Bending the Structure: Jacques Lacan Along the Axis of Structuralism and Poststructuralism

Yapıyı Bükmek: Yapısalcılık ve Postyapısalcılık Ekseninde Jacques Lacan

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ABSTRACT

Lacan wrote and generated ideas at the intersection of structuralism and poststructuralism, and the question of where he stands in this intersection is crucial to understand his conception of the subject. This essay takes the multiplicity of views on Lacan as a structuralist and a poststructuralist as its starting point and aims to weigh these labels against the background of his specific theories and views. We suggest that in his early phase when he was categorised as a structuralist, he had the seeds of his later poststructuralist phase, and when he was generating his poststructuralist ideas, he was building them on his structuralist legacy. This evolution is similar to that of Roland Barthes in that he establishes an ongoing dialog between structuralism and poststructuralism: he is both a threshold figure suggesting an amalgam of these movements, but he is also a dividing figure as his evolution points at the unbridgeable rupture between structuralism and poststructuralism.

Keywords: Jacques Lacan, Derrida, Saussure, structuralism, poststructuralism

ÖZ

Lacan'ın düşüncelerinde yapısalcı ve postyapısalcı öğeleri bulmak mümkündür ve Lacancı özne kavramı ancak Lacan'ın bu ikisi arasında nerede konumlandığının anlaşılması ile açıklık kazanır. Lacan'ın yapısalcı ya da postyapısalcı olduğuna dair ileri sürülen farklı düşünceleri çıkış noktası alan bu çalışma, onunla ilgili bu sınıflandırmaları onun teori ve fikirleri çerçevesinde sorunsallaştırır. Bu çalışmada, Lacan'ın yapısalcı olarak nitelendirildiği ilk dönemlerindeki kuramsal tartışmalarında postyapısalcı nüveler barındırırken, postyapısalcı düşüncelerini ürettiği sonraki dönemlerde ise bu düşüncelerini daha önceki yapısalcı fikirlerine dayandırdığını ileri sürmekteyiz. Yapısalcılık ve Postyapısalcılık arasında süregelen bir diyalog oluşturması bakımından Lacan epistemolojisindeki bu değişim Roland Barthes'da gözlemlenen değişime denktir: Lacan her iki yaklaşımı bir araya getirerek bu iki konum arasında eşik görevi görürken aynı zamanda, çalışmalarının ilerleyen dönemlerinde görüldüğü üzere, yapısalcılık ve postyapısalcılık arasındaki uçuruma vurgu yaparak bir ayrışma noktası da sunar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Jacques Lacan, Derrida, Saussure, yapısalcılık, postyapısalcılık

Introduction

One's understanding of language or the sign might be the first thing to look at while locating him/her as a structuralist or a poststructuralist. Whether that philosopher or the philosophical school is in search of an organising principle or a structure might be another element that tells us about their position. Moving from the particular to a general operating mechanism might be another criterion. We will concentrate on the first criterion, the conception of language or more specifically the sign in Lacan. The first question in this context would be whether he is Platonic or not. Platonism is the account of Western metaphysics, says Derrida:

> The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix-if you will pardon me for demonstrating so little and for being so elliptical in order to come more quickly to my principal theme-is the determination of Being as presence in all senses of this word. It could be shown that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the center have always designated an invariable presence-eidos, arche, telos, energeia, ousia (essence, existence, substance, subject) aletheia, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth.[1]

Here the word metaphysics has nothing to do with the belief systems, but it is a reference to the assumed nature of the signified. Platonism assumes an unproblematic correspondence between the signifier and the signified, both of which make up the sign. Yet, Derrida limits himself only to the world of the signifiers and takes the signified as an assumption. In his attempt to delogocentralize the western philosophy, Derrida was actually detaching himself from this assumed nature of the absolute signified and limiting himself only to the operations of the signifiers. Then, one can come up with the question of 'What is Lacan's conception of the sign?'.

