

The Fracture of the Cogito and the Trauma of Being

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In the seminar *Crucial Problems for Psychoanalysis*,¹ Lacan revisits Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* not to affirm it,² but to displace it. What for Descartes served as a *fundamentum* becomes for Lacan a fracture, a *béance*. The subject of the cogito is not whole but already divided: an effect of the signifier's intrusion into being.

Lacan's reformulation of the cogito: "*I am the one who thinks: 'therefore I am'*", is not a stylistic gesture but a conceptual displacement. The phrase "*therefore I am*" enclosed in quotation marks, signifies that existence is not a transparent truth but an enunciation, a signifier, shaped in the field of the Other. The subject no longer emerges from self-evident consciousness but from the rupture introduced by language.³

Thus, Lacan displaces the Cartesian "I think" from being a sign of self-presence to a symptom of internal division. *Ego* is not affirmation of being but attempt to suture the gap between *énonciation* and *énoncé*, between the subject of speech and the unconscious subject.⁴

Lacan formalizes this division through the distinction between the "I am" of *sense (sens)* and the "I am" of *being (être)*, revealing a subjective split (*Entzweiung*). The subject emerges not through plenitude but through lack, not empirical but structural. Language does not express a preexisting self. It introduces a loss that makes subjectivity possible.⁵

¹ Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XII: Crucial Problems for Psychoanalysis*, Unpublished, lesson 9th June 1965.

² Descartes, R. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. II, trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, & D. Murdoch. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

³ Lacan, *Crucial Problems*, *op.cit.*, lesson 9th June 1965.

⁴ Lacan, J., "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious" *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, New York/London: Norton, 2006, pp. 671–701.

⁵ *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. J.-A. Miller, trans. A. Sheridan, New York/London: Norton, 1978, pp.136-148.

⁵ Lacan, J., *Crucial Problems*, *op.cit.*, lesson 9th June 1965, lesson 16th June 1965.

If Descartes aimed to overcome doubt, Lacan positions doubt at the heart of the subject. The real is not what is known, but what interrupts knowledge. *Cogito* does not reveal being rather it veils it. Thought is not the path to existence, but its detour.

Thus, for Lacan, truth is never complete (*pas-toute*). It arises in the slippage between what is said and what is meant, in the failure of the *ego* to coincide with itself. The truth of the subject, finally, is not epistemological but topological, located in the void where meaning breaks down and the unconscious speaks.