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Psychoanalytic Theory and Textual Interpretation

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Psychoanalysis occupies somewhat of a strange position within contemporary socio-political theory. On one hand, psychoanalysis has long had an influence within the social sciences and social theory outside of the clinic. Although Freud's early writings were concerned with the dreams and various neuroses of his patients, in his later years he turned to applying his model of the psyche to society writ large. Within socio-political theory more specifically, psychoanalytically-inspired critical theory stretches back to at least the Frankfurt School tradition. Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm's arguments about the psychical trade-offs within modern society, among others, illustrated that, at least for some scholars, the insights of psychoanalysis could be fruitfully taken outside of the clinic to understand broader societal dynamics. Habermas's (1971) early work reconstructing psychoanalysis as an emancipatory guide continued these trajectories. An upshot of many of these seminal analyses was the argument that an understanding of the workings of the human psyche could make sense of otherwise puzzling tendencies surrounding issues of self and society, and freedom and repression. In contrast to more behavioral and objectivist approaches to political analysis, psychoanalytic socio-political theory offered an alternative that merged the social and the psychological in a way that not only highlighted problems, but offered ways of thinking about critical social practices aimed at negotiating or overcoming such challenges and realizing emancipatory visions.

On the other hand, psychoanalysis in many ways remains a fairly marginal approach within socio-political theory. Psychoanalysis aims to lay bare what are often uncomfortable truths. As Wolfenstein (1996: 707) noted, psychoanalysis "reminds us of our immaturity, brings us back to

painful experiences we would prefer to disregard, asks us to tolerate the very anxieties and our theoretical discourses have been structured to avoid." Perhaps because of this, or because of the often ambiguous epistemological status of psychoanalysis (Wolfenstein 1996: 707), or perhaps because psychoanalytic forays into social and political issues are often judged from the position of dominant rationalist and objectivist approaches of political science, psychoanalytically-inspired research often has trouble getting a hearing. To be sure, such research has sometimes tended to work against its own advocacy. The notion that phenomena at the "collective" level of society could be reduced by explanation via "individual" dynamics has often led to suspicion of applying psychoanalytic theory to society, and rightly so.[1] Moreover, the idea that collective phenomena can be explained by reference to a collective psychical "unconscious" or "essence" is a contention that is now rightly avoided (Stavrakakis 1999, 1; Wrong 1994).[2] Yet, even when contemporary psychoanalytic-inspired research works to avoid such pitfalls, it is often viewed with extra scrutiny compared to more conventional approaches, particularly when conflated with the reductionist tendencies of earlier efforts.

Despite such challenges, psychoanalytic approaches have long been applied to the interpretation of political texts,[3] and have recently experienced somewhat of a resurgence during the past decade or so. Particularly in political theory, a variety of psychoanalytically inspired frameworks have recently proliferated which address in new ways a host of issues of traditional theoretical concern. For example, the so-called "Essex School" of discourse theory (Howarth, Stavrakakis, and Norval 2000) frequently deploys conceptual tools from Jacques Lacan's social-

[1] See, for example, Reich (1970).

[2] Carl Jung's (1991) work is probably the exemplar here.

[3] See, for example, the books reviewed in Wolfenstein (1996).

psychoanalytical approach. Ernesto Laclau was the founder of the "Ideology and Discourse"

program at Essex, and his most recent work is often explicitly Lacanian psychoanalytical (Laclau

2005), as is other work influenced by him (Critchley and Marchart 2004). Slavoj Žižek (1989,

1997) has long drawn upon Lacanian theory to analyze politics, pop culture, religion, and other

issues. Moreover, similar deployments of Lacanian theory can be found in recent international

relations research (Arfi 2010; Edkins 2003; Epstein 2013; Solomon 2012, 2013). Of course, this

focus on Lacanian-inspired research should not be taken as the only psychoanalytic-inspired

approach to socio-political analysis – Freudian (Schuett 2010), Kleinian (Gallagher 2010) and

other traditions have also been recently drawn upon as well. Yet, research inspired by Lacan

seems to have gained steam and influence in recent years.[4]

Following this trend, this chapter offers an overview of the contribution of Lacan's

approach to those interested in issues of interpretation in political theory. Specifically, it engages

in an explanation and discussion of what Lacan termed the "four discourses," a series of

configurations that concisely draw together many of the key concepts of Lacan's theoretical

corpus. In Lacan's view, discourse is constitutive of social life – of our identities, our collective

understandings, and our subjectivities. In his approach, there are four basic elements that are

common to all discursive contexts. These elements, when brought together in different

configurations, constitute subjectivity in specific ways through the manner in which they channel

desire. Desire, in this view, is the driving force behind subjectivity, and is that which helps to

attach subjects to their articulated positions within discourse, but also that which aims at

achieving a "whole" or "complete" subject. Desire here is not strictly sexual, but is ontological –

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[4] Of course, such work is not without its critics. See Engelken-Jorge (2010) and Robinson

(2004) for critiques, and Thomassen (2004) for a rejoinder.

desire constitutes the subject. The subject continually *lacks* that which it believes will make it "whole," and so desire is directly related to the subject's originary lack, but desire is also what binds the subject to the social field. Consequently, discourse shapes a range of emotional, textual, and intersubjective processes. In this sense, exploring how these different registers of subjectivity are produced, maintained, and shift within different discursive structures holds promise for researchers in political theory seeking frameworks to analyze the ways in which texts produce effects in audiences through the dynamics of desire. This is precisely how Lacanian theory offers a theoretical advantage over earlier Freudian theory. By rejecting the explicit biological drives of Freudian frameworks, and avoiding the notion of a Jungian "collective unconscious" that motivates collective behavior, Lacan's framework circumvents many of the theoretical pitfalls involved in using psychoanalytic concepts in socio-political analysis. By emphasizing the interweaving of discourse and desire in subject formation, Lacan offers a theoretical model that suggests an apt empirical method for textual analysis which forgoes the need to resort to biology or collective essences. Introducing the element of desire into how texts and discourses construct subjectivity in different ways thus holds promise for gaining purchase into the powerful effects that texts can produce in their audiences.

