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THE "FRENCH FREUD"

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Sherry Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics*, New York: Basic Books, 1978.

"French Freud" has become almost common parlance in many academic circles. Yet, until now little has been offered to account for this phenomenon. Sherry Turkle's *Psychoanalytic Politics* enjoys a certain privilege in exploring much uncharted territory.

The core of her study is a history of the various psychoanalytic societies in France. The tale of these groups begins with the founding of La Société Psychanalytique de Paris (SPP) in 1927 which survived as a unified group until 1953. The first *rupture* was precipitated over the man who has become *the* central figure in French psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan. Rumours had been circulating that Lacan was shortening the length of his sessions with patients from the standard fifty minutes. Two weeks after Lacan's announcement that this was indeed the case he was asked for his resignation as president of the society. In response to these actions Daniel Lagache, then vice president of the society, and three other analysts submitted resignations to the SPP and formed a new group, La Société Française de Psychanalyse (SFP), Lacan joined this group and presented his famous lecture "Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse" at the first congress.

Things went fairly smoothly for the SFP for a decade, but the lure of recognition by the powerful International Psychoanalytic Association proved fatal. In 1963 the IPA offered recognition to the SFP under the proviso that Lacan and Françoise Dolto — one of the first four members of the SFP — would be denied their status as training analysts. In taking sides over this issue the members of the SFP split to form two new groups, the Association Psychanalytique de France (APF) and L'Ecole Freudienne. The former, whose members included Lagache and two of Lacan's pupils Laplanche and Pontalis, was granted recognition by the IPA. The latter group, which was and still is denied recognition by the IPA, was formed by Lacan.

In 1969 Lacan's own group split again. This was due to certain proposals put forward by Lacan. He suggested that a new title be created. "*psychanalyste de l'Ecole.*" These "school analysts" would be marked off from the normal practicing analysts for their theoretical abilities. An entire

procedure known as *la passe* was worked out and proposed through which an analyst could earn the new title. Part of the "pass" procedure included certification by a committee of senior analysts on which Lacan would always sit. A group of analysts in the Ecole Freudienne, gathered around Piera Aulagnier, opposed the institution of such a hierarchical ordering. They broke with Lacan and formed "Le Quatrième Groupe." (This group according to Turkle has become something of a meeting ground for various positions. In this sense it remains the most open of all the societies.)

A great deal of the divisiveness within the French psychoanalytic institutions has centered on the problem of authority. In a sense, these splits highlight a tension which is central to the psychoanalytic field. Much of psychoanalytic theory aims at elucidating the ways in which the individual is bound to certain structures of authority. Therapeutic practice should aim at subverting authoritarian structures, and analysis only works if it minimizes their power. This, Turkle suggests, presents a problem for the institutionalization of psychoanalysis. An analysand being trained by a representative of a group or association will, in completing an analysis, presumably manage to detach himself or herself from that very authority which would bestow the title of "analyst." In this way psychoanalytic institutions appear to be inherently self-subversive, and their maintenance would seem to be due only to a certain impurity in relation to their explicit aspirations.

The problem of authority — and its possible resolution — have made psychoanalysis attractive to the political left. A general leftist line of thought has been to see the "individual" as itself an authoritarian production. The critique of authority has come to focus on a critique of the "ego." This has meant less emphasis on explicit political issues and more on epistemological configurations. The ego, in searching to be identical with itself, turns out to be very closely related to a politics which can allow no otherness. In this way, political criticism becomes a critique of knowledge. Inversely, psychoanalysis, with its critique of the ego, launches an epistemological subversion of the claims to knowledge which serve to justify overt political power.

In certain respects this critique by the "French Freud" appears to be in line with the critique of identitarian philosophy offered by the Frankfurt School, and Turkle draws this parallel. However, one must be leery of the unifying formula — "the interpenetration of individual and society." On one hand there are the Frankfurt theorists who could, if not proclaim the existence of, at least entertain the hope for, something like an autonomous ego. On the other is Lacan, whose position — as Turkle points out — tends to disintegrate the division of interiority and exteriority to the point at which an "autonomous ego" can only be the imaginary ego's imaginary version of itself.

Further, the anti-egological twist of much of this French theory has not been unopposed within the psychoanalytic community itself. One could say a

great deal more about the conflicts within the International Psychoanalytic Association by turning back to the influence of ego-psychology within it and to the lasting presence of Heinz Hartmann and the "conflict-free sphere" of the ego.

