

# The Althusser–Lacan Correspondence as Ground for Psycho-social Studies

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**ABSTRACT** *This article discusses a possible dialogue between Marxism and psychotherapy based on the letters between Louis Althusser and Jacques Lacan, exchanged between 1963 and 1969. This dialogue forms the ground for a dialogue between what has come to be known as the “critical tradition” and the “clinical tradition” which, in turn, becomes the ground for imagining what could be called “psycho-social studies”. From the letters, this article explores three thematic angles: the angle of the “old” as Foucauldian askesis; the angle of the “beyond” as Marxian/Freudian theoretical form, or, put another way, the angle of the “break” as internal transition from ideology to science; and the angle of the “forbidden” as the Lacanian Real. In doing so, the article reflects on how these three angles could create conditions and conduits for a dialogue between post-metaphysical understandings of Marxism and psychotherapy. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

**Key words:** Althusser; Lacan; critical psychology; clinical psychology; spirituality

## LEFT FIELDS

The context of this article is the difficulties we have had with the vanguardist attitude of Marxist organisations and with the adaptationist attitude of the mental health sciences.

Marxists stand for change, but this change has been made to fit the framework of historical materialism – a framework that offers legitimating ground, for instance, to the colonisation of Tibet by communist China. Such colonisation is in turn legitimated in the name of progress, growth, developmentalism, scientism, and secularisation, as also liberation from what Chinese secular orthodoxy views as recalcitrant religious orthodoxy in Tibet. The Marxist labour of change was also instituted in haste. It was done without the kind of “work on the self” that Freud foregrounded and Foucault talks of in *Hermeneutics of the Subject* (Foucault, 2005, pp. 29–30).

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Psychology stands for individual change, whereby the “changed” became only one more pawn in the existing language game: the more the patient changed, the more the world remained the same, and the more the world changed, the more the Marxist vanguard remained the same.

This necessitates a rethinking of both the idea of change and the idea of the world. We also need to think of the trajectory of change in the clinic and in the space of the political, as well as the connection between them; and to understand the two kinds of inertia that confront change or transformational praxis: a normative order that pathologises unreason and an exploitative order that facilitates appropriation of surplus labour by excluding the workers – the performers of surplus labour – from it.

This paper is thus about the “clinical practice of psychoanalysis as catalyst of personal change and its intersections with social change” (Parker, 2011, p. 1). It is also about the political practice of Marxism as catalyst for social transformation and its intersection with self transformation. In another sense, it is about “revolutions in subjectivity” in the context of clinical work and the question of “subjectivity in revolutions” (ibid., p. 199) in the context of larger social transformation. Pavón-Cuéllar (2010) has discussed the relation between Marxism and psychology in terms of the subversion with respect to the culture of adaptationism in psychology, showing how, according to Lacan, “psychology adapts people to the capitalist system, while Marx reveals the subversive truth that underlies the system” (p. 70).

The dialogue between psychotherapy and Marxism, about the clinical and the political, is also about the dialogue between the pastness and the futurity of dreams. In other words, it is about the two senses of the dream: one pertaining to the past and the other pertaining to the future. Marxian dreams of a future that do not take account of the (Freudian) archaic or past nature of subjects and shared social dreaming become nightmares. Freudian dreams that do not take account of the utopian futurity of dreams become conservatism. Pastless futures become violent presents; and futureless pasts become claustrophobic – which is why emancipatory futures, such as the one generated by Chinese Marxism, colour the snow-capped mountains of Tibet with the odour of blood. Given this problematic, a rethinking of temporality with respect to the relationship of the present with pastness and futurity needs to be encapsulated in the process of dialogue between the clinical and political.

Without reducing one to the other, these layers of dialogue could be seen as intersecting, compensating and reinforcing one another, and, in the process, providing a directional shift for “psycho-social studies” which could be taken as one of the attempts at creating a dialogue between Marxism and psychotherapy. If the condition of the psychic is traceable to the “factory of [unconscious] thoughts” (Freud, 1965, p. 317), and if unconscious thoughts are an inalienable thread of the overdetermined social, affecting the social and, in turn, being affected by it, how can this dialogue be avoided? How is the “psychic”, which is usually understood as a kind of *interiority*, always already “social”? How is the social, which is usually understood as a kind of *exteriority*, paradoxically “psychic”? What is the connection then between the psychic and the social? How are they interlinked? Where is the overdetermination and contradiction between interiority and exteriority? – and can the Althusser–Lacan correspondence stand in as the ground for the above-mentioned question?