The chapter proceeds in three main sections. First, it offers an overview of Lacan's theory of discourse, specifically his model of the four discourses. Each of the four basic elements of discourse are detailed – the "split" subject, the "missing" object *a,* master signifiers, and system of knowledge – as are their intricate relations to each other, and they are briefly placed within Lacan's broader theory of the subject. Each of these four basic elements are then discussed within the context of the four basic kinds of discourse which Lacan theorizes: the Master's discourse, the University discourse, the Hysteric's discourse, and the Analyst's discourse. Not

only do each of the four elements "take up" different positions in each discursive structure, but each structure is itself part of an overall configuration relating to the others. In the second section, the chapter deploys the framework to analyze the dynamics of desire and subject formation in Hobbes's *Leviathan*. In doing so, the section will aim to illustrate what a Lacanian psychoanalytic approach brings to the textual analysis of a classic work of political theory. The conclusion will draw together the main arguments and analytic themes of a Lacanian approach and how they help us to understand textual effects that might remain unseen when viewed through other analytical lenses.

Lacan's Theory of the Four Discourses

Lacan offers a novel approach to discourse theory and interpretation that moves beyond classical notions of "finding" "the meaning" of a text. Instead, Lacan argues that discourse is more usefully understood as a social bond that ties together agents in a relational manner.[5] In

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[5] Lacan never offers a single definition of "discourse," but instead offers a wide-ranging understanding of it throughout his corpus. He views the "practice of language" as that which "dominates" society (2007: 207). Discourse functions as symbolic systems of difference, yet discourse can also be non-verbal; there can be "discourse without speech" because a "discourse can clearly subsist without words" (2007: 12-13). Yet discourse "subsists in certain fundamental relations which would literally not be able to be maintained without language" (2007: 13). That is, language structures all symbolic and intersubjective relations, verbal and non-verbal. "Through the instrument of language a number of stable relations are established, inside which something that is much larger and goes much further than actual utterances can, of course, be inscribed" (2007: 13). Implied here are the aspects of subjectivity, such as desire, that are bound

this sense, through a Lacanian psychoanalytic lens there is no "meaning" to uncover. Rather,

discourses are to be analyzed as configurations that draw together the role of signification and

desire through which subjects are produced through language. These configurations are depicted

as structures constituted by four discursive positions (Agent, Other, Product, Truth), which can

be occupied by four elements: master signifiers (denoted by the symbol S_1), the system of

signification, or the "knowledge" of the discourse (S_2), the split subject ($\$$), and the "missing"

object a (a). Each of these key components of Lacan's theory of discourse and subject formation

are discussed below. These are constituent elements of any discourse, and consequently play a

role in each of the four basic kinds of discourse described by Lacan. To begin, Lacan posits an

Agent who articulates and "sends" a discourse and an Other who hears or "receives" it

(Verhaeghe 1995; Žižek 1998).

$$\text{Agent} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Other}$$

In hearing or receiving a message from the Agent, an Other is "hailed" (represented by the

arrow →) as a subject of the discourse. The Agent's message to the Other and the Agent's

position itself is underpinned by some Truth, yet this is repressed or ignored by the Agent

(represented by the bar −).

$$\frac{\text{Agent}}{\text{Truth}} \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{Other}$$

At the same time, the Agent's discourse aims at achieving some effect in the Other. This

is represented in the Product position on the receiver side of the configuration.

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up with language yet are not coterminous with it. As Bracher (1994: 107) explains, "these

'fundamental relations' are of several different orders: intrasubjective or psychological relations,

intersubjective or social relations, and relations with the nonhuman world."

$$\frac{\text{Agent}}{\text{Truth}} \rightarrow \frac{\text{Other}}{\text{Product}}$$

Each of the positions above the bar (Agent, Other) represents the most overt, evident, or active aspects of a discourse. The positions below the bar (Truth, Product) represent the more latent or implicit elements at work in the discourse. The positions on the left (Agent, Truth) represent the factors at work in the Agent, while the factors on the right (Other, Product) represent the elements active in the receiving Other.

The relations between the four elements (master signifiers S_1, knowledge S_2, split subjectivity $, and the object a) are dependent upon the positions they obtain within each discourse structure. Lacan argued that these four basic kinds of discourse are rooted in basic structures of subjectivity. Put differently, the four kinds of discourse discussed here can be understood as different types of social bonds that constitute subjects through different kinds of intersubjectivity. The Master's discourse is the discourse of power, governing, and/or commanding. The Hysteric's discourse is the discourse of questioning and protesting. The University discourse is the discourse of educating or indoctrinating. The Analyst's discourse is the discourse of analyzing, transformation, and revolution (Bracher 1993: 53).[6]

Master's Discourse   Hysteric's Discourse

$$\frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a} \qquad\qquad \frac{\$}{a} \rightarrow \frac{S_1}{S_2}$$

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[6] For Lacan these four discourses and their constituent elements represent fundamental aspects of subjectivity. Late in his career he introduced a fifth, the Capitalist's discourse, which is identical to the Master's except for the switched positions of the master signifier S_1 and the split subject $. However, he did not develop this discourse to the extent he did the initial four.

<div align="center">

University Discourse   Analyst's Discourse

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$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\$} \qquad\qquad \frac{a}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{\$}{S_1}$$

Before discussing the particular dynamics and social effects that each of these discourses produce, let us first explain each of the constituent elements (S_1, S_2, $\$$, a) in turn. Each element constitutes a key aspect of Lacan's theory of subject formation through the entanglement of discourse and desire. As such, understanding each element and its intimate relations to the others will help to unravel not only how desire plays a key role in the formation of subjectivity, but also will later point to the different kinds of social effects that each of these discourses may have on receiving subjects.

Master signifiers (S_1)

As Lacan argued that subjectivity is intimately bound up with signification, master signifiers take on a key role. Put simply, master signifiers are those terms that the subject is deeply invested in, and are those that are felt by the subject to express its "essence" (even if such a thing is ultimately illusory). Bracher (1993: 24-5) argues that master signifiers are "one of the main elements that give discourse purchase on a subject," and that "master signifiers are able to exert such force in messages because of the role they play in structuring the subject – specifically in giving the subject a sense of identity and direction." More specifically, master signifiers play a role in drawing together the linguistic and desirous/emotional dimensions of subjectivity.