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Turkle's discussion of the anti-psychiatric movement is complicated by her use of the notions of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. She focuses on Deleuze and Guattari and suggests that they take Lacan's notions of the Imaginary and the Symbolic as stages, in the sense that the infant passes through the Imaginary to the Symbolic. "Oedipus" is located at the point of initiation into the symbolic order. Deleuze and Guattari, according to Turkle, are arguing for a "naturalism" in trying to get back to the Imaginary, i.e., to a "pre-Oedipal" state. This reading only juggles certain categories developed by Lacan. In their critique of Oedipus, though, Deleuze and Guattari are suggesting that the "Imaginary" is itself an Oedipal construct. They object not to a periodization of Imaginary-Symbolic as such, but, rather, to any attempt to demarcate an imaginary field (through periodization or any other conceptual means). Turkle, in situating Deleuze and Guattari within an Oedipal schema, blurs their theoretical position — a position which attempts to rid itself of an entire oedipalized conceptual apparatus.

And yet, we should perhaps not be overly hasty in dismissing the convergence of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and Oedipus in Turkle's discussion. This conceptual matrix may provide us with a clue to some of the theoretical divisions which mark the various factions of the French scene. On one hand we have looked at Deleuze and Guattari who would be rid of Oedipus. Many have suggested that their formulation is too quick in dismissing the difficulties involved in overcoming the Oedipal problematic.

In another case, we might consider Lacan himself. He seems to insist on the analytical division of the Imaginary and the Symbolic as well as their inseparability. This is to say that the relation of Imaginary and Symbolic is not reducible to one of periodization. Instead, the two are in an ongoing process of intermingling. Such an inmixing makes the resolution of the Oedipus complex both necessary and impossible. A resolution is necessary in that the subject must find a way to the symbolic in order to be represented. However, the relation to language invariably splits the subject. The field of the Imaginary lies within this gap opened up in the subject as a result of its relation to language. In the Imaginary the subject is positively represented — as ego — in such a way as to deny the split which has been introduced. The aim of once and for all sealing the subject with language raises the third term — which is no longer one of dialectical transcendence. The real (réel) is affirmed as paradox,

as impossible. The real is the impossible, and the impossible is the real.

Another approach is found in the work of Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. Their position may be viewed as recovering a late essay of Freud's which has been heavily downplayed by Lacan — "The Splitting of the Ego." Abraham and Torok — and we might add Jacques Derrida here — are also critical of the unified and unifying ego. However, rather than attempting to delimit the ego's claims by circumscribing it within an imaginary field, they instead find an inherent instability within the ego itself. They take an old battle cry of ego psychology and turn it inside out, "*Wo Ich war soll Es werden.*" In terms of our general discussion, such an analysis undermines the attempt to clearly separate the Symbolic from the Imaginary.

Finally, within Le Quatrième Groupe we see the attempt to formulate a notion of the Imaginary incorporating aspects of both the Imaginary and the Symbolic in Lacan's scheme. (I am thinking of Cornelius Castoriadis.) In general, the problem here is to describe an "Imaginary" with an inherently self-transformative quality. Castoriadis tries to do this with the notion of imaginary institution. (I do not know to what extent this position reflects the Fourth Group as a whole.)

In what is to me the weakest aspect of her book, Turkle tries to provide some sort of explanation for the popularity of psychoanalysis in France. She turns to a sociology of knowledge. An openness to psychoanalysis is occasioned by a period of rapid social change that forces a turn toward the individual. This general theorem is applied in an effort to account for the different receptions given Freud in America and in France in the early twentieth century. "So, at a time when American society was increasingly receptive to new ways of looking at the world that focused on the *self*, the French bourgeoisie was concerned with reinforcing its own experience of France as a self-contained, organic, interdependent, well-cemented *society*" (p. 32). The disruption of this stable fabric in France during the 1960's, then, opened the door to this shift to an interest in the self. The haste of such an account seems to reflect a certain reductionism.

In spite of these problems, *Psychoanalytic Politics* provides many insights into the problems of the institutions of psychoanalysis and the psychoanalysis of institutions. Further, it offers an entry into the feuds and controversies that have helped to generate so much enthusiasm around psychoanalytic issues in France. The former contribution should add to the growing interest in psychoanalytic material. The latter will perhaps help to keep those away who would dismiss the "French Freud" for its lack of seriousness.

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