As Lacan rereads Freud from a linguistic vantage point which was shaped mostly by Saussure and Jacobson, some critics say that he is a structuralist. However, when we look at what later Lacan says, it becomes impossible to take him as a traditional structuralist. We see that Lacan borrows terms like signifier, signified and sign from Saussure, metonymy and metaphor from Jacobson and uses them extensively or he borrows the idea that language is a site of being from Heidegger. He definitely recontextualizes these words and ideas as he problematizes the link between the signifier and the signified, and he holds the symbolic and imaginary identifications responsible for this problematization. His concepts of Lack and Desire, and phallus as a non-locus or his claim about the lack of overlap between the signifier and the signified make it difficult to locate him within a structuralist frame which assumes that, though the link between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, it is stable and which looks for a totalizing operating mechanism or a structure behind the particulars. Another thing that disconnects Lacan from structuralism is his basic assumption that the subjectivity is based on a radical split between unconscious and consciousness. That is, these psychic realms work through different lines of

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1   Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass (London: Routledge, 2002), 353.

logic, which do not overlap. However, in both we see linguistic processes as he says unconscious is structured like a language and before the subject is born, there is already the word. There is no teleological flow in Lacan, even if we take the Phallus as the origin, its status as an empty locus or absent presence problematizes its teleological significance.

1. Fundamentals of Structuralism and Post-Structuralism and Lacan's standing in relation to them

Giving a brief overview of structuralist and poststructuralist ideas and theorists might prepare the ground for a more comprehensive discussion on Lacan's position in relation to them. As a theoretical movement, structuralism is traced back to the thinking of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) who had a revolutionary impact on the study of language with his famous work *Course in General Linguistics*. It was born as a reaction to the social and linguistic turmoil of the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Western Europe, where "discourse had become degraded to a mere instrument of science, commerce, advertising and bureaucracy."[2] In the face of the era's ideological crisis, the structuralists sought to find an alternative approach, which would be only about the language itself, regardless of the historical conditions surrounding it, and they thought that language could contain reality. Although they disconnected the signified from external reality as a response to their age's ideological crisis, they remained Platonic because the notion of the sign they offered by this disconnection referred only to itself, and there was still a stable signified which was later on taken by poststructuralism as an assumption, as a reflection of the functioning logos which was in fact a non-locus.

Structuralist thinkers were anti-humanist in the sense that they concentrated on language and meaning-making mechanisms rather than dealing with meaning and the subject and searched for a monolithic reading of truth. That is, "carving out of the heterogeneous assemblage of phenomena and practice that fall under the heading of language" "an object which is discrete, stable, systematic, homogeneous, and open to empirical examination and logical theorizing,"[3] they foregrounded only how language functioned and gave closure to the polymorphous ground of meaning. In Genette's words, what they did was exerting "a sort of internal reduction, traversing the substance of the work in order to reach its bone-structure: certainly not a superficial examination, but a sort of radioscopic penetration and all the more external in that it is more penetrating."[4] Based on a single system of signification, the anti-humanistic approach of the structuralists also ignored the role of the human subject in the production of meaning: language, preceding the individual, produced meaning in the context of structuralism. So, turned into a product of language, the individual was no longer seen as the producer or the origin of meaning.

Saussure made a big contribution to structuralism with his notion of the linguistic sign. Regarding the linguistic sign as "a two-sided psychological entity," consisting of "a concept"

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2   Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minnesota: The University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 121.
3   Derek Attridge, "The linguistic model and its applications", In *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Volume 8. From Formalism to Poststructuralism*, ed. Raman Selden (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2008), 59-60.
4   Kenneth McMillan Newton, *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory* (NY: Macmillan, 1997), 92.

(signified) and "a sound image" (signifier), he assumed the presence of a solidarity between the signifier and the signified: "the two elements are intimately united, and each recalls the other."[5] In this context, the relation between the signifier and the signified was not organic or authentic, but arbitrary. This straightforward connection between the signifier and the signified meant that each sign attained meaning based on its difference from the other signs in the system, as he noted:

> in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up; but in language there are only differences *without positive terms*. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only conceptual and phonic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it. Proof of it is that the value of a term may be modified without either its meaning or its sound being affected, solely because a neighboring term has been modified.[6]

