

Book Review: *Breaking Through Schizophrenia: Lacan and Hegel for Talk Therapy.* Wilfried ver Eecke

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This work is a collection of essays that all focus on a common theme: the treatment of schizophrenia. There are several critical secondary works and edited volumes on the subject of psychosis: *The subject of psychosis: a Lacanian perspective* by Vanheule Stijn, and *What is Madness* by Darian Leader. Eecke's work is, thus, an essential part of an ongoing conversation regarding post-Freudian therapeutic approaches to mental health in the Anglophone world. Wilfried Ver Eecke is a prolific scholar who has written much on Lacanian psychoanalysis, notably on the integration of psychoanalysis with philosophy to help those who have a mental illness.

Too often, when approaching Lacan from an interdisciplinary angle, we end up taking 'Lacan the philosopher' as the leading dialogue partner for our respective disciplines. And this is part of a problem in modern Lacanian studies—especially in the Anglophone world—of a clinical Lacan / philosophical Lacan binary. Add to this

the general distaste for continental philosophy in the Anglophone academy, and we can see why Lacan is met with so many raised eyebrows.

Eecke's work is an important remedy for this phenomenon. Rather than examining the philosophical value of the Lacanian clinic for philosophers—as we see in major works from Slavoj Žižek to Lorenzo Chiesa—Eecke inverts this approach. The subtitle of the book is *Lacan and Hegel for Talk Therapy*. This work differs from other interdisciplinary approaches by exploring the therapeutic value of continental philosophy for the clinic in a way that is clear, engaging and unpretentious. In this respect, Eecke follows Ian Parker, who brings out the revolutionary dialectical materialist underpinnings of Lacan's clinical treatment.

This work is essential for two main reasons: it outlines the main theoretical arguments surrounding Lacan's understanding of psychosis, and it explores vital literature regarding this. In part 1, Eecke argues that mental illness is not reducible solely to genetic determination and is instead attributable to a deficiency in the psychosocial and linguistic development of the human being; part 2 looks at the similarity of Hegel to Lacan with a focus on the Master / Slave dialectic; part 3 develops further that schizophrenia is a result of an inability to create metaphors, and part 4 uses Lacan's theory of the paternal metaphor to explore further the case of Judge Schreber; finally, Part 5 examines in a Lacanian framework, three different therapeutic approaches to treating schizophrenia; Bertram Karon, Palle Vilemoes and Gary Prouty.

His discussion of Palle Vilemoes' work with those suffering of psychosis is particularly salient, as he argues that the task at hand is to strengthen the psychotics relationship to language. However, Eecke is clear to say that psychosis is not just about a failure concerning the symbolic, but also a damaged relationship to the Imaginary; not just about law and language, but also the child's early experiences of their own body. Throughout the work, Eecke brings us back to the heuristic value of the Imaginary, Symbolic and Real as a way of exploring the advent of psychosis as grounded in questions of desire and its relationship to the body, the Other and language.

A fascinating section concerns Eecke's comparison of phenomenology and the failure to undergo symbolic castration. He argues that to experience the world, then a myriad of cognitive processes have to be suppressed into the background of our perception. Eecke argues that people who suffer from schizophrenia lack this ability to engage in 'passive synthesis' due to the inability to create a primary metaphor through which suppression can take place. This is fascinating as sometimes phenomenology, as a resource for Lacanians, can sometimes be viewed with suspicion, what with it having overtones of the Imaginary register.

Lacan's understanding of psychosis suffered from gendered Freudian assumptions that can end up placing the blame on the role of the Mother. Eecke takes to task these assumptions by suggesting that the rejection of the paternal metaphor is due to all parties involved, and in so doing brings out nuances in Lacan's work that addresses off-putting themes to those approaching it for the first time.

This is an excellent book for anyone interested in Lacan and philosophy, or for those who wish to explore literature on the treatment of psychosis in the clinic. The language is clear and engaging without being generic. Highly recommended.