## THE ALTHUSSER–LACAN CORRESPONDENCE

The paper draws on the Althusser–Lacan correspondence (conducted between 1963 and 1969; see [http://nosubject.com/index.php?title=Main\\_Page](http://nosubject.com/index.php?title=Main_Page)) to examine the relation between Marxism and psychotherapy. In other words, it takes recourse to the philosopher of structure and the philosopher of the subject to set up a possible dialogue, between two (purportedly) opposed traditions: Marxism and psychotherapy. In another way, it sets up a relation between a philosophy of structure and a philosophy of subjectivity. The philosophy of structure is, in turn, marked by the philosophy of the inside in Althusser and the philosophy of the outside in Lacan. Althusser's philosophy of the inside, marked by "interpellating apparatuses", repressive and ideological, thus comes to speak with Lacan's philosophy of the outside, marked by the Lacanian "Real" as rem(a)inder of the process of symbolization.

A few questions about a possible relationship and a dialogue between Marxism and psychotherapy, however, remain. For example, when discussing Marxism and psychotherapy, there is a question about which kind of Marxism and which kind of psychotherapy we are discussing. This is a question because, on the one hand, historicist, identitarian and/or economic Marxism (Marxism not menaced by the Lacanian Real or what Parker called the "three kinds of antagonisms that bear on work in the clinic"; Parker, 2011, p. 178), would find it difficult to relate to psychoanalytic psychotherapy; and, on the other hand, behaviourist, cognitivist, and/or medical forms of psychotherapy marked by psychologisation, pathologisation, ego-centrism, adaptationism, and pharmaceutical remedies would find it difficult to relate to post-metaphysical Marxian questions of ethico-politics, subject-production, and change/transformation as revolutions in subjectivity. It would also find it difficult to relate to Marxism marked at the same time by non-essentialist understandings of class (Resnick & Wolff, 1987), deconstructive understandings of capitalism (Gibson-Graham, 1996), and non-teleological interpretations of transition and development (Chakrabarti & Cullenberg, 2003; Chakrabarti & Dhar, 2010; Chakrabarti, Dhar, & Dasgupta, 2014). This is also because the positivist versions of both Marxism and psychotherapy could find something in common – for example, ideals of objectivity, neutrality – but imaginations of each premised on a critique of metaphysics, secular theology, and positivism would give to each a shape that would be difficult to reconcile with the metaphysical, secular, theological, or positivist version of the other.

Also, what kind of a relation or dialogue would it be? What could it be built on? It could be built on core epistemological concerns, say the question of "overdetermination" that informs both Freud and Althusser. It could be built on shared ontological questions, say the erasure of the *homo economicus* and the *homo psychologicus* in Marx and Freud. It could be built on ethico-political questions, say the "clinical practice of psychoanalysis as catalyst of personal change" in Freud and its "intersection with social change" in Marx (Parker, 2011, p. 1). It could be built on the more general orientation of each to the question of "the subject and truth" (Foucault, 2005, p. 3). It could also be built through a turn to the *old* question of Greek *askesis* ("care of the self").

Or would it be premised on more challenging contradictions? For example, for Vygotsky (1927/1987) "psychology is in need of its own *Das Kapital*". What did Vygotsky mean by this statement? Did he want to say that psychology needs an investigation and a text analogous to *Das Kapital*? Did he mean to say that psychology needs a political

economy perspective (see Dhar, Chakrabarti, & Banerjee, 2013; Parker, 2014)? Did he mean to say that psychology needs to work on a concept comparable to “class”? However, if psychology is in need of its own *Das Kapital*, Marxism is also in need of its own *Interpretation of Dreams*. Thus the respective theorisations of Marx and Freud cannot be put to a relation without turning both ab-original; without making each move into territories hitherto forbidden. On the one hand, “medical/psychiatric psychology” is far removed from Marxism; on the other hand, orthodox Marxism is also far removed from psychological exegeses. Marx left behind the perspective of the psychic as the first footnote of *Kapital*; this footnote and hence the other economy – the psychic economy that was ignored thereafter by orthodox Marxism – has left a black hole in our efforts at building a comprehensive critique of the political economy of capitalism and alternative or just political economies.