Similar to Platonic tradition, this closed-circuit signification system was based on hierarchical binary dualities: the signified was privileged over the signifier. As a result of this hierarchical signification system which assumed the presence of a transcendental signified to which each signifier was unproblematically destined to arrive, meaning was frozen. In his attempt to repress the signifier under the signified, Saussure also made a distinction between langue ("a self-contained whole and a principle of classification") and parole ("many-sided and heterogeneous" actual use of language).[7] Finding it difficult to "discover its unity" due to its "belong[ing] both to the individual and to society,"[8] he reduced parole to the state of non-existence. So, he saw language as "a system of signs, which was to be studied 'synchronically'—that is to say, studied as a complete system at a given point in time—rather than 'diachronically,' in its historical development."[9] Similar to Saussure, formalist thinkers cherished the notion of binary logic because they saw literary texts as systems in which elements were formed "in relations of foreground and background."[10] As one of the Russian formalists, Roman Jakobson also contributed to structuralism. With the concept of "the dominant," he addressed the integrity of the Saussurean signification system. He defined "the dominant" "as the focusing component of a work of art: it rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components. It is the dominant which guarantees the integrity of the structure."[11] In this context, he implied the presence of a manipulating centre around which all the other elements in a work of art were gathered for unity. Apart from addressing the Saussurean sign system with his concept of "the dominant," Jakobson addressed Saussure also by the distinction he made between metaphor and metonymy.

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5   Ferdinand De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. C. Bally ve A. Sechehaye, trans. W. Baskin (NY: Philosophical Library, 1959), 66.
6   Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* 120.
7   Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* 9.
8   Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics,* 9.
9   Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction,* 84.
10   Raman Selden et al., *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* (London: Pearson Longman, 2005), 38.
11   Newton, *Twentieth-Century Literary Theory,* 6.

Finally, the French linguist Emile Benveniste needs to be mentioned for the crucial role that he played in the construction of the structuralist discourse. Abandoning Saussure's claim about the arbitrary nature of the relationship between the signifier and the signified, Benveniste argued that this relation was not arbitrary, but necessary from the language user's point of view, and he suggested the notion of the referent to show that the true site of arbitrariness lies between the sign and the reality to which it refers.[12] He also made a distinction "between language as *énoncé* ('enounced': the particular linguistic items in particular order) and as *énonciation* ('enunciation': the utterance as it occurs on a particular occasion)."[13] Following statements from Lacan seem to summarize what we have referred to so far:

> You recall that in linguistics there is the signifier and the signified and that the signifier is to be taken in the sense of the material of language. The trap, the hole one must not fall into, is the belief that signifieds are objects, things. The signified is something quite different – it's the meaning, and I explained to you by means of Saint Augustine, who is as much of a linguist as Monsieur Benveniste, that it always refers to meaning, that is, to another meaning. The system of language, at whatever point you take hold of it, never results in an index finger directly indicating a point of reality; it's the whole of reality that is covered by the entire network of language. You can never say that this is what is being designated, for even were you to succeed you would never know what I am designating in this table – for example, the colour, the thickness, the table as object, or whatever else it might be.[14]

To sum up, what the structuralists did by their mechanical approach to meaning and the sign was to enhance the teleological logic of modernity. Ordering and arranging meaning in a hierarchy of significance, they tried to foreground only one perception of reality and exposed the lower leg of the binary trap to repression. Re-surfacing in the symbolic in the form of grand narratives, the epistemic violence of their closed system of sign sterilized meaning from its material conditions of existence and assumed the presence of a centre through which heterogeneous nature of meaning was forced to be totalized. In this binary mode of thinking in which certain ideas were privileged over the others, there was also no possibility for a third alternative.

Poststructuralism problematizes the stable signification system of Saussurean linguistics in which each sign attains meaning by means of its difference from the other signs. It points to the conflict inherent in the closed system of the sign, arguing that the process of differences to which meaning is exposed cannot be given closure. That is, the realization that a sign differs not only from a single sign, but also from many other possible signs renders unthinkable the presence of a one-to-one set of correspondence between the signifier and the signified. This in turn throws into doubt the taken-for-granted notions of truth. As Eagleton notes: "since the meaning is a

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12   Attridge, "The linguistic model and its applications", 72.
13   Attridge, "The linguistic model and its applications", 72.
14   Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book III: The Psychoses 1955–1956*, ed. Jacques Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1993), 32.

matter of what the sign is *not*, its meaning is always in some sense absent from it too."[15] Laying bare the working mechanisms of Saussurean signification system, thus, post-structuralist thinkers argue against the presence of a transcendental signified at which each signifier is assumed to problematically arrive. Rather, they underline that a signifier each time refers to another signifier, forming a complex network of signifiers. As they reflect, meaning, being too fluid to be frozen by binary polarities, arises in this process that involves the open-ended play of signifiers: meaning "cannot be easily nailed down, it is never fully present in any one sign alone, but is rather a kind of constant flickering of presence and absence together."[16] The elusive nature of meaning that stands uncontainable by language is underlined by Ryan from a Marxist angle:

> Poststructuralists assume that culture constructs order out of the inchoate matter of the world and in so doing helps to maintain repressive social regimes. If structuralists found order in everything from kinship systems to fashion, poststructuralism argues that all such orders are founded on an essential endemic disorder in language and in the world that can never be mastered by any structure or semantic code that might assign it a meaning.[17]

Contrary to the structuralists who seek to find an essence or a solid foundation at the core of every work by dissecting and articulating them with a mathematical precision, the post-structuralist thinkers argue that no sign can be taken in isolation to search for its origin because each sign carries the traces and fragments of other possible signs with it. Though unvoiced and reduced to the state of non-existence due to the threat they pose to linear logic of modernity by their impenetrability, these signs always stand there, lying beyond the full grasp of language. Their potential but unactualized presence refutes the Saussurean idea that assumes the presence of a happy solidarity between the signifier and the signified and unveils the illusion of Oneness inherent in it.

Reflecting that "language is a much less stable affair than the classical structuralists had considered," the post-structuralists criticize the structuralists also by arguing that "nothing is ever fully present in signs:"

> Since language is something I am made out of, rather than merely a convenient tool I use, the whole idea that I am a stable, unified entity must also be a fiction. Not only can I never be fully present to you, but I can never be fully present to myself either. I still need to use signs when I look into my mind or search my soul, and this means that I will never experience any 'full communion' with myself.[18]

Arguing that there cannot be "full communion" in the subject, they emphasize the illusion of metaphysical presence and Oneness, which cherishes unitary notion of subjectivity. They come

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15   Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction,* 111.
16   Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 111.
17   Michael Ryan, "Marxism and poststructuralism", içinde *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, ed. Christa Knellwolf ve Christopher Norris, (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 101.
18   Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction,* 112.

to this conclusion based on the fact that there always lies a gap between what is said and what is meant by the subject.

As one of the touchstones of post-structuralism, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida was the first who proposed deconstructing Western metaphysical thinking in order to demonstrate the constructed nature of the hierarchical relationship between the signifier and the signified. Derrida's deconstructive criticism depends on applying a symptomatic reading to texts and finding the impasses of meaning. As noted in his *Of Grammatology*:

> If in the process of deciphering a text in the traditional way we come across a word that seems to harbor an unresolvable contradiction, and by virtue of being one word is made sometimes to work in one way and sometimes in another and thus is made to point away from the absence of a unified meaning, we shall catch at that word. If a metaphor seems to suppress its implications, we shall catch at that metaphor. We shall follow its adventures through the text and see the text coming undone as a structure of concealment, revealing its self-transgression, its undecidability.[19]

Derrida challenges phonocentrism and its teleological drive, giving priority to writing rather than speech as he thinks that writing reveals its textuality better than speaking with its continual dissemination. So, he takes the writing as the originary, as binaries are dissolved in it. He starts with Saussurean assumption and goes beyond it, arguing that although we cannot get rid of logos, we can lay bare its working mechanisms. Unveiling the "structurality of structure,"[20] he emphasizes the dispersal of meaning. As he notes, meaning can never be nailed down as it is not present in a sign. It is dispersed among the chain of signifiers beyond capture. Also, as the meaning constantly differs and gets delayed, we can have only traces of it. In this context, he poses a challenge to the notion of a centre in structuralism. As he says, although the centre is outside the system, untainted by its own working mechanisms, it is also inside as it regulates the system. As he notes:

> Thus it has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which while governing the structure, escapes structurality. This is why classical thought concerning structure could say that the center is, paradoxically, within the structure and outside it. The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality), the totality has its center elsewhere.[21]

In this sense, contrary to the Platonic tradition for which signifiers can be meaningful as long as they are organized by the master signified, he argues that signified part is just an assumption:

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19   Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Translator's Preface. Of Grammatology by Jacques Derrida* (The John Hopkins UP, 1998), lxxv.
20   Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 353.
21   Derrida, *Writing and Difference,* 352.

although it does not exist, it functions by organizing the way we think. So, destroying the content of the sign, he destroys the entire logic of language.

To conclude, post-structuralism lays bare the working mechanisms of the Western metaphysics of presence and points at the lack of correspondence between the signifier and the signified. Departing from the Platonic tradition, it argues that meaning is dispersed along the chain of signifiers.

