

Jacques Lacan

*Logical Time and the Assertion of
Anticipated Certainty: A New Sophism*

A Logical Problem

A prison warden has three prisoners summoned and announces to them the following:

" I have here five discs differing only in color: three white and two black. Without letting you know which I have chosen, I shall fasten one of them to each of you between his shoulders; outside, that is, your direct visual field. At that point, you will be left at your leisure to consider your companions and their respective discs. **The first to be able to deduce his own color will be the one to benefit.** His conclusion, moreover, must be founded upon logical *and not simply probabilistic* reasons. "

How can the subjects solve the problem?

The Perfect Solution

After having contemplated one another for *a certain time*, the three subjects take *a few steps* together and pass side by side through the doorway. Each of them then separately furnishes a similar response which can be expressed thus:

"I am a white, and here is how I know it: as my companions were whites, I thought that, had I been a black, each of them would have been able to infer the following: 'If I too am a black, the other would have necessarily realized straight away that he was a white and would have left immediately; therefore I am not a black'. And both would have left together, convinced that they were whites. As they did nothing of the kind, I must be a white like them. At that, I made for the door to make my conclusion known."

All three thus exited simultaneously, armed with the same reasons for concluding.

The Modulation of Time in Lacan's logic

Instant of the Glance

I) Being opposite two blacks, one knows that one is a white.

Time for Comprehending

II) Were I a black, the two whites I see would waste no time realizing they are whites.

Moment of Concluding

III) I hasten to declare myself white, so that these whites, whom I consider in this way, do not precede me in recognizing themselves for what they are.

Towards a Lacanian group psychology: The prisoner's dilemma and the trans-subjective

Derek Hook

To understand the subject-to-society relation, we need to grasp a logical succession of modes of **subjectivity** - from subjectivity to **inter-subjectivity**, and from inter-subjectivity to a form of **trans-subjective social logic**.

The instance of the glance **singular subjectivity** is involved:

No inter-subjective dialectic.

The time of understanding **inter-subjectivity** is involved:

The subject needs to reason from the place of the other 'indefinite reciprocal subject'; she relies on the action (or lack thereof) of the other. It is also necessary that a certain time elapse, which varies in length; this is not an instantaneous moment of recognition.

The moment of concluding **trans-subjective** social logic is involved:

One is most concerned with is a **posited social objectivity** with reference to which each subjectivity finds its relation to societal norms.

The subject has to **hypothesize** of

*what the other subject **hypothesizes** about **a Third**.*

Flossie and the Fox: "Oh well, a fox be just a fox. That aine so scary."

Ο αναγνώστης / ακροατής της αφήγησης **hypothesizes that**:

Ο αφηγητής **hypothesizes that**:

the others believe "Oh well, a fox be just a fox. That aine so scary."

Ο αναγνώστης της αφήγησης **hypothesizes that**:

Ο αφηγητής **hypothesizes that**:

*typical community members **are considered** to **believe** "Oh well, a fox be just a fox. That aine so scary."*

Η πρόταση στα εισαγωγικά αποδίδεται στον **Άλλο** της κοινότητας

The disconnect between inter- and trans-subjective

1 We can imagine a situation of a constituency in which each member thinks positively of a given political candidate – would in fact like to vote for him – but which nonetheless, as a whole, votes him or her out of power.

No subjective opinion needs to change before a broader trans-subjective tipping-point is reached. What matters is not so much what single individuals think, or even the trade in inter-subjective impressions of the given politician; more important by far is apprehension of *what the Other of the group thinks* (what we might call *the Other* of the others).

2 Anxiety is a common response when one is introduced to a group of unfamiliar people. One way of domesticating this anxiety is to gravitate to someone similar to one's self within the group and establish a degree of common ground. A brief interaction with them will provide clues as to *what they might think of you*. This minimal inter-subjectivity will provide a frame of sorts, that is, the elementary co-ordinates of how you are understood within the perspective of this other.

Far more anxiety-provoking is the question of how an unfamiliar group *as a whole* sees one. What is in question here is not simply an aggregate of inter-subjectivity (the sum total of possible one-to-one relationships you may have with each member). What is in question is rather an unstable consensus which emerges through *what group members think other group members think of you more generally* (the level of the trans-subjective).

In a community, **you are considered** by *typical* community members to **believe the trans-subjective framework**.

3 It is quite possible that in a community no one feels themselves to be subjectively racist. Nevertheless such a community may retain deeply racist assumptions embedded within **the trans-subjective framework** of what **others are considered to believe**.

This is not an instance of repressed psychological racism. It is rather a case of distributed or delegated racism which can persist in de-personalized institutional or trans-subjective forms, without any clear subjective psychological agents.

Subjective assertion of Anticipated certainty

" **I hastened** to conclude that I was a white, because otherwise they should have preceded **me** in reciprocally recognizing themselves to be whites (and had **I** given them the time to do so, because of that very fact they would *have led me astray.* "

1 The judgement which concludes the sophism *can only be borne by a subject* who has formulated the assertion *about himself*:

The judgement cannot be imputed to the subject unreservedly by anyone else.