Marx began *Kapital* with the following entry point: “The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as ‘an immense accumulation of commodities’, its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity” (Marx, 1987, p. 43). This is fair enough as a contingent object of enquiry or origin. He continued:

A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference. Neither are we here concerned to know how the object satisfies these wants, whether directly as means of subsistence, or indirectly as means of production. (ibid, p. 43)

Marx thus puts aside the question of *wants* and of *fancy*. It is well possible that political economy also requires an investigation into what Marx had set aside. Is a commodity only an object outside us? Or does it have a (psychic/phantasy) life of its own? What if one also needs to look “inside us”? Perhaps one needs to turn to the first footnote of *Kapital* – “Desire implies want, it is the appetite of the mind, and as natural as hunger to the body ... The greatest number (of things) have their value from supplying the wants of the mind” (ibid., p. 43) – more attentively to see the connection between the purportedly psychic and the purportedly economic.

Although Marx and Freud began from radically different origins, we suggest that psychoanalytic psychology is closer to Marxism than other forms of psychology and psychotherapy. For Althusser, Marxian and Freudian theories come close through the concept of overdetermination and the invocation of a reality (material/psychic) that is “necessarily conflictual”. In this paper, we have invoked the Lacanian Real as a conceptual shorthand for the conflictual as also for what the hegemonic necessarily conceals (or *forecloses*); Marxism would do well to adopt it. We have also invoked Marxism as a way of taking a “position in the conflict”. Resnick and Wolff’s (1987) notion of *entry point* and feminist *standpoint epistemology* are expressions for such positionality; psychoanalysis would do well to learn from them.

Late Foucault finds in both Marxism and psychoanalysis the Greek questions of the *epimeleia heautou* (“care of the self”), and so of “spirituality” as a condition of the “subject’s access to the truth”. However, both seem to part ways on the question of “ends”: for Marx it was material/social change; for Freud it was psychic/personal change: How to relate the

material/social and the psychic/personal change? Why in the Western tradition do they emerge as opposed entities? Given the correspondences (as demonstrated by Foucault and Althusser, albeit in different registers) and the impasses, how does one set up a relation between Marxism and psychotherapy, between the critical tradition and the clinical tradition? They could come to dialogue around the *old* Greek questions of spirituality. They could also come to speak through their turn to the *forbidden* – the secret abode of desiring production and producing desire.

In this paper, we see “the space of the clinic” or of psychotherapy not just as “the space of personal change” (Parker, 2011, p. 196) but as also a “crucible of revolutionary subjectivity”; all the more because an imagination of the clinical menaced by the Lacanian Real “has an *extimate* and antagonistic relation with everyday reality” (Parker, 2011, p. 197). It would be important, in this context, to table what we mean by extimacy; all the more because the idea of extimacy offers a way beyond the somewhat strict and non-dynamic division of the human world into inside and outside.

The term “extimacy”, an English translation of the French neologism (*extimité*) coined by the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1959–1960), is deployed in this paper for the purpose of problematizing, questioning, challenging, and even rejecting and going beyond the traditional psychological distinction between exteriority and psychic interiority or intimacy. Instead of this fundamental distinction and the resultant fixed conceptual dualities that cross and constitute psychology, extimacy indicates the non-distinction and essential identity between the dual terms of the outside and the deepest inside, the exterior and the most interior of the psyche, the outer world and the inner world of the subject, culture and the core of personality, the social and the mental, surface and depth, behaviour and thoughts or feelings (see Pavon-Cuellar, 2014).

Parker has taken forward the understanding of the “clinic” by suggesting that the clinic “is a space that does not give up on that part of oneself that one does not know or cannot accommodate” (Parker, 2011, p. 197). Parker’s imagination of the clinical looks to be marked by what Lacan in Seminar XX called the *limits of love and knowledge*. Further, an imagination of what has come to be known as the “clinical” or the “psychotherapeutic” menaced by the concept of power, more specifically hegemony, puts to question the adaptationist impulse that has haunted the clinical so far. On the other hand, an imagination of the “political” menaced by the Lacanian Real steers clear of the vanguardism so characteristic of the Marxist tradition (Spivak, 1999; Dhar, 2013).

