

Science, Truth and Suture

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Lacan's "Science and Truth" was first published in Volume I of the *Cahiers pour L'Analyse*, alongside a text by Miller, "Suture".¹ This volume was titled "The Truth."²

In "Science and Truth", Lacan notes that the subject historically coincident with a new scientific worldview was the *cogito*.³ As per Descartes' method, this subject is arrived at by scepticism – rejection of knowledge. It is the certain and insoluble remainder of refused knowledge, certain because undoubtable. It is *clearly* and *distinctly* conceivable, hence true.⁴ For Descartes, knowledge can only be built upon the *true* ground that the subject of enquiry *is identical to itself*.⁵ The truth of this identity I=I is the condition for the *cogito*'s claim to know. Science has historically necessitated this dehumanized subject, evacuated of depth, reduced to the condition of its being, to lay claim to knowledge.

Lacan notes that psychoanalysis can only have emerged after the seventeenth century, or the genesis of modern science and after Descartes.⁶ The subject of psychoanalysis remains the subject of science – a subject in relation to knowledge and truth. But we could say that Lacan radicalises Descartes' position. For Lacan this subject is split. The insoluble ground and condition of this subject's claim to knowledge is not Cartesian (its being self-identical) but its being not identical to itself.

Miller's text "Suture" frames this well. He discusses Leibniz, for whom identity means substitutability without loss of truth.⁷ Where there is truth there is identity. But what then of non-identity? Is truth there lost? It is not that truth is lost but that its condition is what is not identical to itself. The split subject is the condition of truth. Miller's reading of Frege follows. For a series $n+1$, 0 is the necessary condition for there being 1 in that series. 0 must be counted *in* that series for there to be a series as such. For a series of three numbers, 0 is the excluded-included fourth number which constitutes it. But this 0 which can be *counted* as identical to itself represents the concept of an object that is not (and which exceeds this representation of it). A symbolic series is grounded on the substitution of a substitution. 0 in fact represents what is impossible for it to represent – what is excluded for 0 to be an exception itself in the series.

In terms of signifiers, the subject that is not identical to itself is represented by that which is both excepted and included in the chain of signifiers in order to ground it. The subject can persist in the signifying chain, coinciding there as that which is represented by one signifier for

¹ Hallward, P. and K. Peden (ed.), "Appendix: The *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* (1966-69)", *Concept and Form, Volume I, Selections from the Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, New York/London: Verso Books, 2012, p. 259.

² Ibid.

³ Lacan, J., "Science and Truth", *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, New York/London: Norton, 2006, p. 727.

⁴ Descartes, R., *Meditations*, trans. D. M. Clarke, London: Penguin, 2010, p. 18-20.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Lacan, J., "Science and Truth", *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, New York/London: Norton, 2006, p. 727.

⁷ Miller, J.-A., "Suture (Elements of the Logic of the Signifier)", *Concept and Form, Volume I, Selections from the Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, ed. P. Hallward and K. Peden, New York/London: Verso Books, 2012, p. 96.

another, even as it is inexhausted. There is no exhaustive coincidence of the subject with the symbolic order within which knowledge is elaborated. Suture names this relation.

It could thus be said that the subject of Lacan, like that of Descartes, is grounded in truth as the condition of knowledge – or rather in the suture at the core of the possibility of truth.