2. What is the case in Lacan, then?

The dominant idea in the first period of Lacan's work, 1932-48, is the domination of the human being by the image.[22] Later on, there is a shift in emphasis from the image to the signifier. Rather than the absolute signified which is located in a transcendental domain, Lacan locates the absolute signified in the unconscious. In his epistemology, this absolute signified or the "master signified" is identical to what can fill in the immense sense of Lack in the individual. However, this element undergoes a repression after the infant is linguistically castrated, that is, disconnected from the (m)Other, or a sense of wholeness experienced with the mother. We are doomed to repress this wholeness, and replace it with Lack. What is this repressed material in the primary repression? We don't know. This repressed is most of the time identical with the master signified. However, in Lacan, the correspondence between the signifier and the signified is very rarely achieved, and he calls this correspondence "full speech," in the aftermath of which the subject gets rid of the conflicting material in his ego.[23] Therefore, in the full speech the signifier overlaps with one's desire regarding the element which disturbs the psyche and after this overlap, there is what we call "the cure." The master signified, which is radically repressed after the infant's submission of itself to the logic of the signifiers in the symbolic, is replaced by a master signifier which is in the domain of culture or the symbolic. So, the master signified, whatever it is, can be a metaphor for the nostalgic phallic Other, or the (m)Other. The master signifier, on the other hand, rules in the shared Other of the symbolic. The master signified is definitely beyond the grasp of the speaking subject unless he is a psychotic. However, the master signifier in the shared Other is a non-locus, an absent presence. It doesn't exist, but it functions. It is what Lacan calls the phallus, anything that promises to fill in this sense of Lack or anything that promises to eradicate the rupture between the subject and the Phallic Other or anything that promises to fulfil desire. However, this is an impossibility. Therefore, desire goes on constantly producing itself.

In Lacan, there is the endless play of the signifiers as in Derridean mode of thinking. In a similar tone of voice to Derrida, he says, "the signifier begins not with a trace, but with the fact that one effaces the trace. Nevertheless, an effaced trace does not a signifier make. What inaugurates the signifier is the fact that it is posited as capable of being effaced."[24] Further, he

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22 Madan Sarup, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 101.
23 Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits*, Trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2015), 35.
24 Jacques Lacan, *Desire and Its Interpretation. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VI*, ed. Jacques Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (Polity, 2019), 80.

puts forward that "a sign is not the sign of something, but of an effect that is what is presumed as such by a functioning of the signifier."[25] By giving priority to the signifier and its play and by foregrounding the erased nature of the signified, Lacan explains the split between the signifier and the signified with a bar, but this bar problematizes the happy solidarity between the signifier and the signified in Saussure:

> The signifier presents itself both as being able to be effaced and as being able, in the very operation of effacement, to subsist as such. I mean that the signifier presents itself as already endowed with the properties characteristic of the unsaid. With my bar, I cancel out the signifier, but I also perpetuate it indefinitely, inaugurating the dimension of the signifier as such. To make a cross is to do something, that strictly speaking, does not exist in any form of mapping available to animals.[26]

Unlike Saussure, he talks about a dysfunctional signified, or "it's in the relationship of one signifier to another signifier that a certain relationship of *signifier over signified* will be engendered. The distinction between the two is essential."[27] The signifier is preceded by trace "which is an imprint" and with its "evanescent" nature, the trace is integral to signification process:

> Let's begin with what a trace is. A trace is an imprint, not a signifier. One does, however, get the sense that there may be a relationship between the two, and in actual fact what is called the material of signifiers always partakes in something of the evanescent character of a trace. That even seems to be one of the conditions for the existence of signifying material. It is not a signifier, however. Friday's footprint that Robinson Crusoe discovers during his walk on the island is not a signifier. On the other hand, if we suppose that for one reason or another he, Robinson Crusoe, effaces this trace, then the dimension of signifiers is clearly introduced. As soon as it's removed, where removing it has a meaning, that of which there is a trace is manifestly constituted as signified.
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> If the signifier is thus a hollow, it's insofar as it bears witness to a past presence. Conversely, in what is a signifier, in fully developed signifiers in speech, there is always a passage, that is, something following each of the elements that are articulated together and that are, by nature, fleeting and evanescent. It's this passage from one to the next that constitutes the essential feature of what I call the signifying chain.[28]

This is a far cry from the Saussurean understanding of the sign which bases itself on the power of the signified. As Birlik argues, the cleavage between conscious and unconscious psychic