While Spivak foregrounded the proper name “Marx” as an “itinerary of errancy” and put under erasure the theoretical form called ‘historical materialism’, Althusser wished to give Marx’s *wild* dialectic (wild not because he didn’t “have the time” to tame it and to enclose it in his theory but because of the historical constraint of concepts imposed by his time – Hegelian ones – the only ones then available and handy) its theoretical form. It was in such theoretical form that he saw himself “on the threshold of understanding” Lacan. This is in fact also about what Althusser called *interdiction* or radical/absolute *discontinuity* in Lacan’s work – work that begins with Freud and analytic technique, as a purported return to Freud, but which in terms of “philosophy” or “theoretical form” goes *beyond* Freud. It is in such a *beyond* – a *beyond* marked by the birth of the *theoretical form* – that Marx and Freud, and Althusser and Lacan could possibly meet. The correspondence with Lacan is about Althusser’s rather passionate argument for what he called the “theoretical absolute”; as against *askesis* or “praxis of the self” by Foucault in the *Hermeneutics of the Subject*. It is about Althusser’s

turn to philosophy and Foucault's turning away from philosophy (Foucault, 2005, p. 13). Hidden in the Althusser–Lacan dialogue is thus a dialogue between Althusser and Foucault. The Marx–Freud dialogue, however, forms the ground of all such dialogues.

### THE BEYOND: THE TURN TO THEORY?

Now, what or where is the crucible of the theoretical form? In the letter dated 1 December 1963 Althusser argued for the transition from “practical truth” to the theory of *that* truth or to its concept. He raised the issue of “the access to theory ... of those who are plunged into the horizon of a practice, either because they pursue it or because they are, dare I say, its material”. He continued:

How can one accede, from the very heart of a practice pursued or experienced, blindly pursued or experienced, to its *concept*? A problem of pedagogy, it will be said, but in the last analysis it is not a problem of pedagogy. It's an entirely different problem that concerns the transition from what I would call a “practical truth” (which is practiced or experienced) to the theory of that truth or to its concept. Now this problem is, at bottom, a specific – and crucial – theoretical problem. You have admirably shown that problems of analytic technique cannot be resolved at the level of technique, that a *leap* was needed – the recourse to theory – and that in the final analysis only theory decides and determines problems of technique; what does that mean? Does it mean that there is, on the one hand, pure and simple technique, which would be only technique, practiced by people without any idea of theory and to whom that theory must be taught so that they can then reform their technique? That is not the way things go. The conflict is not between a pure technique *without theory* and pure theory. There is no pure technique, and that too you have shown. Any technique that wants to be pure technique is, in fact, an *ideology* of technique, that is, a false theory. Moreover, that is indeed what your effort implies: you are not one who teaches people who are only technicians that they are simply *blind*, or ignorant, quite simply by teaching them of the existence and the necessity of a theory; you are one who teaches allegedly pure “technicians” the truth of their practice on the absolute condition of destroying something other than an ignorance or blindness – by which I mean an ideology, the false theory that is the obligatory mate of their false innocence as pure technicians. Every pedagogy thus cannot consist in teaching a truth to one who is ignorant, thus filling a void with a plenum – every pedagogy consists of substituting an explicit and true theory for an implicit and false theory, *replacing* a spontaneous ideology ... with a scientific theory. Now what distinguishes an explicit and conscious scientific theory from the implicit and spontaneous ideology it must *replace* is a radical *discontinuity*. In a precise sense, it can be said that pedagogy has nothing of a phenomenology, even a *disguised* one: there is no internal *transition* from ideology to science. Every pedagogy is necessarily a *break*, and to be something other than a compromise or an illusion, it must be pursued within the conscious forms of that *break*.

It is at this *break* or at this moment of *radical discontinuity* between spontaneous ideology and scientific theory that Marx and Freud meet. It is at the *beyond* of a spontaneous ideology of healing, humanism, or politics that Marx and Freud's theoretical absolutes meet. Not that the theoretical absolutes of Marx and Freud are the same or they match; but the fact that both *search* for or work towards theoretical absolutes, while praxis forms the base/basis of both, the methodological yearning for a theoretical absolute beyond praxis is what brings them close. This paper would like to argue that the methodological yearning for theoretical absolutes takes psychotherapy beyond mere (adaptationist) techniques, mere skill-sets, and Marxism beyond mere vanguardist praxis, mere knowingness.

