

# Cultural Centre for Freudian Studies and Research

23 Primrose Gardens, London NW3. Tel: 586 0992

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The Newsletter has received the following articles by M. Dury and F. Nakano. If you wish to comment on any of these texts, or to contribute in any way to the Newsletter, please send your contribution (typed) before February 20th to the Centre at its London Address.

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## COMPUTERS CANNOT TELL THE TRUTH

### The Question

The computer does not think (any more than the human subject does).

### The Definition

A computer in operation is an EMBODIMENT of an ordered set of transformation rules themselves defined in the FORMAL(-ISED) language whose symbolic alphabet it manipulates; and it will operate effectively as long as its transformations generate statements (aggregates of symbols) which are grammatical for that language.

### The Structures

#### 1 Machine Language (lowest level)

##### (i) Alphabet

0 1

##### (ii) Grammar

###### - Nouns

(a) Bit. ie: '0'

(b) Byte. ie: '/0010/1001/' (8 bits)

Note: Most bytes are only postal codes or 'addresses'.

###### - Verbs

'move', 'add', etc.

Note: There are only imperatives.

###### - Connectives

(a) NOT  $A(1) \rightarrow /N/ \rightarrow \text{NOT } A(0)$

(b) OR  $A(0) \rightarrow / \quad 0/ \rightarrow C(1)$   
 $B(1) \rightarrow / \quad R/$

(c) AND  $A(0) \rightarrow / \quad A/$   
 $B(1) \rightarrow / \quad N/ \rightarrow C(0)$   
 $/D/$

- Sentence (Only 'Instructions')

(a) Half-word (2 bytes) ie:

/0001/1010/0010/0110/  
A X1 X2

= Add contents of X1 to contents of X2

(b) Word (More elaborate version of above including conditional or unconditional 'branches')

(iii) Semantics (Signification)

None (Axis of choice - synchrony - is '0' or '1')

(iv) Syntax

The language is pure syntax, ie, a combination of bits ranging from the simple to the infinitely complex. (But this complexity is not purely metonymic, since many groups of bits are transformed at the SAME time - in parallel).

At the highest level, there exists on the one hand the layman who seems to feel that a computer represents a (human) subject for another computer, and on the other hand a collection of users who, if they begin by imagining themselves as subjects representing the Other (the code) for other subjects, soon end up referring to themselves as 'interfaces' (ie, that which allows two or more computers to communicate).

In other words, they are drawn into a circular process which is not identical to the circulation of binary codes in a machine, though it derives from it.

Here the question remains as to who or what issues these codes, since there is no reason to exempt the subject of computing from the rule that there is no subject without an Other. But as any answer in this field only inverts the question, as moreover the true subject of computing is not information but the general subject of control, we will limit ourselves to noting that this simulation of the Other called computer is similar to the Other in this - that, once in operation, it is its own description, meaning it does not have a meta-language.

As far as the code itself is concerned, it would seem that it does not, unlike the letter, always return to destination, for (a) it can get lost (machine failure) and (b) it can be fragmented or disseminated (mixed addressing giving unpredictable results). But that would be to confuse the machine itself with its mechanism, for though the former is subject to contingencies, the latter is infinitely reproducible.

Like the signifier there are at least two codes, but unlike it, the code REPRESENTS presence and/or absence directly, and if a computer can therefore be said to be a fort-da game for the advanced it is not primarily in so far as the computer is an object like a cotton-reel - though what better instance of the Aristotelian proposition that a man thinks with his object? - but in so far as the movement of an electron can only be mastered symbolically.

If the said layman could be forgiven for IMAGINING that the computer is a subject-supposed-to-know, ie, that it speaks, what strange delusion does the said user suffer from, not to mention the apostles of Artificial Intelligence, when they treat the computer not only as an object-supposed-to-know (or at best a virtual subject) but also as one which will one day burst into simulated speech once the convolutions of its circuitry and the size of its factual memory have reached a certain sum, when there is no single localised subject in the strings of binary codes one has to decode every time its 'mind' is looked into which could provide a starting point for the question who or what it is that 'knows'?