Lacan argued, along with many other contemporaneous thinkers, that identity and subjectivity have no "natural" or pre-given basis. Rather, subjectivity is produced through language, and it these linguistically constructed "senses of self" that form the subject. We can

observe the role of language in child development when we deploy signifiers to position children into social relationships within what Lacan calls the Symbolic order.[7] When we encourage or discourage children with discourses like "you're a big girl/boy," children often eagerly invest in seeing themselves as such, and work to embody those traits that they perceive as characteristics of being a "big girl" or a "big boy." Later in life, we turn to and invest in other signifiers that we feel represents us – "father," "mother," "professor," and so on. Similar investments obtain in politics. Societies generate time-honored signifiers with which most members of the community identify. "Democracy," "justice," "freedom," and "revolution" are prominent examples of political master signifiers. Similarly, "weapons of mass destruction/WMD" arguably functioned as a master signifier in American political discourse in the 2002-2003 run-up to the Iraq War (Oren and Solomon 2013; Oren and Solomon 2014). Such terms often become the central discursive anchors around which much political debate coheres because of the structuring role they play in (collective) subjectivity. Audiences become political subjects through their investment in the images that such signifiers offer. The image of one who identifies with "democracy," "freedom" and so on is perceived by the subject to be valued by the wider society,

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[7] For Lacan the Symbolic order comprises the register of language and intersubjective relations, and encompasses what we commonly call culture and society. More specifically, it is the realm of intersubjective communication that is structured by linguistic differences that have no foundation outside of language. Evans (1996: 203) offers a similar definition: "Since the most basic form of exchange is communication itself, and since the concepts of [symbolic] 'law' and of 'structure' are unthinkable without language, the symbolic is essentially a linguistic dimension. Any aspect of the psychoanalytic experience which has a linguistic structure thus pertains to the symbolic order."

and so s/he aims to embody those characteristics that s/she sees as appropriate to one who is "democratic" and who promotes "freedom." Yet, these terms themselves have no "natural" or "intrinsic" meaning. Despite their adherents' beliefs to the contrary, there is no natural referent "out there" that "freedom" hooks into. In this sense, even though identities are ultimately without foundation, meaningful constructions of these terms help to temporarily "pin down" such signifiers as central points around which political debate obtains.

Desire plays the crucial role in tying subjects to their beloved significations, and the very instability of master signifiers is crucial to their position as discursive anchors. Put differently, their *lack* of stable or "full" meaning is key to their role in structuring subjectivity. In technical terms, master signifiers' lack of "full" meaning elicits subject's desires to identify and invest in the "promise" of "full" subjectivity it is seen to offer. Take the role of "freedom" in contemporary American political discourses. On one hand, "freedom" can mean many things. The various political forces within American politics all attempt to define "freedom" on their own terms, and its meaning is therefore continually contested within political discourse, and its history helps to explain its centrality to contemporary debates (Solomon 2015). Despite its contestation among different political forces, "freedom" remains unquestioned as a political value, and this is precisely the role of the master signifier. Subjects accept it without question for its own sake, even if its meaning is not able to be pinned down. Yet, in another sense, the term's lack of fixed meaning leaves a gap between "the meaning" of the term and subjects' identifications with it. No interpellation process can ever "fully" hail a person as a subject (as there is always a "remainder" of subjectivity that is not captured by representation), and it is this failure that produces the very possibility of identification (Žižek 1989: 122). This lack of full meaning allows the subject to "fill in" or invest this gap with its own subjectivity. Desire is the

spark here. No signifier's meaning is ever fixed, and no hailing discourse can represent or interpellate the subject fully, and desire to overcome, eradicate, negotiate, and alleviate lack (and its attendance anxieties and frustrations) is the driving force constituting identification processes. Thus, these dynamics between lack, "fullness," desire, and signification interweave to produce the subject's investments in instances of signification.

Knowledge (S_2)

The knowledge S_2 of a discourse plays a supporting role to the master signifier S_1. Although the term "knowledge" can have many different meanings (such as formal academic knowledge, intuitive knowledge, etc.), its specific sense here relates to its articulation through signifiers. The system of knowledge or beliefs S_2 that a discourse attempts to produce is a series or battery of signifiers that represent elements or concepts that underpin the dominant message of the master signifier. As Alcorn (2002: 70), explains, "S_2 is the collection of meaningful representations belonging to a culture or a person. S_2 is itself not truth but the collection of those things meaningful for a culture. S_1 is part of S_2 because it is meaningful, but it is different from S_2 because it is valued." While both S_1 and S_2 are signifiers, master signifiers S_1 play the dominant role of carrying, or imposing, the preferred meaning of the discourse. In this sense, master signifiers are more valued than the system of knowledge underpinning it, yet knowledge plays a key role in providing the wider system of beliefs within which the master signifier draws its power. It is their mutual relationship in a discourse that ties them together. It is "something that links one signifier, S_1, to another signifier, S_2, in a relationship of reason" (Lacan 2007: 30).

Like master signifiers, systems of knowledge/belief[8] are key in the production of a subject's identity. The master signifiers and supporting range of signifiers that represent a subject's values and culture constitute the discursive context within which a meaningful sense of self is produced. Returning to the earlier example, "freedom" in the American context is typically supported by a range of associated signifiers which help to partly "fill in" its meaning. On the left, "freedom" is often group together with "equality," "social justice," and "fairness." Strung together in a discourse, these signifiers help to construct a message of "liberalism" or "progressivism." In contrast, on the right "freedom" is often more associated with the "free market," "liberty," or as an antonym to "big government." The system of knowledge/belief within which the subject is caught up helps to not only constitute identity, but perhaps more importantly works to channel the subject's desire in different ways. It is these links among the range of master signifiers S_1 and systems of knowledge/belief S_2 that help to constitute the subject's sense of itself, both conscious and not; "the foundation of what is known, of what is quietly articulated as the little master, as the ego . . . resides in such a relation as this and, precisely, insofar as it is not known" (Lacan 2007: 30). Consequently, not only does S_2 help to constitute both conscious and unconscious knowledge, but also situates the body "within a knowledge, that is, an articulation of signifiers, a network of relationships (associations and oppositions) with other sensations, perceptions, and affective states" (Bracher 1993: 110).

Split Subject ($)

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[8] Conventional understandings of knowledge and belief as distinct notions are largely irrelevant here. Lacan is concerned with how both must be articulated through signifiers within a discourse to be socially meaningful and effective.

