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Anja Kraus

“Nowhere is the intention of the individual more evidently surpassed then by what the subject finds”, Jacques Lacan writes in his Report to the Congress held at the Instituto de Psicologica della Università di Roma in the year 1953. This Congress was marred by deep controversy ending up in the vote of ‘no confidence’ against Jacques Lacan, the president of the Societé Psychoanalytique de Paris who was then obliged to resign.

In the quotation an antagonist, opponent, enemy, challenger by Lacan is supposed to be derived from inside in one and the same instance. This is puzzling. Usually, we regard the subject as an entity identical with itself and furthermore an ethical integer. Three questions immediately arise as regards to the quotation above: what does the term “subject” actually mean, what is Lacan referring to when he writes “what the subject finds” and what is meant by "surpass"? A “subject” going beyond its own intentionality could refer to a kind of homunculus, a Cartesian Cogito. With this hypothesis we are rather near to a solution. Though, Lacans structuralist approach generally paves the way for the poststructuralist movement. Thus, according to Lacan the subject which “finds” (something) is „structured like a language” (Lacan: Seminar XI). At the same time it is not a conscious subject as one might think, rather it is meant to be an unconscious subject. Here language is not seen to be a representational system as we generally think of it, but rather refers to a kind of tacit knowledge.

This tacit knowledge and aspects of its emergence Anna Herbert explains using psychoanalytical as well as neuropsychological and cognitive approaches. Thematically she elucidates tacit knowledge using phenomena’s such as: the gaze, the dream, humour, negation, creativity, memory, learning, art, the symptom. She discusses aggression in relation to this tacit knowledge etc., and she describes the method of free association originally used within psychoanalytic practices.

Along with these topics the forms are described for how we might become deceived by our ‛selves’ and how we are surpassed in this self-deception by the subject which “finds” (something). Herbert shows that in each of these phenomena the modes or style of the unconscious/symbolic order emerge in a variety of ‛ways’ making apparent just what it is that affects us (often in a fundamental way). However the focus here is not 'what' we aim at in our intentionality (i.e what we look at, dream etc) but rather how and why we do it. It becomes clear that primarily imaginary moments as well as real ones are constitutive for the – unconscious – symbolic order.

The manifestation of the unconscious symbolic order respectively the manifestation of the “subject” that goes ‘beyond’ intentionality is described by Lacan in terms of an ‘event’, when something unplanned happens to the actor. This event surprises and puzzles the latter especially in regards to his capacity for self-control.

Seen in this way, the focus on the subject that “finds” seems predestined to serve as a concept describing creativity as a productive way to form something, through the interdependency of doing and experiencing. Unfortunately or luckily Lacan does not make it all that easy. The subject that “finds” can be, but it is not necessarily, a creative one. Lacan differentiates between three forms of knowledge (savoir, connaissance and savoir-faire) in which real, imaginary and symbolic elements are correlated in a variety of ways. Each particular form of knowledge enables, frames, hinders and
structures the “subject” going ‘beyond‘ its intentionality and affects this subject in a fundamental way. Pleasure and jouissance (desire) permeate each of these forms of knowledge (according to Lacan even shaping their foundation) and turn them into patterns of interaction. Patterns of interaction seen from a psychoanalytic perspective are primarily dictated by closeness and distance as well as by their modifications in regards to approximation and dissociation, facilitation and hindrance, delight and control. In his explanation of the four discourses (the Master´s discourse, the Hysteric’s discourse, the Analyst’s discourse and the University discourse) Lacan shows the ways how the unconscious symbolic subject positions itself in relation to unconscious desire in different ways.

In her explanation of these discourses Anna Herbert uses Lacanian theory to develop a backdrop against which creativity can be analysed and organised into themes. She discusses creativity specific to pedagogical situations, or more precisely, a mode of interaction where both the pedagogue and students feel satisfied, by their mutual experience of having gained fundamental insights. Anna Herberts aim is to work out why learning at school and creativity in pedagogical situations can be fun and what the conditions are for this kind of learning and creativity. To do so she her backdrop serves her in the analysis and explanation of what might act as hindrance to creativity in pedagogical situations. Taking recourse to these instruments of analysis power relations can be explored in conjunction with diverse phenomena of pleasure. The steps taken to make these instruments applicable even to empirical research seems however to be rather short.

In the book furthermore a creative form of listening to someone (the Other) is described through which the strong effects of power relations can be interrupted. Besides that it is pointed out in a very convincing manner, what the inevitable circumstances for a kind of listening which causes someone to learn from the one who speaks, actually are.

It is surprising to find in the light of a theoretician who is nearly unknown in pedagogics – whereas he is widely proliferated in disciplines like feminism and film and cultural studies – theories which can be used to enlighten topics that are very up to date in pedagogics today. For example implicit learning and tacit knowing can be analysed by referring to Lacan; Herbert does this by taking over a generic and praxeological perspective. Further she marks out the initial conditions for motivation and creativity as well as those of aggression and violence and she points out certain rules arising from their binary tension. Last but not least some central framings of lifelong learning are revealed.