Where, then is the subject.

There are some close at hand.

If, according to Alan Turins, the computer embodies the rules of an 'effective procedure' by imitating it once this procedure has been formalised (ie, by means of the 'programme'), then any user can imitate a subject and reproduce it on plastic. Hence the 'card' by means of which the human subject becomes the subject of medicine or financial credibility for another subject.

## 2 User language (highest level)

As varied as they are, all follow a similar process of translation.

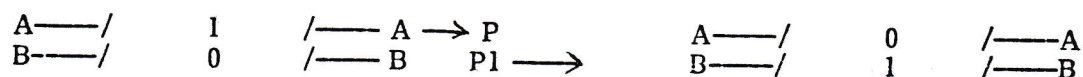
/1100/1000/ /1100/1001/ → DC DC → c8 c9 → 'HI'  
Binary Assembler Hexadecimal Alphabet

In other words there are 16 squared or 2 to the power of 8 minus 1 special characters made available by the byte system.

The systems which translate user code to executable machine code are called the compiler and the assembler, the former converting from a specific user language to assembler (a mnemonic) and the latter, originally written in binary, from assembler to binary.

### The Secret

Either there IS a current or there ISN'T a current. Hence the memory (the 'flip-flop'):



At the moment of the next pulse P1, EITHER 'A' WAS 'on' and 'B' WAS 'off' OR vice versa.

Interlude (or how the symbolic sets the real to work)

A current can flow in two possible ways:

- where an electron moves as excess/surplus (Phosphorus)
- where an electron moves as lack/hole (Boron)

The two materials together are used to construct a diode. And two diodes can be used together to form an OR-state (cf above).

Furthermore, in diodes built in this way, a current can be induced by applying a negative or a positive charge, thus multiplying the options in the building of more complex gates.

From which follows that the computer allows one to rewrite momentarily that piece of the real which has been wrested away into the symbolic, part of the molecular structure of boron say, which, for the duration of the operation, becomes hyperreal, a real recreated from a model, before returning to its former state.

### The Warning

Lacan: 'Do not confuse the calculations of the machine with its mechanism.'

## The Subject

In all of the above one could (should) substitute CODE for LANGUAGE and EN-/DECODING for translation since binary notation knows no signifiers. To every code or code configuration there corresponds one and only one correct interpretation/transcription, and as consequently TRUTH does not apply, one could say that computing is that part of the symbolic field which falls outside speech. The computer at any moment can reveal all, but it cannot tell it.

Yet,

At the lowest level, the level of the current, a pulse represents the subject of pure difference for another pulse.

M. Dury

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## DEAD AND EATEN

The English-speaking countries have, for some time now, been in closer contact with the work of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. This acquaintance, however, has been either restricted to the rarified university circles (through literature and linguistics) or the feminist cliques. In both cases, should their knowledge of French interfere with their reading the texts in the original, their acquaintance will be based on still not very reliable translations (1). Neither the writings of the first nor those of the second group, who prefer to narrow their expositions only to sexual politics, together with those which are dedicated to their study of the clinical work of the Lacanian theory, seem to have done much to dispel several misunderstandings in the readings of both Freud and Lacan. Those who can be considered responsible and original writers on the field can be counted on one hand (2).

Jacqueline Rose, even though having written several pieces on Lacanian topics - ranging from psychoanalysis to cinema, seems to continue her fight against what she calls the Lacanian phallogocentric system. She seems not to grasp the important idea that instead of fighting the phallic she should be fighting its penial counterpart, which she equalises with the former; yet from the very beginning Lacan made clear the distinction between the so-called 'phallus' and the 'penis' (3). This generative organ belongs to certain subjects - namely males - whilst the phallus

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- 1 Even Alan Sheridan's worthy translation presents certain renditions which sometimes obnubilates, sometimes effaces, subtleties or clarities which can be found in the original.
  - 2 Possibly the best introduction to date to Lacan is still the essay written by Malcolm Bowie (in 'Structuralism and Since: From Levis Strauss to Derrida' edited by John Sturrock, Oxford University Press, 1979).
  - 3 Eugénie Lemoine-Luccioni is one of the few writers who has always made this distinction clear in her writings.