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25   Jacques Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book XX*, ed. Jacques Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (Norton & Company, 1999), 49.
26   Lacan, *Desire and Its Interpretation. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VI*, 80.
27   Jacques Lacan, *Formations of the Unconscious. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book V*, ed. Jacques Alain Miller, Trans. Russell Grigg (Polity, 2017), 26.
28   Lacan, *Formations of the Unconscious*, 322-323.

mechanisms denies the possibility of a coherent and a mathematical structure for the subject, and it would be wrong to configure the Symbolic as a stable structure with knowable working principles because

> on the one hand the *Shared Other* upon which the Symbolic is founded tries to repress the imaginary O/other (that is, the regulating principle in the imaginary), but on the other hand it fails to totally eliminate the Imaginary O/other and becomes inconsistent by its residues.[29]

Lacan also says that language works on a metaphorical basis:

> It's on the basis of the signifier-to-signifier relationship, of the link between this signifier over here and that signifier over there—on the basis of a relationship between signifiers alone, that is, the homonymic relationship, between *'atterre'* and *'terreur'*— that the action of creating signification, namely, the nuancing by 'terror' of what already existed by way of meaning on a metaphorical basis, is going to occur.[30]

Unlike Derrida, however, this endless play in Lacan takes place in alignment with the logic of the signifiers. Interestingly enough, for him, unconscious is structured like a language as well. That means, there is a different logic of the signifiers (images) operating in the unconscious that is different from the logic of the signifiers in the symbolic. As can be seen, his analysis of both unconscious and conscious mechanisms is in linguistic terms.

Another issue that moves him to a poststructuralist ground is his refusal to acknowledge psychoanalysis as a science. For him, it is a discourse, and at the end of the analytical sessions what the analyst aims to reach is not a cure at all. Cure comes as a bonus.[31] What is aimed at in the analysis is to enable the subject to achieve an encounter with his /her desire. So, his analysis is not based on a positivist teleology, but an open-ended flow. At the end of the analysis, if the subject wishes to be "cured," it is his/her decision. Another Lacanian departure from the Freudian terrain is his attitude toward the ego. In contemporary Freudian psychoanalysis which is dominated by ego psychologists, the main aim is to strengthen the ego of the analysand by leading to an identification between the analysand and the analyst, however, according to Lacan, this is a form of ideological imposition.[32] He rejects a teleological flow in the course of the analysis. Also, he rejects a sense of origin or an organizing principle in the form of an ego. He bases his conception of subjectivity on a spilt between the unconscious and consciousness. For him, the subject is a barred S due to the unbridgeable difference between the logics of consciousness and

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29   Birlik, "Lacan's Complicated Relationship with Structuralism", *Ankara University The Journal of The Faculty of Languages and History-Geography* 59, 1 (2019): 534.
30   Lacan, *Formations of the Unconscious. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book V,* 26.
31   Sarup, *Jacques Lacan,* 11.
32   Sarup, *Jacques Lacan,* 11.

unconscious.[33] Unconscious is elusive and alien to the conscious subject and it is untranslatable into symbolic logic: "[t]o the extent that what is spoken rarely coincides with what the ego intends to communicate."[34] This barred status refers to the status of the unconscious beyond the rational grasp of the subject himself/herself or the others, and this is the thing that differentiates the human from the animal.

There is no way for us to go into the abys of the unconscious, except for a few occasions like the dreams, slip of the tongue or the pen, as we all know. In his interpretation of the slips from unconscious, he thinks in Freudian lines, but he replaces Freudian terms of condensation and displacement with the linguistic terms of metaphor and metonymy, thus he attracts the attention to the impossibility of a totalized comprehension of the unconscious psychic material. For him, rather than what is repressed, how this repressed is put into words or turned into *Verneinung*[35] is important:

> According Lacan's interpretation of Freud, when repression takes place, a word or some part of a word, "sinks down under," metaphorically speaking. The word does not thereby become inaccessible to consciousness, and it may indeed be a word that a person uses perfectly well in everyday conversation. But by the very fact of being repressed, that word, or some part thereof, begins to take on a new role. It establishes relations with other repressed elements, developing a complex set of connections with them.[36]

Here he moves his analytic practice to a slippery ground by putting the emphasis not on knowing, but on interpreting. What the subject makes of his/her repressed material varies from one subject to another and, again, it differs from the response of one analyst to another. This is a problematization of the positivist truth value of the psychic material. He also rejects the universally accepted one-hour sessions, not to be duped by the ego of the subject, he opts for irregular sessions, which sometimes take only five minutes.