As is evident by now, Lacan departs significantly from the unified, self-knowing, rational "self" of mainstream political analysis and political psychological approaches. For Lacan, the subject is not located in the ego – the self-conscious aspect of subjectivity – but is rather de-centered off of the traditional foundations of the ego. The mistake of psychology, Lacan (2006: 705) argues, "consists in taking the very phenomenon of consciousness to be unitary, speaking of the same consciousness…" The split or division of the subject refers back to the notions of fullness and lack, and those aspects of subjectivity that escape representation in discourse. The subject adopts master signifiers as its own in order to gain symbolic representation and to achieve a sense of stability, yet the master signifier never fully represents or exhausts subjectivity as such. There is always a gap between representation through a signifier and what gets left out of representation. This gap is simultaneously unbridgeable yet constitutive of subjectivity as such – the subject needs representation through signifiers to engage in symbolic relations even though representation fails, yet it is this very failure that sparks the desire for it. Lack sparks desire for subjectivity, yet since no signifier can fully deliver on the "promise" of subjectivity desire is ongoing and is continually displaced to other objects. In our discourse of "freedom" example, individuals may identify as subjects of the discourse, yet the hailing process would never be fully complete. The discourse of "freedom" will always lack a certain ineffable *something* (the object *a*, discussed below) which in turn will spark the subject's desire to continue to identify with it. This split – or lack – of subjectivity is the condition of possibility for continued identification. This has far-reaching effects for the subject, as it prompts the movement of desire that continually produces subject formation, and ensures that the subject is never self-identical, so to speak. As Fink (1995: 45) argues, the subject is split "between an ineluctably false sense of self and the automatic functioning of language (the signifying chain) in

the unconscious." The self-conscious ego never completely coincides with the subject-as-lack because of this split. As Lacan (2007: 103) put it, there "where I am thinking I do not recognize myself, I am not, this is the unconscious. There where I am, it is all too clear that I am lost." In other words, the self-conscious thinking ego, or "I," never quite coincides with the subject as such, since it is split between consciousness and the linguistically-structured unconscious.

Object a (a)

There is a key aspect of the subject's constitutive split to which Lacan pays particular analytical attention. For him, the question of why the subject keeps pursuing the promise of representation that always nevertheless fails is key. What precisely does desire keep driving at even in the face of continual frustration? Lacan gave a name to this "object," *objet a*, or object *a*. Strictly speaking, though, this is not an "object" in the conventional sense. Rather, it is "that part of the subject's being that is simultaneously left out of and produced by the identity established for the subject in the $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ articulation (Bracher 1993: 114). The "excess" of subjectivity is both produced by and escapes representation in discourse. Object *a* "designates precisely what presents itself as the most opaque in the effects of discourse . . . yet is essential. It is a question of an effect of discourse that produces a reject" (Lacan 2007: 42-3). Signification produces the possibility of lack, and it is this sense of lacking (manifested in the subject's frustration, anxiety, and so on) that sparks the subject to seek that which appears to promise the alleviation of lack. The subject searches that which would appear to eradicate lack and promises a "full" sense of self. Yet, there is no such object that will ultimately provide the grounding that the subject seeks. The perceived-to-be-missing object is nothing other than the leftover of the signification process itself. Signification does not capture the "whole" of subjectivity, in turn producing lack and desire, yet the subject's belief that something is "lost" is nothing but the retroactive

presupposition that *something* must have caused the subject's desire. Indeed, this positing of

some object that will alleviate lack is the subject's way of avoiding confronting the anxiety

associated with its intrinsic groundlessness. In this sense, object *a* is the cause of the subject's

desire, although it is not an empirically-existing "object," and does not directly appear in

discourse. "We know nothing about this object, except that it is the cause of desire, that is to say

that strictly speaking it manifests itself as a want-to-be" (Lacan 2007: 151). Numerous objects

can temporarily fill this role – such as money – yet lack always resurfaces, and the search for

another object continues. As Žižek (1997: 178) argues, object *a* "is simultaneously the pure lack,

the void around which the desire turns, and, as such, causes the desire, *and* the imaginary

element which conceals this void, renders it invisible by filling it out." The subject continually

constructs "fantasy" narratives for why the promised "fullness" is never forthcoming.

Prominent master signifiers are often seen as partial manifestations of object *a.* In politics,

terms like "democracy," "justice," and so on can function as object *a* through their ambiguity.

Since "justice" has no intrinsic meaning, it can have multiple meanings without being fixed to a

single one. There is no "essence" behind "justice," even if its adherents feel and believe that

there is. Yet, it is this lack of fixed meaning which allows – or, invites – subjects to identify with

it by "filling in" its lack with their own perceived meaning. In other words, it is the lack in

"justice" that draws in subjects to represent themselves through it. The same process is at work

in our "freedom" example. The subject's continued identification with a discourse touting

"freedom" as that which will bring what seems to be missing actually depends upon "freedom"

not delivering on this promise. Since there is no "essence" to "freedom," subjectivity will

continue to be lacking since the master signifier that defines it is itself lacking. In this sense,

"freedom" is often seen by its adherents as the embodiment of the elusive object *a*, or that which

will "solve" the problems in our politics. As Žižek (1989: 158) argues, the "self-referential movement of the signifier is not that of a closed circle, but an elliptical movement around a certain void. And the *objet petit a*, as the original lost object which coincides with its own loss, is precisely the embodiment of this void." In this sense, the concepts that we often feel as having the richest meaning of a discourse – "justice," "freedom" – points to subjects' own "filling in" of its lack, since it has no natural meaning that enriches it beyond the meanings attributed to it through identification practices.

Master's discourse

$$\frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$$

It is helpful to begin with the Master's discourse, since it is the discourse structure in which the elements seem to most intuitively coincide with their position. Here, the master signifier S_1, in the Agent position, functions as the anchoring signifier for the barrage of secondary signifiers of the system of knowledge S_2 (in the Other position) within which the master signifier draws its power. These are the two most overt aspects of the discourse, as they are above the bar – separating them from the latent elements. The master signifier and system of knowledge constitute the manifest discursive context within which the subject is formed. Below the bar on the Agent's side, in the position of latent Truth, is the divided subject $\$$, and below the bar of the Other is object a in the position of Product. The latent or "hidden" Truth of the Agent is that s/he is a divided subject. Although the master signifier – and the Agent who deeply identifies with it – aims to present itself as fully present, autonomous, and unified, it is in fact a lacking subject just as any other. It is still produced by the desire sparked by lack and its attendant anxieties, even if it purports that it is not. The master ultimately lacks foundation just as every other signifier and subject. For the Other, the "missing" object a is below the bar. This is

because the Other's desire (for the object) is, in effect, denied in the Master's discourse. The Master offers a discourse to the Other that promises the delivery of something that would make the Other "whole." The master signifier, as discussed above, signifies this promise. However, the Master's significations and discourse never fully deliver on the promised "wholeness." The effect is that the Other "keeps hanging on" to the Master's discourse without ever obtaining that which it seeks – the object *a* which is denied to it.