The Phallus, from the very beginning, had a religious significance, Herodotus mentions the 'pompa phalli', celebrated in both Egypt and Greece, later introduced in Italy, first in Etruria and then in Rome. The writer Varron describes these ceremonies: the phallus was placed on a cart and carried, in a procession through the fields and the city. At first it was still considered a sacred object. When the cult became vulgarised, it also became known as Priapus. Gradually this transformation made the cult simply a manifestation of debased eroticism. Even then, however, it retained a symbolic meaning (as a deity) through the so-called 'fascinum'. The penis, even in the most explicit writings, was never called a phallus or a priapus but, for example, 'mentula' this differentiating the two. Certain feminists today still take one for the other.



is always lacking in both male and female subjects. It is through the phallus (whilst symbolising the so-called unmediated, that is, full jouissance) and not the penis, that any subject is able to enter language, that is, what Lacan calls the symbolic order. It is well known that in the analytical session both are present, because the penis always belongs to the patient (regardless of the sex of the patient) and the phallus is always placed with the analyst. We see therefore that, even though the (signifier) phallus has a role which is different from its penial counterpart it, concomitantly, is also referring (how could it not be) to it.

Together with Juliet Mitchell, Rose edited and translated several texts by Lacan (4). Her latest opus (5) unfortunately seems to be based on a number of misunderstandings. To make things clear, the 'text' she follows is neither Freudian (per se) nor Lacanian, but Mitchellian - who advocates a Freud which only British feminists seem to follow and understand. Her feminism aims to overthrow the patriarchal (phallogocentric) system which she believes is the structure of both Freud and Lacan. Her mistake (and Dr. Rose's) is that this utopic aim is a failed one from the very start, since what they aim to kill, to destroy, cannot be killed or destroyed, simply because one can no longer kill or destroy the (primordial) father, who is the origin and cause of a patriarchal system. How could this ever be (attained) when he is already dead (and eaten)?

Her latest book is disappointing because what we have is a kind of replay action of texts which are collected and presented without any revision or explanation. Disappointing because it still presents a number of misunderstandings (of the writings of Lacan). Take her 'Dora: Fragment of an Analysis', which still continues to twist and turn and reach the wrong point. The defense of the tenets of her feminism seems to obnubilate her vision, thus restricting the range of her horizon. As one example (amongst many others which can be found through the text(s): Freud's discussion with Dora on sexual matters (she says) is 'conducted by Freud as an apology for Dora (and himself) (...) as insistence on the perverse and indifferentiated nature of infantile sexuality, so that Dora's envisaging of a scene of oral gratification might be less of a scandal'. First of all, sexuality - even children's sexuality - and all forms of perversions were not only discussed but also published (6); secondly, how a 'scandal', since Dora herself already knew most of the things that were being discussed, since she had been reading about sexual matters? Does Dr. Rose mean a scandal because of the discussion on the matter in the sense that Freud would be imposing the male point of view, thus eliminating her feminine understanding of the thing(s), 'delighting' in talking 'dirty' as implied (in Dr. Rose's text)?