**THE OLD: THE TURN TO A PRAXIS OF THE SELF?**

“Our relations are old, Althusser” is how Lacan began his letter to Althusser on 21 November 1963. One can ask: What is *old* about the relation? Where is *that* connection that comes to be designated as old? What is the nature of the old? How old? Where is it emanating from? This paper inserts Foucault’s *Hermeneutics of the Subject* between Lacan and Althusser to make sense of the old:

It seems to me that Lacan has been the only one since Freud who has sought to refocus the question of psychoanalysis on precisely this question of the relations between the subject and truth. This is to say, in terms which are of course absolutely foreign to the historical tradition of this spirituality, whether of Socrates or Gregory of Nyssa and everyone in between, in terms of psychoanalytic knowledge itself, Lacan tried to pose what historically is the specifically spiritual question: that of the price the subject must pay for saying the truth, and of the effect on the subject of the fact that [s]he has said, that [s]he can and has said the truth about [her/]himself. By restoring this question I think Lacan actually reintroduced into psychoanalysis the oldest tradition, the oldest questioning, and the oldest disquiet of the *epimeleia heautou*, which was the most general form of spirituality. (Foucault, 2005, p. 30)

Foucault was of the opinion that “in both Marxism and psychoanalysis, for completely different reasons but with relatively homologous effects, the problem of what is at stake in the subject’s being (of what the subject’s being must be for the subject to have access to truth) and, in return, the question of what aspects of the subject may be transformed by virtue of [her] access to the truth, well, these two questions, which are once again absolutely typical of *spirituality*, are found again at the very heart of, or anyway, at the source and outcome of both these knowledges” (Foucault, 2005, p. 29). Taking a somewhat wide-angle historical view over two millennia, Foucault found again in Marxism and psychoanalysis “the questions, interrogations, and requirements which ... are the very old and fundamental questions of the *epimeleia heautou*, and so of spirituality as a condition of access to the truth” (Foucault, 2005, p. 29).

However, neither of these two forms of knowledge has openly considered this point of view clearly and willingly. There has been an attempt to conceal the conditions of spirituality specific to these forms of knowledge. This explains why it becomes difficult to make Marxism and psychotherapy come face to face. While at the core they share an *old* relation, they have increasingly got separated and have come to be distant to each other.

Here one needs to understand what Foucault means by *spirituality*. This is important because the Foucauldian turn to spirituality (as distinguished from what Parker has rightly called “pop-spirituality”) is emerging, somewhat retrospectively, in this paper as one of the cusps between Marxism and psychotherapy. Foucault begins by first making a distinction between philosophy and spirituality. He called “philosophy” the form of thought that “determines that there is and can be truth and falsehood and whether or not we can separate the true and false” (Foucault, 2005, p. 13), and that asks what it is that enables the subject to have access to the truth and which attempts to determine the conditions and limits of the subject’s access to the truth. He calls “spirituality” “the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary

transformations on [her]self in order to have access to the truth” (Foucault, 2005, p. 13). For Foucault:

spirituality, as it appears in the West ... postulates that the truth is never given to the subject by right. ... truth is not given to the subject by the simple act of knowledge (*connaissance*), ... for the subject to have right of access to the truth he [or she] must be changed, transformed, shifted, and become, to some extent and up to a certain point other than himself [or herself]. The truth is only given to the subject at a price that brings the subject’s *being* into play. ... there can be no truth without a conversion or a transformation of the subject, without a long labor of *askesis* (*askesis*). (Foucault, 2005, pp. 15–16, our emphasis)

Such a labour of *askesis* and such practices of subjectivity give to psychotherapy and especially to Marxism a character that also makes them apposite.

## THE IDEA OF THE CLINIC AND REVOLUTIONS IN SUBJECTIVITY

We have referred to the psychotherapeutic clinic as encompassing two possibilities: (i) as conveyer belt of adaptationism (let us call it the *reactionary* face of the clinic) and (ii) as the site of the (im)possible experience of the limits of love and knowledge or of the inassimilable (Lacanian) Real (let us call it the *revolutionary* face). The perspective common to both is “work on the self” or transformation of the self. Is the idea of the clinic, or of “clinical thinking” then a displaced site of *epimeleia heautou*? Is *epimeleia heautou* in turn a kind of quasi-clinical work, whether in its adaptationist form or in its transgressive potential? After all, what is *epimeleia heautou* without either the adaptationist telos or revolutions in subjectivity? This, though, leaves us with a discomfiting feeling: *epimeleia heautou* can be both reactionary (i.e. the axis of past–future is cruci-fixed in the “consensus” of the present, thereby ruling out any other interpretation of the present) and revolutionary (in which the axis of the past–future is unfixed from the “consensus” of the present, thereby opening new ways of interpreting the present – ways which may revolt against the consensus). Thus *epimeleia heautou* by itself cannot usher in what Parker called revolutions in subjectivity; it is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition.