An example of the Master's discourse that Lacan offers is science. We are used to thinking of science as precisely that method that protects against prejudice, political influence, and so on. However, Lacan argues that, as with all discourses, science is often characterized by the power of the Master (Lacan 2007: 149). Even as science purports to be guided by empirical research of the real world, it in effect draws in more of that world into the sphere of master signifiers around which scientific discourse is structured (Bracher 1994: 118). Similar examples are found in politics. We see the Master's discourse at work when a discourse – anchored by a master signifier – becomes an organizing principle for nearly all spheres of society. The "free market" in contemporary American political discourse may be seen as a Master's discourse – many in power attempt to expose all aspects of life to the dominating power of the "free market" S_1, and this is supported by a range of other secondary signifiers S_2 ("competition," "fairness"). Yet, the discourse of markets deny the latent Truth that it is not the "free" system that it purports to be ($\$$), but is rather a system that creates and sustains economic, social, and political inequalities, and thus denies its adherents the fantasies of wealth (*a*) that it nevertheless promises.

Hysteric's discourse

$$\frac{\$}{a} \;\rightarrow\; \frac{S_1}{S_2}$$

In the Hysteric's discourse, each of the constituent elements shift one position clockwise.

Here, the divided subject $ is now in the Agent position, and the master signifier, previously the

guiding element of the Master's discourse, is in the position of Other. The "missing" object *a*

occupies the latent position of Truth (on the Agent's side, under the bar), while knowledge S_2 is

in the Product of the discourse. The Hysteric's discourse is characterized by questioning and

protesting. As the split subject $ takes the force of Agency, this does not mean that a self-

unified, autonomous subject drives the discourse, but rather the subject's "split" itself is the

driving force. The subject is dissatisfied with its position and interrogates ($\rightarrow$) the dominant

master signifiers S_1 with questions. In a sense, the Hysteric is sparked by its lack (its anxieties

and frustrations) to continually ask the master signifier for answers. However, even though the

master signifier acts as the organizing principle for the society's dominant discourses, it is

ultimately empty and devoid of fixed or uncontested content. It is thus unable to offer the

Hysteric the foundational answer that it seeks – the master has no ultimate foundation to offer.

Instead, the master continually offers a stream of knowledge S_2 to try and placate the Hysteric,

but to no avail. The subject remains ignorant that what drives its anxieties is not this or that

problem, but instead its intrinsic groundlessness ($). The subject constructs a fantasy that

attempts to ground its existence and to alleviate its frustrations, which may temporarily succeed,

but lack always re-arises, as fantasies are always structured around master signifiers of some

type (Lacan 2007: 94).

As Alcorn (2002: 86) explains, the Hysteric's discourse "performs an enormously

important social function: It reveals the lack in other discourses." Hysterics point out where the

Master offers no satisfactory answers and what the Master leaves out. As a result, "the subject

himself, the hysteric, is alienated from the master signifier as he whom this signifier divides"

(Lacan 2007: 94). The Hysteric's discourse is thus a valuable counter to the claims of the Master – by constantly interrogating the anchoring position of the master signifier, the Hysteric's discourse calls into question the dominant discourses structured by such signifiers. However, because, "hysterical subjects are not recognized as subjects in the terms offered by the discourse of the master or the university (discussed below), their speech often does not make sense" (Alcorn 2002: 86). Consequently, Hysteric's discourses are often seen as lacking "legitimacy" as grounds upon which discourse can commence.

Analyst's discourse

$$\frac{a}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{\$}{S_1}$$

In the Analyst's discourse each of the elements again shift one position clockwise. Now, object *a* occupies the position of Agent, the split subject $\$$ takes the position of Other, knowledge S_2 in the latent Truth position, and the master signifier S_1 in the product position. If the Master's discourse is characterized by commanding, and the Hysteric's discourse by questioning, the Analyst's discourse is perhaps best characterized as transforming, and potentially revolutionary. The key reason for this is the *a* in the Agent position – that lack itself becomes a force of agency in this discourse. What does this mean? For Lacan, the Analyst's discourse holds the best chance for the subject changing its relationship to lack and desire. The subject's lack – its anxieties, frustrations, and disillusionments – takes center stage here, meaning that the subject actively engages with its lack. Put differently, the subject actively *confronts* its lack – the very act that the Master's and University (discussed below) discourses aim to avoid. However, a master signifier S_1 is in the Product position here. This means that the subject's confrontation with lack ultimately produces another Master's discourse. This may seem paradoxical at first – how can a supposedly "revolutionary" discourse resort back to that which it attempts to counter?

The key here is that this new master signifier is produced by the subject itself, rather than being imposed from outside (Bracher 1994: 124). All subjects must be represented by some master signifier if they are to be part of the Symbolic order. However, if the subject can produce this new anchoring signifier him/herself, then this will likely go some way towards alleviating the alienating aspects of a signifier imposed from outside and adopted unreflectively. In this sense, there is a continual cycling among the different discourses, including the Analyst's and the Master's discourses, rather than a linear progression. "This displacement [among the discourses] never ceases," Lacan (2007: 147) argues, and is "the very condition of analytic discourse." The transforming or revolutionary potential arises from its orientation that is opposed to the certainty and pretense to foundations of the Master's discourse. The Analyst's discourse is opposed to "mastery" (Lacan 2007: 69). In actively negotiating the sources of its frustrations, the subject comes to see that its desire is not for this ideal or that particular image, but is rather ultimately oriented around its lack of foundations. By prompting the subject to face his/her alienation with the current master signifier, the Analyst's discourse configures desire in a manner that stimulates the subject's own production of a new master signifier.

