

Why the Analyst Has to (Re)claim the Role of the Cuckoo : By [Paulina Tanterl | Vienna, Austria](#) | March 23rd, 2022 | [LRO 333](#)

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# LACANIAN REVIEW ONLINE

## Why the Analyst Has to (Re)claim the Role of the Cuckoo

Most clinical institutions in Vienna operate primarily in service of the Austrian healthcare system, placing psychoanalysis and the diverse psychotherapy methods in the same category. Whilst providing their services for little to almost no costs, the institution aims for the quick elimination of the symptom, the reduction of stress, suffering and pain as if this all could be set as a guaranteed assurance.

In the “nest of the institution”, only the good, the marvelous eggs are worthy of sharing. It’s the promise of the perfect egg, an egg with no cracks, the happy egg with no colored spots, no irregularities. Order as an imperative.

Meanwhile, in the following passages of a well-known children’s rhyme, the order has already collapsed:

“[...] Three geese in a flock

One flew East

One flew West

And one flew over the cuckoo’s nest.”

While the geese have left their flock to continue individually, the cuckoo surprisingly has built its own nest. Let’s imagine one of these individualistic geese was once thrown out of its nest precisely by this cuckoo who forced a necessary crack in the bird’s egg — a starting point.

A crack from which the goose could emerge to find its very own singularity.

If the Lacanian orientation emphasizes an ethics that aims for desire, then it's also a necessity to focus on the singularity of the subject, on the desire of each subject individually. Claiming the analytical experience will ultimately lead to happiness would be a betrayal of the subject. And Lacan goes even further: by stating that the analyst should never put himself into the service of this "bourgeois dream".[1]

Nowadays this dream has emerged from the service of goods to the politically supported service of self-optimization. The analytical discourse is completely absent in this scenario. The way society approaches psychoanalysis today reflects the current discourse of our time. Happiness as an ongoing pleasure in constant self-optimization: Be mindful! Work on yourself! Set boundaries! Drink enough water and be healthy! Those are not claims of a small group, but rather a global phenomenon. In psychoanalysis, these requests often get articulated as the wish to get "reassembled", to get assistance in the process of replacing one's original peculiarities with a socially adjusted version of oneself.

If the analyst is confronted with the demand for happiness one has to get a glimpse of how to, according to Lacan, "approach these things differently, how far we are from any formulation of a discipline of happiness".[2]

This is why the analyst must claim his role as the cuckoo!

The role of the crazy one, the one who disturbs the order. And he does it with persistence. He refuses to offer flawless eggs, but rather cracks them open. One after another. If the cuckoo once has occupied the nest of the obedient goose, he aims to unseal the immaculate eggshell. Just like the analyst poses his questions to open up the hard-boiled surface of the person who addressed the analyst in the first place.

By cracking these eggshells, both the goose and the subject are enabled "to put himself into a position such that things mysteriously and almost miraculously work themselves out right [...] to grasp them right".[3] The emphasis here lies on the act of grasping. The subject is not a passive entity but rather has to make room for himself within the egg, maybe even break free from it. It has to take its chance. The subject needs to confront these cracks and work with them instead of denying them. Facing this discomfort may ultimately be the liberation for the goose, as well as for the subject.

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[1] Lacan, J. *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII (1959-1960)*. Edited by J.-A. Miller. Translated by Dennis Porter. London: Routledge, 1992, 303.

[2] Ibid., 292.

[3] Ibid., 293.

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Availability of references

Notes and information : [Seminar VII: The ethics of psychoanalysis: 1959-1960: begins 18<sup>th</sup> November 1959 : Jacques Lacan](#) or [here http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=386](http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=386)

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Texts from the Reading Seminar VII Group : <https://lacanianworks.net/category/works-in-progress/reading-seminar-vii-ethics/>

[1] Seminar VII : 6<sup>th</sup> July 1960, p303 of Dennis Porter's translation,

If we are to consider an analysis completed for someone who is subsequently to find himself in a responsible position relative to an analysis, in the sense that he becomes an analyst himself, should it ideally or by right end with the position of comfort that I categorized just now as a moralizing rationalization of the kind in which it often tends to express itself? When in conformity with Freudian experience one has articulated the dialectic of demand, need and desire, is it fitting to reduce the success of an analysis to a situation of individual comfort linked to that well-founded and legitimate function we might call the service of goods? Private goods, family goods, domestic goods, other goods that solicit us, the goods of our trade or our profession, the goods of the city, etc.

Can we, in fact, close off that city so easily nowadays? It doesn't matter. However we regulate the situation of those who have recourse to us in our society, it is only too obvious that their aspiration to happiness will always imply a place where miracles happen, a promise, a mirage of original genius or an opening up of freedom, or if we caricature it, the possession of all women for a man and of an ideal man for a woman. To make oneself the guarantor of the possibility that a subject will in some way be able to find happiness even in analysis is a form of fraud.

There's absolutely no reason why we should make ourselves **the guarantors of the bourgeois dream**. A little more rigor and firmness are required in our confrontation with the human condition. That is why I reminded you last time that the service of goods or the shift of the demand for happiness onto the political stage has its consequences. The movement that the world we live in is caught up in, of wanting to establish the universal spread of the service of goods as far as conceivably possible, implies an amputation, sacrifices, indeed a kind of puritanism in the relationship to desire that has occurred historically. The establishment of the service of goods at a universal level does not in itself resolve the problem of the present relationship of each individual man to his desire in the short period of time between his birth and his death. The happiness of future generations is not at issue here.

[2] Seminar VII : 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1960, p292 of Dennis Porter's translation, Those reasons are expressed in politics by the following formula: "There is no satisfaction for the individual outside of the satisfaction of all."

It is in such a context that analysis appears to be - without our being able to explain why precisely it is the case in this context - and the analyst sets himself up to receive, a demand for happiness.

I have set out to show you this year the distance travelled since Aristotle, say, by choosing among some of the most crucial concepts. I wanted to make you feel the extent to which we **approach these things differently, how far we are from any formulation of a discipline of happiness**.

There is in Aristotle a discipline of happiness. He shows the paths along which he intends to lead anyone who is willing to follow him in his problematic, paths which in different spheres of potential human activity lead to the realization of one of the functions of virtue. Such virtue is achieved through μεσότης [probably mean] something that is far from being a simple golden mean or a process linked to the avoidance of excess; instead it is supposed to enable man to choose that which might reasonably allow him to realize himself in his own good.

Please note that one finds nothing similar in psychoanalysis.

[3] Seminar VII : 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1960, p293 of Dennis Porter's translation, Please note that one finds nothing similar in psychoanalysis. Along paths that would appear surprising to someone straight out of high school, we claim to allow the subject to put himself in a position such that things mysteriously and almost miraculously work themselves out right, provided he grasp them at the right end. Goodness only knows how obscure such a

pretension as the achievement of genital objecthood (*'objectalité génitale*) remains, along with what is so imprudently linked to it, namely, adjustment to reality.