2 The *subjective act* of judgment ***anticipates its own certitude***:

3 In the end, the judgment is ***desubjectified*** to the utmost.

Remarks 1, 3 seem contradictory.

Derek Hook

**Towards a Lacanian group psychology:
The prisoner's dilemma and the trans-subjective**

A community may retain assumptions embedded within
the trans-subjective framework of
what **others are considered to believe.**

Reference of an " I " to the *common measure* of reciprocal subjects,
insofar as they are *others for one another*

The " I " in question here defines itself
through a subjectification of competition with the other.

- 1) A man knows what is not a man;
- 2) Men recognize themselves amongst themselves to be men;
- 3) I declare myself to be a man for fear of being convinced by men
that I am not a man.

I want to belong to a club that will not accept people like me as a member



Remarks 1, 3 seem contradictory:

Remark 3 seems to assert that: The concluding judgement *establishes the Other* – yields the “master signifier” – *and becomes part of the Other* – immanent to the synchronic script of the grand Autre.

A. Johnston

Lacan’s temporal logic is a false temporality, a staged time in which the diachronic unfolding of crucial moments is immanent to the synchronic script of the grand Autre. The moment of concluding yields the “master signifier” by which the illusory temporality of the game is dissipated in the flash of the quilting après-coup.

After arriving at a conclusion, each prisoner necessarily perceives how the hesitations of himself and his companions are already built into the game by the rules and the particular combination of disc colors. Without perceiving this and being able to explain it in the form of a proof, no deduction sufficient to merit release can be formulated.

Before arriving at a conclusion, the hesitations are perceived as contingent.

The experiential durationality of the delays preceding the moment of concluding — the location of the synchronic hooking of the point de capiton — **congeals into the rigidity of evidence**, evidence as immediately accessible to the backwards glance of identificatory certainty as the disc colors offered to the spatialized instant of the glance.

The delays become rigid evidence after arriving at a conclusion.

A. Zupancic

Reality’s own inherent negativity/contradiction appears as part of this reality precisely in the form of the subject, an *objective* embodiment of reality’s contradiction.

Subjectivation is not only a concrete and singular way in which things determine me, it is also and at the same time the subjectivation of a paradox/contradiction involved in the very things that determine me; this paradox/contradiction exists “in itself” only as this objectivation - subjectivation, or objectivation via the subject.

The subject exists among objects, yet it exists there as the point that gives access to a possible objectivation of their inner antagonism, its inscription into their reality. Lacan’s gesture, which is often misread as his version of “correlationism,” consists in introducing a short circuit of the epistemological and ontological levels (of knowledge and being) in the form of their joint/common negativity (lack of knowledge falls into a lack of being) — and the concept of the subject (as subject of the unconscious) is situated at this precise juncture.

The placing of the subject at the level of enjoyment in talking enables the production of the new signifier from the perspective of which it is now possible to effect a separation at the heart of the One-plus involved in repetition. This new signifier is the event proper, and it triggers a new subjectivation.

ΣΧΕΤΙΚΟ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΤΙΚΟ ΥΛΙΚΟ

Jacques Lacan, *Logical time and the assertion of anticipated certainty: A new sophism*

Derek Hook, *Towards a Lacanian group psychology: The prisoner's dilemma and the trans-subjective*

Προτεινόμενες ασκήσεις

1 Στο άρθρο του Jacques Lacan αναλύεται λογικά το δίλημμα των τριών φυλακισμένων (βλέπε The Perfect Solution και την λεπτομερή Λογική Ανάλυσή της), χρησιμοποιώντας τρεις συλλογιστικούς τρόπους: instance of the glance, time for comprehending, moment of concluding.

Εξετάστε ένα τροποποιημένο Muddy Children Puzzle (Fagin – Halpern – Moses – Vardi Reasoning About Knowledge, Ενότητα 1.1), όπου τα παιδάκια γνωρίζουν αρχικά ότι ένα τουλάχιστον είναι λερωμένο, αλλά ο πατέρας δεν εμφανίζεται για να τα ρωτήσει αν γνωρίζουν αν είναι λερωμένα ή όχι.

Αφού τα παιδάκια δεν παίρνουν πληροφορία για τη γνώση των άλλων, πώς μπορούν να καταλάβουν αν είναι λερωμένα; Αναλύστε το τροποποιημένο Muddy Children Puzzle όταν $k = 2$ (δύο λερωμένα παιδάκια), όταν $k = 3$ και όταν $k = 1$. Ποιοί συλλογισμοί γίνονται σε κάθε περίπτωση;

2 Στο άρθρο του Derek Hook αναφέρονται παραδείγματα των εννοιών inter-subjectivity και trans-subjectivity, και χρησιμοποιούνται για να εξηγηθεί πώς διαφέρουν οι δύο έννοιες. Μπορείτε να βρείτε άλλα παραδείγματα (πχ από την κοινωνική σας εμπειρία);