Furthermore, Dora's repulsion, misinterpreted by most (even at first by Freud himself) has been corrected, but by very few. The text is clear. He writes: '..... during the man's passionate embrace she felt not merely his kiss upon her lips, but also the pressure of his erect member against her body'. And he continues saying that the repulsion is the result of a displacement from the lower part of the body to the upper. Now, the pressure was not on her genitals, which means that it was, so to speak, half-way between the mouth and the vulva, which facilitates the displacement both upwards and downwards. Upwards because of the feeling in the lower region, and downwards because of the feeling in the upper part of the body. Let us focus on the kiss. Because he was in an agitated state, a high level of excitation (having already attained a full erection) his kiss is very unlikely to have been a mere peck or even a simple kiss with the lips closed. It would, more likely, be what is called a 'French kiss', also commonly known as a 'wet kiss', where 'wet', as extensively discussed by Freud in several places, is here related not only to the lips of her mouth, but also to the lips of her genitals - that is how the displacement up and downwards was facilitated. The intromission of Herr K's tongue into Dora's mouth (since this is what characterises a French kiss) was the equivalent (to her) of the intromission of his (already erect) penis between the lips of her genitals. Furthermore, Dora's (per os) 'sexual gratification'

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- 4 Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose (ed): 'Jacques Lacan and the Ecole Freudienne' (The MacMillan Press Ltd. 1982).
  - 5 'Sexuality in the Field of Vision' (Verso, 1986)
  - 6 Moll's and Krafft-Ebing's enchiridia on the matter were widely read and discussed, and reviews of them appeared in many publications of the time. The same, in spite of Freud's complaints, happened to his works.



has, somehow, been wrongly attributed to be towards her father, because she herself declared him to be 'ein unvermögender Mann'. Thus, her renewed tussis nervosa (the tickling in her throat - the so-called gag response) is the result, not any longer of her identification with her father's cough, but now, of the fantasised penetration of a penis (which is, however, not any more an act of fellatio but of irrumatio) which was neither the one which belonged to her father nor the one which belong to Herr K, but the one (so she imagined) which belonged to Frau K (the symbol - to her - of the phallic mother).

The paternal mediation in the mother-child-phallus schema (misunderstood by most feminists as being an imposition) felt by the child as 'interdiction', 'frustration' or 'privation' is a necessary step in the development of all subjects (7), at the same level as the child's discovery of the sexual difference.

The subject becomes aware of a sexual difference only as an *aprê-coup* when the subject begins to articulate the question of sexuality, when (s)he begins to discover his/her sex. The question is then how can one ask oneself about one's sex if one's sexual mark is already there (anatomically speaking)?

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7 Interdiction, because in interdicts the satisfaction, fulfillment of the impulsion (ie, irresistible desire).

But what does the father interdict?

The mother (of being for the child) as what she is for him, thus depriving the child (of the mother). The father, thus, is seen as interdictor, frustrator and depriver (all characteristics of the image of the castrating father).

In the case of frustration, this lack, which Lacan calls 'un dommage imaginaire' has a real (*réel*) object: the penis. Prototype for the girl, it is through its absence in the mother that the experience is felt by the boy. In the privation, it is this lack which is real - what Lacan calls 'un trou dans le réel'. The object of this privation is, however, a symbolic one, with the phallus as the signifier.

In the castration, this symbolic lack is the representation of the interdiction of incest (the Lacanian 'dette symbolique') and the object is imaginary. This imaginary object is nothing else but the phallus. But the point mistaken by most feminists comes when one reaches the fading of the Oedipal Complex. It is here that the father, in the eyes of the child, demonstrates that he is the possessor of the phallus, even though he is not it, therefore reinstating it (the phallus) as the desired object (of the mother) and not simply as the object which can be taken away or be given by him. The child, then, renounces the idea of being the maternal phallus (this is called 'sublimation') and begins the dialectical relation(ship) of having it through his identification with the father.

If we take into account the girl (and here the misunderstanding grows) she does it by deciding not to have in through her identification with the mother who, like her, does not (need to) possess one, but who knows where it is located and, if necessary, so to speak, where to reach it. As Lacan puts it, 'l'homme n'est pas sans l'avoir et la femme est sans l'avoir' (le *désir* et son interpretation).

