

Reviews

Lesesucht

RIK LOOSE, *The Subject of Addiction: Psychoanalysis and the Administration of Enjoyment*. London/New York: Karnac Books, 2002. 308 pp. ISBN 1-85575-299-9 (pbk).

Discussions of addiction too often get tangled up in the ideological preoccupations and agendas of contemporary culture, and in a domain of speculation and proscription where psychology abuts the state. On the one hand, metaphors of addiction have spread well beyond the discipline to account for our abnormal attachments to cyberspace (in 'internet addiction') or to each other (in forms of 'co-dependency'). On the other hand, the 'war on drugs' expands the remit of governmental intervention from the injunction to just say 'no', to military intervention in its own dependent states. The problem, as Rik Loose points out in *The Subject of Addiction*, is that attention is thereby drawn to the range of 'objects' to which we are supposed to be addicted nowadays at the expense of a serious consideration of what addiction is for the subject hooked on toxic substances; scary messages about what these substances will do to you feed the very fantasies that structure enjoyment. This path-breaking book provides a wide-ranging theoretical review and synthesis of psychoanalytic arguments that have clinical implications for our understanding and treatment of addiction.

Although Loose deploys Lacanian concepts to take psychoanalytic work forward in this domain—and the second half of the book draws on Lacan's few scattered comments on addiction and then embeds them in an accessible review and extension of Lacanian theory—his work is grounded in Freud's own attempts to grapple with the phenomenon, including his difficulties in managing it in his colleagues, patients and himself. The self-contained enjoyment of masturbation is the motif that Freud often evoked. In this respect alone, the book provides a useful historical review of the concept of addiction in Freud's work and that of 'post-Freudians' working in the area. The discussion of Freud's and Jung's dealings with their addict-analyst colleague Otto Gross, for example, is used to draw attention to questions of countertransference (in which the analyst is sucked into the transference relationship a patient has with objects of desire) and 'dual diagnosis' (the relationship between neurosis, which may be treatable, and addiction itself, which may not).

The advantage of the Freudian (and then Lacanian) clinical exploration of addiction is that, against the pop-psychological motifs that are prevalent in self-help books and now-dominant therapeutic ideology, the concept is stripped down and then relocated in the relationship between the subject and others. Three key Lacanian theoretical concepts are elaborated in the course of the book: 'toxicomania' (which homes in on a particular problematic use of a poisonous substance, rather than the

diffuse and imprecise uses of 'addiction' to describe such things as compulsive gambling), 'jouissance' (absolute and impossible enjoyment that lures us 'beyond the pleasure principle' and against which we defend ourselves) and the Other (first instantiated in the mother but then, after the alienation and separation of the infant, a condition of desire as something human in and for the speaking subject)—so, addiction is 'the incorporation of a drug which causes immediate jouissance independently of the Other' (p. 147). A fourth concept is thus necessary to describe how the addicted subject manages jouissance in its peculiar relationship with the Other (a relationship that it attempts to avoid), and Loose invents and fleshes out as his own addition to psychoanalytic vocabulary that of 'administration'.

Apart from the historical survey and detailed excavation of psychoanalytic concepts in the first half of the book, there is a good deal of theoretical work that is of interest. The description of Lacan's account of discourse as a social bond (much of which is still unpublished in English), for example, is very clear, to the point where it also serves well as one component of the introduction to the clinical relevance of psychoanalysis generally and Lacan in particular that the book provides. However, Loose also goes beyond Lacan's 'four discourses' (of the master, university, hysteric and analyst) to formulate a discourse of addiction. This addiction discourse is produced from a torsion in the discourse of analyst (which poses a number of problems for the analyst as well as for the addict), and there is yet another twist: as Loose points out, the addiction discourse is an uncanny mirror-image of the discourse of human science that Lacan alluded to (though there is a typographical error on the page where this discourse is sketched out so that the subject under the master signifier is represented as if it were a full rather than barred subject):

In the discourse of human science, the subject is barred from his or her true cause by being spoken to in no uncertain terms of a knowledge that pretends to know without fail. . . . [And then] addicts pursue precisely this kind of knowledge or explanation. The availability of this knowledge simply feeds their desire to know nothing about the truth of their addiction. (p. 264)

There are many implications for those concerned with the place of theory in psychology, and Loose's book uses the specific issue of addiction here to raise broader questions about the relationship between pathology and knowledge (and our own forms of pathology as we relay knowledge to others).