University discourse

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \to \frac{a}{\$}$$

Finally, in the University discourse, each of the elements shifts clockwise one position from the Analyst's discourse. Here, knowledge S_2 occupies the Agent position, object a the Other, the master signifier the latent Truth, and the split subject as the Product. The most notable feature of the University discourse is the place of knowledge S_2, which is the most overt aspect of the discourse. Knowledge interpellates the Other as a, the Product of which is a subject $\$$ split between the knowledge it adopts and that which escapes that system of representation. Although

knowledge has the force of agency here, the University and the Master's discourse share a key commonality – they are both, in effect, controlled by master signifiers. Much of the power of the University discourse stems precisely from the place of "objective" knowledge – knowledge which is seen as unbiased, and apart from the subjectivity of whoever articulates it. Whereas the Master derives its power from the sheer force of authority, the University promotes itself as a discourse of objective knowledge. Yet, Lacan argues that every discourse is supported by the force of master signifiers (here, in the Truth position). The discourse of science, for example, promotes itself as free of perspective, but Lacan sees science as driven by the unquestioned master signifier of more "knowledge" for its own sake, and critical questions about the value of this knowledge are typically "quashed" (Lacan 2007: 105). As Zupančič (2006: 168) notes, the most political aspect of this discourse is precisely that "it disavows its performative dimension; it always presents, for example, that which leads to a political decision, founded on power, as a simple insight into the factual state of things (or public opinion polls, objective reports, and so on)." This discourse is at work when subjects feel that "'the facts compel me,' logical compels me,' or 'rules require the following'" (Alcorn 2002: 83).

It is important to remember that these configurations aim at concisely conceptualizing the complex relationships between subjectivity, signification, and desire. As such, they provide a useful framework to understand and analyze the role of desire in the construction of subjects through discourse. As there are different relationships that can obtain between desire and signification, there are a variety of subjects that different discourses produce through these various positions. Consequently, introducing desire into discourse analysis can aid in more comprehensively grasping the kinds of subjects that texts can produce and the political effects therein.

How can this framework be put to use to understand the dynamics of desire and signification at work in texts? The following sections use Lacan's four discourses as a lens through which to pinpoint the role of desire and discourse at work in a text of classic political theory. Hobbes's *Leviathan* is a text that works to position its readers in particular stances vis-à-vis lack and desire. In this sense, Hobbes's text is perhaps exemplary in its deployment of both the Hysteric's discourse – in positioning fear (or, lack) as the initial driving force of the discourse – then offering a quintessential Master's discourse solution of the Leviathan.

Discourse and Desire in Hobbes's *Leviathan*

Hobbes's *Leviathan* offers pertinent example of how discourse shapes desire for subjectivity in particular directions, facilitating certain types of subjects. *Leviathan* is a rich text that also demonstrates how the four discourses often work in conjunction. Rarely is one discourse found in "pure" form, or found totally divorced from the other discourses that it can often shade into. The key sections of Hobbes's text show how the reader is positioned in shifting ways via shifting discursive structures through Hobbes's argument. As analyzed here, *Leviathan* works to position its receiving subjects through three key discursive moves. It initially hails the subject with a University discourse of "objective" knowledge about the material nature of reality, then positions the subject's lack (here, fear in/of the state of nature) front and center in a Hysteric's discourse, and subsequently offers a Master's discourse as a promise and solution – in the form of the Leviathan itself.

"Matter" and "Motion" as Ontology/System of Knowledge

Hobbes's thoroughly materialist ontology famously forms the basis for his politics. Matter and motion form the foundation for the entire epistemological framework that follows.

Hampsher-Monk (1992: 9) explains that for Hobbes, the "basis and origin of all human knowledge was sensation. The basic and irreducible component of existence for Hobbes was moving matter." As put by Hobbes himself (1991: 15), "when a thing is in motion, it will eternally be in motion, unless somewhat els stay it." Life itself is "but a motion of Limbs" (1991: 9). Indeed, reality is nothing but materiality (1991: 463). Human perception is material experience impinging upon bodily "sense;" for "besides Sense, and Thoughts, and the Trayne of thoughts, the mind of man has no other motion" (1991: 23). This materiality is key for Hobbes's view of human action, community, and political order. He distinguishes between the two types of motion in humans, "vital" (natural processes of breathing, heartbeat, etc.) and "animal" or voluntary (1991: 37-8), yet they are closely related. Voluntary motion can aim to preserve and maintain vital processes, but can also aspire to more social goals of honor and riches (1991:53). Of all of the numerous desires that characterize human life (1991: 70-1), the desire for survival is a general proposition regarding human behavior. The continuation of motion is the ultimate cause of such self-seeking behavior, since without such motion or desire "is to be dead" (1991: 54). Consequently, Hobbes puts "for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death. And the cause of this [is that] . . . he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more" (1991: 70).

The opening twelve chapters of *Leviathan* which lay out this ontological and epistemological scheme are presented by Hobbes as the new scientific study of human behavior. "Science" as defined by Hobbes is the search for consequences, as opposed to causes (1991: 35). As science depends upon the careful and proper defining of terms (Hobbes 1991: 28), the materialist foundation of human behavior is advanced as logically deduced from seemingly

undisputed facts of existence. Reason itself, for Hobbes (1991: 32), "is nothing but *Reckoning* (that is, Adding and Subtracting) of Consequences of general names agreed upon, for the *marking* and *signifying* of our thoughts." Material reality at base is matter and motion, our knowledge of it stems from the logical deductive linking of our significations with their consequences, which mirror links in material nature – this fundamental ontology is presented by Hobbes as neutral analysis of the nature of reality, based on logic and science, apart from political perspective. Much of this presentation fits well with the logic of the University discourse.