This identification is composed of both the introjection of the father's imago and the internalisation of the Law (of the father), which implies an element of inertia, which presents a constant revision of an endless dialectical process. The mother, therefore, moves from the symbolic to the real, whilst, through the intervention of the phallus, the objects move from the real to the symbolic. The process of the function of the alter-ego then ensures both normalisations: that of the libido and that of culture. The libidinal one is completed by the cultural one when the child realises that (s)he is the third member of the family, a member still incomplete. The child's attempts will then be directed towards a series of (identifications of) different ideals and, once aware of also being a member of a larger family (society), will be able to accept, as a condition for being accepted into it, all its restrictions.

As in the case of the child, when this interdiction humanises its desire, the woman, as Lacan puts it, 'il lui faut perdre ce qu'elle n'a pas'.



This possibility arises because there is no single truth but truths which wind round and put into question an appearance, which the subject supposes to be his/hers. But they are simply imaginary constructions which the subject clings to in order to maintain the closing of his unconscious in a fictitious appearance. The role of the analyst (and psychoanalysis) is to undo these appearances, these semblants, in order that a truth, which can never be considered as a whole - but as a pas-tout - emerges.

As there is no anatomical difference of the sexes in the unconscious, what exists is the inscription of a lack. It is only in the discourse of each subject that the sexual position (of a subject) can be determined. This position, however, will not assure the sex of the subject. What it will do is emphasise the fact that this subject can belong to both (anatomical) sexes in different times, because, as a speaking subject, (s)he is determined by these two positions due to the lack.

The male, (bearer of the penis) only perceives the importance of the organ which he has from the moment that he discovers that there are those who do not have it. The female, which does not bear one, will say: 'I had one and I have lost it'. But as we have seen before, the sexual positioning does not depend only on the anatomical. Therefore, there are subjects who, taking the feminine position, which means, those who belong to the order of the pas-tout, when not finding any difference between the man and the woman accept the fact and leave the question open. What we find here is no longer an exclusion but an inclusion, which indicates the dissymmetry which exists between the two (sexual) positions of the (speaking) subjects. The impossibility of the sexual rapport is thus what the symbolic demonstrates, no matter how hard the imaginary tries to demonstrate the opposite, that is, to symmetrise them. What emerges is the inexistence of the woman (the woman) so that women can exist, beings which, although having the masculine as a point of reference, go beyond it. That is why Lacan says that women are more men than men. The dissymmetry exists, since we are not dealing with an inclusion opposing an exclusion; (what) this inclusion must deal with is the fact that it has to exist without annulling the other. This is what is called introjection (which is symbolic) whilst (the imaginary) projection is situated on the masculine side.

The subject, therefore, is always in the feminine discursive order since all speaking subjects present a hole in the imaginary, therefore being a pas-tout; from this point, they would enter the masculine, where they would try to create a position which would (supposedly) deal with the lack, which determines them. They thus project in the other (subject) the cause of the impossibility of completeness (identification). It is through the après-coup that they return to the feminine, where they can recognise that the impossible is the determining factor (that is, the moment of recognition of castration).

This recognition of the impossible is the recognition of the existence of a difference - the hetero (sexual), to which all speaking subjects are condemned to. The lesson that Lacan teaches us is the necessary homo (sexuality) of the speaking subject, since the masculine side has to be crossed by all (speaking) subjects, from where there is an attempt to annul this difference whilst from the feminine side it is this difference which is emphasised, that is the hetero (sexuality). That is why the other, always being a difference, comes as a substitute of the sexual relation, which does not exist. This is what most feminists seem to forget. That is why Dr. Rose's statement that Dora is a feminist continues, alas, to be mistaken. Dora ended her days, not as a feminist at all, but, as Freud himself put it, merely a case of 'petite hystérie' that she had always been, nothing else.

Dr. Rose finds herself situated at a point when feminism can no longer be based on premisses which were the basis of the movement. From that time, so many things changed that even the so-called classical texts on the subject are already dated beyond redemption. Many figures of the movement have understood these changes and consequently also moved on.

Despite these criticisms, many of the articles in her book are interesting (for example her essay on 'The Imaginary').

December 1986

F. Nakano