How do we reach then the question of “revolutions in subjectivity”? The first step is to see the clinic as always already *socialized–politicized*. The second is to foreground the limits of love and knowledge and the perspective of the Lacanian Real (including all that connected to class exploitation and the reductionist imperative so central to adaptationism). The third is to displace the objective of “treatment” from “symptom” to “dis-ease” (see Pavon-Cuellar, 2010). The clinic is thus *relocated as an emerging site of self-transformation, where the subject is made to face not just psychoanalytic subject effects but the hegemonic effects of foreclosure*, the breakdown of order and consensus, the impossibility of closure whether by love or knowledge in its absolutist, positivist sense. The “impossibility of the social” (see Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) is thus brought to bear upon the impossibility of the telos of a self-maximising, self-satisfied, whole called the “Subject”. This paper is thus also about “the subject who is finally in question” (see Lacan, 2006, p. 189). In that sense, the axis of the “psycho-social” is about a dialogue between Lacan and Laclau and Mouffe. Seen in this

way, the clinic is not just always already social but the social in turn is always already incomplete and open to resignification.

It is here that one can again turn to Parker (2011):

it is possible to grasp theoretical interventions situated within a renewed engagement with spirituality that are congruent with Lacan, and, even if they are not all Marxist, with revolutionary Marxism. Suffering today is often mediated by a spiritual impulse, yearning for something *beyond* the coordinates of this wretched world, and so revolutionaries, including revolutionary Lacanians, must engage with that. (p. 178)

We are now in a position to see what Parker possibly means by revolutions in subjectivity. Parker traced the labour of psychoanalysis to “retrieve something positive out of negativity” as analogous to “attempts at revolution against capitalism” (ibid, p. 118). The overdetermined conjunction of (Foucauldian) spirituality and (Marxian) ethico-politics inserts into psychotherapy a perspective hitherto unthought. This in turn means that to conceptualize the ground for an *epimeleia heautou* beyond the coordinates of this wretched world one needs to extricate oneself from what Marx in *Value, Price and Profit* calls the *delusive appearance of things* (that produces in turn and sustains the coordinates of the wretched). One possible site where subjects could come to encounter the coordinates is perhaps the clinic; not the usual clinic but the alternative conceptualization – the alternative space and place – of the clinical.

While we have been arguing for the indispensability of the Marxian perspective in psychotherapy, one can turn the table, and also argue for the indispensability of the psychoanalytical theoretical absolute (not just turns to self, subjectivity etc.) to Marxism. This is because the clinic, as Parker suggested, can be seen as a conceptual site for revolutions in subjectivity and not just as the site for the reproduction of adaptationist subjects. The clinic itself is a conflicted space and hence is an idea(l) to be (re)claimed. The clinic, however, is not just always already political. It has to be politicized. In its adaptationist form it is a prop for the hegemonic, while in its politicized form it is a place of radical hope for Marxian revolutions in subjectivity. This brings us to a tricky question: If the clinical is always already social/political, isn't there in the social/political something analogous to the clinical, something analogous to the old question of the *epimeleia heautou*? For example, isn't the classroom, a quasi-social site and a microcosm of the larger social, a conveyor belt of reproducing adaptationist subjects as also a possible site for revolutionary subjectivities? Not surprisingly, revolutionaries (Marxian or non-Marxian) who opposed the trail blazer of capitalist modernity invested so much time and effort in rethinking education and its site, the 'classroom'. Some, such as Rabindranath Tagore, even questioned the idea and design of Westernized class rooms (architecture, form, aesthetic, content, objective, etc.) with its ingrained adaptationist motifs.