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\$}$$

$$\frac{\text{Materiality}}{\text{Order}} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\text{"Scientific" Subject}}$$

The force of "objective" knowledge characterizes the University discourse in the position of Agent. Lacan notes that the University discourse is a particularly modern discourse – with the rise of science and modernity, scientific knowledge, rather than religious or mystical knowledge, came to have power to define truth regimes. Fink (1995: 132) argues that Lacan suggests "a sort of historical movement from the master's discourse to the university discourse, the university discourse providing a sort of legitimation or rationalization of the master's will" (see also Lacan 2007: 104). As a key text of modernity, much of *Leviathan*'s profound influence can perhaps be attributed to its early deployment of a University discourse, hailing its subjects with "scientific knowledge" rather than the sheer force of monarchical authority of a Master's discourse. In these opening chapters of *Leviathan*, Hobbes offers a barrage of signifiers that form the foundation of his system. "Matter," "motion," "science" – these terms form the basis of his

ontology or system of knowledge S_2, and take the force of Agency driving the discourse at this point. The object a, or the lack in the discourse, occupies the position of Other. Although the object a is above the bar, this should not be taken to mean that it is somehow "visible" or overtly represented in the discourse. It is the "lost" object of desire, or lack. Correspondingly, the split subject is the Product of the discourse. Alcorn (2002: 83) explains that in the University discourse, "the reception of knowledge works precisely through the suppression of individualized feeling or desire. In this discourse, the subject says 'the facts compel me,' 'logic compels me,' or, 'the rules require the following.'" "Logic compels me" seems to fit Hobbes's discourse well here. As a discourse based on the science of "matter," "motion" and so on, it is seemingly articulated apart from Hobbes's own subjectivity.

However, another crucial aspect of the University discourse is the position of the master signifier S_1. Recall that Lacan argues that although a discourse may present itself as "objective" or "based on the facts," it nevertheless ultimately supports a master signifier, however latently. Although Hobbes's discourse at this stage purports to offer scientific knowledge S_2 apart from political perspective, it is ultimately made to serve what is dominant signifier of *Leviathan*: political order. The receiving audience here is guided from prefatory discussion of the system of knowledge regarding "matter" and "motion" to the crucial discussion of the conditions under which humans come together to form a political community.

The "State of Nature" as Induction of Fear/Anxiety

Hobbes progresses from the foundations of his system to the conditions for human collective association, which falls under his discussion of the "state of nature." Following from his scientific method, Hobbes views himself as logically deducing the state of pre-government humans from the characteristics he has asserted as natural to them. All humans seek to satisfy

their desires throughout their lives: "the object of man's desire, is not to enjoy once onely, and for one instant of time; but to assure for ever, the way of his future desire" (Hobbes 1991: 70). Power is any means through which humans secure these continual desires. "The Power of a Man (to take it Universally), is his present means, to obtain some future apparent Good" (1991: 62). The desire for power ceases only with death (1991: 70). Moreover, as there is no "*Summam Bonum*" or "highest good" to which humans orient their actions – and given that notions of good and evil are subjective judgments of what we feel to be good or bad for us – it is ultimately the pursuit of desires and power to achieve those desires that drive behavior (1991: 70, 39). As Sabine (1961: 463) explains, the "desire for security, the really fundamental need of human nature, is for all practical purposes inseparable from the desire for power, the present means of obtaining apparent future goods, because every degree of security requires to be still further secured." Yet, it is not the power-laden pursuit of desires alone that leads to the state of nature. Hobbes (1991: 87) notes that since the "difference between man, and man, is not so considerable" both in terms of physical strength and intellect, there is a kind of natural equity to humans. The pursuit of desires amongst humans of natural equality will almost inevitably lead to conflict:

> From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our Ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which neverthelesse they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their End (which is principally their owne conservation, and sometimes their delectation only,) endeavour to destroy, or subdue one an other (Hobbes 1991: 87).

In such a context, and during that time "men live without a common Power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called Warre; and as such a warre, as is of every man, against every man (1991: 88). This, of course, makes "the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short" (1991: 89). Thus, the war of all against all is not primarily caused by scarcity

of resources, but from humans' reasoning abilities. Humans' conflicting desires for the same

objects leads to their calculations of potential social interactions rather than scarcity alone

(Hampsher-Monk 1992: 25).

Guiding the reader (via a University discourse) from basic materials of reality ("matter"

and "motion") to the basic motivations of humans in their "naturall condition" (1991: 86),

Hobbes arguably now positions the reader into a Hysteric's discourse:

$$\frac{\$}{a} \rightarrow \frac{S_1}{S_2}$$

$$\frac{Fear}{a} \rightarrow \frac{Order}{Science}$$

Although Hobbes concedes that the "state of nature" is not accurate history (1991: 90),

the dynamics he describes potentially push the subject into a position where his/her division is

the driving force of the discourse at this point. The fear and anxiety $ generated by the state of

nature sparks the desire for a master signifier S_1 that will bring order to the war of all against all.[9]

The subject in such a context pursues a master signifier that will provide a foundation for the

anxieties and fears that currently manifest themselves as the subject's splitting, acting as the

force of Agent here. Ultimately, it is the subject's lack of foundations (*a*) that drives his/her

divisions and anxieties, even if in the short term the fear of violence and survival is immediate.

Hobbes's rhetoric here is quite illustrative, and points to the type of subject his discourse

positions at this point in order to soon lead to the solution to the problem of order:

> In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain;
> and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that
> may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and

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[9] Sokoloff (2001) argues that anxiety, rather than fear, is the key problem that concerns Hobbes

with the state of nature.

removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all; continuall feare, and danger of violent death" (1991: 89).

Hobbes paints a picture of the state of nature as so dire that one has essentially no choice but accept a politically drastic solution. The subject's fears and anxieties, in other words, take the prominent position of the discourse at this point. The Leviathan, as the guarantor of order, produces a new system of knowledge S_2 that secures the new order and provides the subject with some semblance of grounding, even if this is ultimately impossible (*a*).

The "Leviathan" as a Master's Solution

As the state of nature is so horrific, Hobbes puts as another general proposition that humans desire peace: "all men agree on this, that Peace is Good, and therefore also the way or means of Peace" (1991: 111). Consequently, Hobbes puts forward his first two natural laws. The first is that humans seek peace and that everyone should endeavor to obtain peace, but where this effort fails, there is no constraint on what one may do to defend themselves in order to survive (1991: 92). Second, Hobbes argues that in order for peace to fully obtain, each must be willing to "lay down his right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men, as he would allow other men against himself" (1991: 92). Only by entering into a contract with all others in society may the safety of all be guaranteed.