We can make a longer list of why Lacan goes beyond structuralism. As can be seen in all these examples, there is no origin as a reference point or a telos in his analytical practice, this moves him onto a more slippery and fluid ground and makes him an anti-positivist practitioner of psychoanalysis. Likewise, Lacan sees the decision to become an analyst as analogous to the act of becoming a poet.[37] All these were not acceptable by the institutional medicine, and he was expelled from the International Psychoanalytic Association because of his unorthodox practice and teaching methods.

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33 Jacques Lacan, *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis. Book II, 1954-1955*, ed. John Forrester, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (WW Norton & Company, 1988), 3-12.
34 Stuart Schneiderman, *Returning to Freud: Clinical Psychoanalysis in the School of Lacan*, ed. & trans. S. Schneiderman (Yale University Press, 1980), 3.
35 As he argues, "*Verneinung*…belongs to the order of discourse and concerns what we are capable of bringing to the light of day in an articulated form" (Lacan, *The Psychoses,* 84).
36 Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996), 8.
37 Sherry Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics: Jacques Lacan and Freud's French Revolution* (The Guilford Press, 1992), 123.

Lacan is harshly criticized for being phallocentric by the French feminists and the post feminists. We agree with them, to some extent; however, if we bear in mind that Lacanian understanding of the phallus is a function or a position, we have a different view of the issue. Another thing that must be underlined is the fact that in Lacan's explication of subjectivity, rather than the phallus, the word Other is employed most of the time and Other is a two-partite space, phallic Other and the shared Other.[38] Phallic Other is occupied by the imaginary mother who gives narcissistic omnipotence to the infant as she allows the infant to occupy a phallic position for herself. However, in a patriarchal discourse, this symbiosis is to be shattered as it poses a threat to the heteronormative discourse in culture and it hinders the infant from becoming a functioning member of culture.

If we put all these in a nutshell, we can say that in Lacan, there is no easy assumption of a correspondence between the signifier and the signified as in Saussure, but he refers to rare cases of full speech, unlike Derrida. As noted by Birlik, "the Lacanian notion of the *point de capiton* is rejected by the poststructuralists."[39] Also, there is an organising principle, that is phallus, but it is very elusive, beyond grasp, it is an absent presence. He borrows a lot from Saussure, but moves beyond him and towards a poststructuralist plane of thinking. As a result, we can say that Lacan is somewhere between structuralism and poststructuralism.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we argue that despite borrowing terminology from structuralist theory, Lacanian epistemology follows the path of post-structuralism, problematizing the idea of teleology and the relationship between language and reality in a Derridean fashion. Stated otherwise, Lacan both points to the discrepancy between structuralism and post-structuralism in his theory and reflects his shift of emphasis from structuralism to post-structuralism, rendering any absolute notion of truth dsyfunctional. Structuralism assumes the presence of a one-to-one correspondence between the signifier and the signified, confining the signifier to the lower leg of the binary trap. However, Lacan contests the taken for granted notion of this correspondence, prioritizing instead the signifier over the signified and arguing that meaning, evading any attempt for closure, arises out of the endless play of the signifiers in the chain of signification. It is worth noting that teleology assumes the presence of a transcendental signified, which lies at the core of Platonic philosophy or metaphysics of presence. In a teleological context, meaning is given closure by the idea of Oneness or unity. However, as Lacan brings to the fore through this theorization of subjectivity, meaning is too fluid to be totalized by Platonic metaphors: far from yielding to the closure of the close-circuit Saussurean signification system, meaning gets dispersed and deferred. On the other hand, when he argues that unconscious is structured like a language, he addresses the methodology of structuralism in the construction of his theory's post-structuralist nature; however, he thinks that the unconscious working mechanisms cannot be fixed by a structure. This becomes more apparent when we think that the Lacanian notion of subjectivity resists the

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38   Dylan Evans, *An Introductionary Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2006), 136.
39   Birlik, "Lacan's Complicated Relationship with Structuralism", 540.

idea of metaphysical presence: as subject arises out of the spontaneous, momentary points of convergence between the signifier and the signifier, denying full grasp of language, we can no longer talk about the origin in a Lacanian context, but the originary. Nevertheless, because of his idea of fleeting moments of convergence between the signifier and the signifier, we may say that Lacan differs from the poststructuralist thinkers, which gives support to our argument that Lacan is located somewhere between structuralism and poststructuralism.

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