Is Marxism then inalienably tied to a rethinking of the space-place of the “clinic” – the clinic as also a theoretical absolute and not just as site for adaptationist praxis of the self? The Marxian transformation of subjects thus cannot fully materialize without some reflection on the idea, design and praxis of the clinical relation. Since the social is individualized and the individual is socialized, and since both are Symbolic-alized through foreclosure (see Chakrabarti, Dhar, & Cullenberg, 2012, ch. 3), Marxism cannot do without the

psychoanalytic perspective. It needs to rethink the clinical as a space-place of subject production, as also a site of revolutions in subjectivity and subjects in revolution. The *work* of relating *epimeleia heautou* with the “political” (conditioned by limits of love and knowledge, even of its own) is one way to redefine Marxian praxis. This imagination of Marxism geared towards the politicizing of the site and event of *epimeleia heautou* is miles away from the naturalized idea of the clinic that produces adaptationist subjects, all in the name of “doing good”.

## THE FORBIDDEN

Can Marxism take what Althusser called the “forbidden path”? Althusser credited Lacan for having opened the forbidden path:

I regard you as being, in the field one is provisionally obliged to call the “human sciences,” the first thinker who has assumed the theoretical responsibility of giving to Freud veritable concepts worthy of him – and to that extent the first to have accorded that “domain” the path of access, the only one, that might be expected of Freud: a *forbidden* path. That interdiction, insofar as it is forbidden, is the path of access itself. (Letter dated 26 November 1963)

One way of provisionally accessing the forbidden is through the rethinking of the Lacanian Real. The Lacanian Real is what could make Marxism and psychoanalysis apposite. Without a theory of the outside, or the Real or of the rem(a)inder, psychology becomes adaptationist and Marxism becomes a confident movement from false to true consciousness.

Lacan, in a letter to Althusser (dated “*This Wednesday, no, Thursday 21-XI-63*”) invoked the article “Philosophie et sciences humaines” by Althusser (published in *Revue de l’enseignement philosophique* 5 - June–July, 1963), in which Althusser specified in a note that Lacan “has seen and understood Freud’s liberating break” and that as a result, “one owes him the essential”. Althusser, in a letter to Lacan (dated [*Paris*] 26.XI.63) suggested that only when he reached the core of Marx’s philosophy (and not the philosophy of his *work*, say, for example, *Capital*) and its theoretical form, did he see himself on the threshold of understanding Lacan, understanding that there is a deeper philosophical relation between Marx’s revolution (rejection of *homo economicus*, rejection of any philosophical “subject”) and of Freud’s revolution, which Lacan had restored (rejection of any *homo psychologicus*) as also between their respective critique of pseudo-psychologists and other philosophers of the human person and intersubjectivity, as well as the technocrats of structuralism, their pretensions, their sermons, and their amateurism: in sum, their theoretical imposture.

## THE NON-COERCIVE REORGANISATION OF DESIRE

Althusser hoped to show the *beyond* (and not the *old* as Foucault had done), where Marx and Freud could meet. Parker (2011) has also focused on the (dis)position of the *beyond* in *Revolutions in Subjectivity* – which is why a closer attention to Parker’s work could create conditions for a relation. It is in terms of Parker’s formulation of the critical and the clinical as *revolutions in subjectivity* that one can see how the spectre of a thinker who purportedly had nothing to do with the political – Freud – but had lots to do with the “non-coercive reorganization of desire” (Erikson, 1969, p. 439), can come to haunt Marxism:

“psychoanalysis offers a method of intervening non-violently between our overbearing conscience and our raging affects, thus forcing our moral and our ‘animal’ natures to enter into respectful reconciliation” (Erikson, 1969, p. 439). Based on and continuing from Parker’s work, one can give more teeth to the “non-coercive reorganization of desire” or “ethical self-transformative capacity” as constitutive of both Marxism and psychotherapy, for

for Marxism self-determination of associated producers reworks notions of autonomy such that human rights are defined in relation to freedom understood *relationally* in an ethical relation to creative labor. One can also see this *relational* conception of autonomy at work in psychoanalysis. (Parker, 2011, p. 118)

Does the philosophy of transformation as “non-coercive reorganization of desire” and “being-in-relation or being-in-common-with-Others”, not a simple being-in-relation or a simple being-in-common, learning to *be*-related, learning to be-one-in-many, and a difficult learn-*ing* nevertheless, emerge as one of the cusps or the shared ground of Marxism and psychotherapy?