The crucial dimension of the contract is that it must be instituted through power. As the laws of nature ("as *Justice, Equity, Modesty, Mercy*, and (in summe) *doing unto others, as wee would be done to"*) are contrary to our "natural Passions," the "terrour of some Power" is necessary for them to be observed (1991: 117). Indeed, power is a necessary factor here, since "without the Sword, [covenants] are but Words, and of no strength to secure a man at all" (1991: 117). Without power, the political community cannot come into being and sovereignty cannot be

instituted. The nature of this contract for those who consent is, of course, absolute. It is as if

"every man should say to every man, *I Authorise and give up my right of Governing my selfe, to*

this Man, or to this Assembly of men, on this condition, that thou give up thy Right to him, and

Authorise all his Actions in like manner" (1991: 120). All, through their consent, transfer their

own power over to single ruler or assembly. "Hobbes's idea," Hampsher-Monk (1992: 40)

explains, "is that the public *persona* of the citizen is concentrated in the sovereign so

exhaustively and irrevocably that there is no political agency left for the individual to exercise

and so no source of political conflict."

Indeed, there is perhaps hardly a better example of the Master's discourse:

$$\frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$$

$$\frac{Order}{Fear} \rightarrow \frac{Materiality}{a}$$

The Sovereign becomes the foundation of political order, which is the very definition of the

master signifier S_1. The master signifier offers the Hysterical subject what it was looking for – a

foundation upon which to ground itself, and which to alleviate lack. The foundational signifier –

the signifier of order, in this case – is supplemented by a range of other signifiers S_2 that form the

system of knowledge within which the subject takes its place. Indeed, as Hobbes contends, the

Sovereign itself sets the meanings of words so that contracts and covenants are aptly carried out;

"It belongeth therefore to him that hath Sovereign Power, to be Judge, or constitute all Judges of

Opinions and Doctrines, as a thing necessary to Peace; thereby to prevent Discord and Civill

Warre" (1991: 125). In this sense, the Leviathan is the literal embodiment of the master signifier

founding the Symbolic order. Yet, what is produced (in the position of Product) is not

necessarily the security that the Sovereign promises. Instead, lack itself (*a*) is (re)produced.

Since no one can complain of an injury from the Sovereign since he himself is the author of

Sovereign authority (Hobbes 1991: 124), the security promised by the Sovereign does not

ultimately obtain as it is promised.

Hobbes's Discourse through Lacanian Lenses

What a "four discourses" reading of *Leviathan* offers is a glimpse of how desire works

through discourse. Desire is a key element of discourse, and is that which drives subjects to keep

producing and identifying with discourse in order to obtain an ever-elusive sense of "fullness."

Perhaps at least part of *Leviathan*'s political effects can be attributed not solely to its logical

strategy of argumentation, but rather to how it positions subjects in different discursive

structures, thereby shifting them into varying positions with respect to desire. As Alcorn (2002:

97) argues, discourse is often "effective when it works on the desires that trigger particular

meaning effects" (Alcorn 2002: 97). The value-added of this Lacanian reading of Hobbes can be

briefly compared and contrasted to Ernesto Laclau's Lacanian-inspired reading of *Leviathan*.

What the four discourses add is precisely this focus on how the discourse of the text may induce

different political effects based on the different structures channeling desire.[10]

Laclau, in an essay exploring the role of empty signifiers in politics, uses Hobbes's state of

nature to demonstrate the organizing power of words within the politics of discursive hegemony:

> Let us consider the extreme situation of a radical disorganization of the social fabric. In
> such conditions – which are not far away from Hobbes's state of nature – people need *an*
> order, and the actual content of it becomes a secondary consideration. 'Order' as such has
> no content, because it only exists in the various forms in which it is actually realized, but in
> a situation of radical disorder 'order' is present as that which is absent; it becomes an

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[10] For recent Lacanian reading of *Leviathan* within the context of International Relations theory,

see Epstein (2013).

empty signifier, as the signifier of that absence. In this sense, various political forces can compete in their efforts to present their particular objectives as those which carry out the filling of that lack. To hegemonize something is exactly to carry out this filling function (Laclau 1996: 44).

Laclau points out here the power of the discourse of *Leviathan*, rather than the persuasiveness of its logical argumentation. "Order" as a signifier has no intrinsic meaning; rather, its meaning is only generated relationally via its difference to other signifiers in the symbolic system. The "need" for a foundational signifier is primary argues Laclau, yet the content and actual organization of that order is secondary. Yet, what Laclau neglects here is what this chapter tries to draw out. That is, desire plays a key role in the "need" that Laclau asserts. Unfolding this "need" is in fact necessary to more comprehensively understand the very political dynamics that Laclau wishes to elaborate. "Need" is better understood as desire for "fullness" in the Lacanian sense. As *Leviathan* progresses through its key stages of argumentation, its discourse channels desire in particular ways via specific discursive configurations. In doing so, it produces desiring subjects as its political effects. It is not only that the particular content of "order" is secondary to the institution of the founding signifier itself. "Order" obtains the political power that it does because of the effects of desire driving the fantasy of stability and wholeness.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that incorporating the psychoanalytic notion of desire can be a fruitful step for more comprehensively understand the potential socio-political effects of texts and their interpretations. A Lacanian method of interpretation that centers on desire does not attempt to "uncover" "the meaning" of a text, but rather views texts as discourses that produce social reality. Such a method attempts to discern the intricate workings of desire and subject formation within texts. For Lacan, different discursive structures (Master's, Hysteric's,

Analyst's, University) position the subject in relation to desire in various ways. The different positions that desire can take in relation to subjectivity ($\$$), master signifiers (S_1), systems of knowledge/belief (S_2), and lack (*a*) produce discursive configurations that can generate notable political effects.

This chapter is not, of course, the only Lacanian reading of *Leviathan* that is possible, and certainly not the only possible reading drawing upon psychoanalytic theory more broadly. However, this chapter is – like every text – a discourse, and as such positions an audience in particular ways. In this sense, the discourse of this chapter approaches the Analyst's discourse.

$$\frac{a}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{\$}{S_1}$$

One of the aims of the chapter is to try and disturb existing notions of interpretation and to thus induce some uncertainty ($\$$) in order to persuade scholars of political theory interested in issues of interpretation to begin to pay attention to the role of desire (S_1) in interpretation. In this sense, "desire" is perhaps the key master signifier underpinning this discourse. Implicitly, the present author's assumed knowledge (S_2) of Lacanian theory has served as a latent "foundation" for this chapter's discourse, even if this "foundation" is not really a foundation at all – as Lacan's vast corpus is open to multiple interpretations, this multivocity is useful in stimulating new ways of understanding the multifaceted dynamics of historical texts such as *Leviathan*.

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