more than simply invite the analysand/learner to engage in exchanges or interventions, she must attempt to learn her own unconscious knowledge *from* the analysand/learner. In adopting this pedagogical stance, the analyst/teacher denies the possession of her own knowledge and dismisses all claims to total knowledge, to mastery, to being the self-sufficient, self-possessed, proprietor of knowledge.

This, then, is to reject the traditional image of the pedagogue as omniscient, an image modelled on an illusion: that of a consciousness fully transparent to itself. Based on the discovery of the unconscious, which abolishes the postulate of the subject presumed to know, Lacan contends that the position of the analyst/teacher

must be that of the one who learns, of the one who teaches nothing other than the way she learns, of a subject who is interminably a student, of a teaching whose promise lies in the inexhaustibility of its self-critical potential—this is undoubtedly the most radical insight psychoanalysis offers pedagogy.

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