## THE OUTSIDE

Yes, there is an outside, thank God. And one day, willingly or unwillingly (unwillingly, but they will manage one day to put a good face on it), they will have to recognize directly, without an intermediary charged with that impossible mission, without being able to depend on someone who was protecting them from the outside that he was announcing, that such an outside exists. Outside. You are henceforth outside. In your true place: that of your reasons, of Reason. There, you are not alone. It is enough to begin working – you who have not stopped working – it is enough to begin working with those who are working within that outside. (Althusser, *Letter to Jacques Lacan*, Paris, 4 December 1963)

Not all Marxism is tuned to the *outside*, to the *unspeakable* limit of knowledge and language. Not all Marxism attends to the *unspoken* of the hegemonic. In other words, not all Marxism is attuned to what Lacan designates as the Real, as the rem(a)inder. Hence the necessity of turning Marxism psychoanalytic. Hence the necessity of a conception of Marxism that is, on the one hand, attuned to the “politically salient exclusions” of the hegemonic, and is, on the other, attuned to psychoanalytic subject-effects like foreclosure, repression, disavowal, and negation. Yet the perspective of Marxist psychotherapy and the perspective of psychoanalytic Marxism are never the same. Psychoanalysis in its *original* form cannot set up a dialogue with Marxism. Marxism in its *original* form does not lend itself to psychoanalysis. To make possible a Marxist psychotherapy and a psychoanalytic Marxism, both psychoanalysis and Marxism need to undergo a number of conceptual displacements. Marxism also needs to go inward and be menaced by the uncanny (t)horny-ness of human interiority: people have strong affective dispositions; people are profoundly affected by unconscious fantasies and perceptions that begin as early as infancy. Psychoanalysis is the method and theory directed toward the investigation and understanding of how we develop [as sexuante(d) selves] and experience these unconscious fantasies and of how we construct and reconstruct our felt past in the present (Chodorow, 1989: 4).

Thus, while Marxism would do well to relate to Lacan's philosophy of the subject and philosophy of the outside, psychotherapy would do well to relate to Althusser's philosophy of structure and philosophy of the inside.

## CONCLUSION

How can we relate on the one hand, exploitation–oppression and social transformation and on the other, suffering and healing? How can we relate the two experiences – social and individual? In other words, how can we relate the first level: exploitation–oppression and mental suffering?

Perhaps one needs to see suffering differently. The de-pathologised understanding of suffering – suffering as perhaps *alienation* – could come closer to a non-identitarian understanding of exploitation–oppression. The understanding of exploitation–oppression deepens when one turns psychoanalytic; when one deploys the Lacanian Real. The understanding of suffering expands when one brings in the hegemonic – how suffering is only an experience contingent upon the *nature* of the hegemonic. For example, Dhirendranath Ganguly (1911–1998), the Bengali Marxist psychiatrist, tried to understand mental suffering through the trope of *alienation*.

How can we relate to the second level, that of socio-political transformation and personal healing? Socio-political transformation and self-transformative healing can perhaps be related at two related levels:

1. Erikson's "non-coercive reorganization of desire" at both political and clinical levels, and Parker's "relational conception of autonomy"; and
2. Parker's "revolutions in subjectivity" and subjectivity in revolutions as the perspective of the beyond, and Foucault's "care of the self", as the perspective of the *old*.

Creating – or, rather commenting on – the dialogue between Althusser and Lacan helps us see hegemonic systems as Symbolic systems with an attendant Real; and the Symbolic as hegemonic systems with an attendant foreclosure. It is not additive. It is not that one adds the Lacanian Real to Gramscian hegemony or Althusserian interpellation. It is not that one adds Gramscian theorizations of hegemony to the understanding of the Lacanian Symbolic. It is perhaps mutually constitutive. Both come together to give us an understanding of the proletarian's world(view) and the patient's world(view). Nodal points of partial closure and foreclosure give us an understanding of a disaggregated yet hegemonic inside and a constitutive outside. If Marxism is about a theory of the hegemonic *inside*, psychoanalysis is about a theory of the constitutive *outside*. Bringing the two together gives us a deeper understanding of both.

Thus the relation between Marxism and psychotherapy or, for that matter, between critical and the clinical will perhaps take, at most, the *form* of a cusp; the form of: *at the cusp*. But then what specifically is it to be at the cusp? We therefore are in search of a *philosophy of the cusp* that is not reducible to "Hegelian synthesis". We are not so much in search of a cusp; a concrete empirical cusp. But rather a philosophy of the cusp: where "the two [of Marxism and psychotherapy] will cross paths, but without ever confirming each other, without the least bit of certainty, in a conjecture that is at once singular and general" (Derrida, 1993, pp. 1–2).

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