The terrain onto which Loose takes us—from the clinical structure of the addicted subject to the discursively structured social bonds to which we are all potentially subject—however, is the terrain of constitutive cultural representations, and an attention to this terrain poses questions for his own work. First, is not the very material he cites to illustrate the phenomenon of addiction (ranging from the testimonies of Thomas de Quincey to William Burroughs) part of the very 'stuff' (the stuffing, lining) of addiction? These representations are now historically sedimented in the symbolic order, in the field of the Other, such that nowadays every subject is always already within the field of addiction. And these representations are not mere fictions through which we speak but are interwoven with material practices that today comprise the functioning of late capitalism. You do not need to be a Lacanian, for example, to argue that capitalism (in which the pharmaceutical industry is fairly important) requires crime (of which drug trafficking is quite a potent force) and that it functions by virtue of this criminal reverse of the Law, an obscene injunction to 'enjoy' (Mandel, 1984).

Second, is not the very conceptual grounding of ‘addiction’ as an attempt to be independent of the Other—traced back so clearly by Loose to Freud’s warnings about the perils of masturbation—symptomatic of the simultaneous injunction relayed to each subject under capitalism to be a self-contained worker able to sell his or her labour power but not so self-contained as to think that s/he can exist outside the exploitative relationships that characterize contemporary society? Masturbation is only a good emblem of the pathological administration of enjoyment independent of the Other if it is historically located as a pathology, and if the notions of ‘addiction’ that we might be tempted to treat as a timeless universal threat to civilization (and which Loose seems tempted to treat as such) are also historically located (Laqueur, 2003).

Toward the end of the 18th century in German culture there was much discussion of individual (i.e. bourgeois) ‘self-formation’ (and it is this very Enlightenment tradition out of which psychoanalysis was formed as a reflexive practice by which we might find a way to speak the truth about ourselves one-by-one), but this also conjured up the concern that there could be excessive dedication to this task. What nascent capitalism called forth also had to be contained, and it was at this time labelled as potentially pathological, as *Lesesucht* or ‘reading addiction’. And now this raises a further reflexive question about the category that Rik Loose explores so well in this very enjoyable book (but not too enjoyable, of course), which is that everyday practices like reading might be sustained by the very addictive phenomena that they attempt to escape.

References

- Laqueur, T. (2003). *Solitary sex: A cultural history of masturbation*. New York: Zone.
Mandel, E. (1984). *Delightful murder: A social history of the crime story*. London: Pluto.

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Controversial Neurosciences

M.R. BENNETT AND P.M.S. HACKER, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003. 461 pp. ISBN 1-4051-0855-X (hbk), ISBN 1-4051-0838-X (pbk).

Claims about some new philosophical book being revolutionary usually have no other effect on me than to make me stifle a yawn. I was, therefore, scarcely impressed by the foreword’s bold and explicit warning about the book being ‘highly controversial’. Yeah sure: aren’t they all? But this particular book made me swallow my scepticism: it *is* controversial.

Not only do the authors make short shrift of the entire history of neuroscience, but they mercilessly wipe the floor with present-day neuroscience and philosophy of mind as well. So what is the quibble the authors have with the received accounts of neuroscience? The following sentence neatly sums up their main point: ‘The tendency to explain how a living being perceives, thinks, feels emotions etc. by reference to a subordinate part of that being runs like a canker through the history of