

Psychic Speech, “Unaware Lack”, and Educational Discourses

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This paper explores my sense of psychic speech, informed by the works of Lacan, Taubman, and those of other scholars. While being “the unaware lack” in oneself that is ineluctable and transferential, this psychic speech informed by the ideas of psychoanalysis and education focuses on a simultaneity of two aspects: **first**, derived from the chain of signifiers, psychic speech manifests as recurring patterns in one’s life, embedded in one’s unconscious thoughts and desires and compulsively repressed by the conscious; **second**, this psychic speech recognizes the existence of surplus, emphasizing “the object” within the subject, both as one’s most primitive internality as first cause and a remainder of the symbolic demand upon oneself yielded during the process. I then summarize the two aspects of psychic speech as “remote resonance” and “generative filters” and argue that the two aspects may disrupt educational discourses. Locating oneself along one’s chain of signifiers and within the surplus that is the kernel in oneself, my sense of psychic speech allows self to move endlessly toward transcendence.

Keywords: psychic speech, unconscious, repetition, surplus and transcendence

My Teaching Story--The Unconscious and the Disavowal Knowledge

A while ago, I worked as a university lecturer teaching public required courses in a Chinese university. I adopted bilingual teaching for the course entitled *Fundamental Knowledge of Chinese Law*. This teaching experience allowed me to reconsider teaching and learning and my role as a university teacher. Bilingual teaching at that time in China seemed innovative because of the use of another language in teaching Chinese law. As I spent all of my efforts and time on teaching and was teaching with passion (I believe that I was not indoctrinating), surprisingly, I obtained different feedback from my students for my teaching: some were listening attentively while some of them might not have been very focused or seemed indifferent to what I said in class; some students were interested in content of the subject while some were bothered by the difficulty encountered in their learning; some wanted to do something more related to their careers such as their specialization learning while some considered the class as an opportunity to learn both English and law. However, I did not take students’ response seriously. I have kept repeating the way that I thought as ideal way of teaching” during my teaching career. I had always hoped that my student can embrace the knowledge I taught, and shared with me what they had learned from my class.

Many years later, as I recalled that experience, I began to ask myself: Are these the reasons as shown above that students do not always learn what we teach? Why is certain knowledge (conceived as discourse sometimes) being taught, however

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producing different, unexpected outcomes? Taubman (2011) offers an answer: "Students interpret, accept, resist, or ignore in a hundred different ways unique to each of them what the teacher says and offers. That which is taught is never synonymous with what is learned, unless what is taught is exactly that which can be reproduced, in which case we have two machines, both transmitting and receiving" (p. 25). The knowledge taught by teachers is "filtered" by various students—each of them has their own way of interpreting and understanding knowledge. How can we have access to "the inner operation of students"? How can we know the effects of the knowledge taught by teachers as time goes by? "Furthermore," as argued by Taubman (2011), "on some level teachers know that while they might "touch" that one life, "save" that one mind, or "reach" that one student, the effects they have dissolve into the complicated lives those students lead" (Taubman, 2011, p. 25). The dissolving effect seems to be only approached contingently, that is, one knows one gets informed by certain knowledge on certain occasions; however may fail to explain why and when it can happen.

Teaching is a magical work. Can we control its outcomes or predict success? "[a] teacher can teach exactly the same thing in the same way in two different classes and have totally different results" (Taubman, 2011, p. 24). For Taubman (2011), it is "the idiosyncratic subjectivities of student" (p. 23) that predicts effect. For my case, the bilingual teaching that I have considered to be innovative and meaningful, may seem "boring" or "irrelevant" to some students. As stated by Taubman (2011), "what the teacher considers to have been a fantastic class the students may have found boring, and vice versa" (p. 24). How can the teacher and student find a common ground on which they can stand together? Derived from the above story, what can we learn?

Unconscious and the Disavowal Knowledge

To further analyze my teaching experience, I may need to begin with the concept of the unconscious. The unconscious is about "the otherness in thinking" (Taubman, 2011, p. 23). Felman (1997) writes that "the unconscious ... is precisely the discovery that human discourse can by definition never be entirely in agreement with itself, entirely identical to its knowledge of itself, since as the vehicle of unconscious knowledge, it is constitutively the material locus of a signifying difference within itself" (p. 24). For her, the unconscious is the constitutive material locus that breeds a signifying difference and disrupts any "possibility of totalizing what is known or of eradicating one's own ignorance" (p. 25). As "the radical otherness within knowledge" (p. 21), Taubman (2011) argues that:

"the unconscious not only de-centers us, subverts our sense of ourselves as masters in our own house but also, because it remains outside our rational comprehension of the world and always threatens to disrupt that comprehension, it bores a hole from within that comprehension, exposing its precariousness and incompleteness" (p. 21).

Self is then no longer being in "the unity which he had always considered it to be, as though there were something else in him that could confront that self" (Freud, 1926, p. 188, cited in Taubman. p. 21). The "something else" is the unconscious,

from which the subject emerges. For Lacan, the unconscious is about “thinking elsewhere” (Taubman, 2011, p. 164), structured as language in which Big Other insists in and exists. The Big Other involves social relations, conventions, laws, rules, what parents convey through language their desires, and the unconscious (Taubman, 2011). “In that sense,” Taubman (2011) argues that, “the unconscious is both within and without” (p. 164). As explained by Taubman (2011), “...we are composed of two agencies—the ego and the unconscious, which Lacan seems, most of the time, to equate with the subject” (p. 168). The human subject is always split between a conscious side, a mind that is accessible, and an unconscious side, an assemblage of drives and forces which remain inaccessible (Taubman, 2011). It is the subject in its division. The ego, as posited by Taubman (2011), is not synonymous with subject; “The unconscious is the unknown subject of the ego and misrecognized by the ego” (Lacan, 1988, p. 43). We are the split subject between our conscious and the unconscious. Our unconscious must emerge from the other side of ourselves. Lacan attends to these unknowns, giving partial access to these othered aspects of reality (Wiebe, 2016).

The knowledge of and from the unconscious is, for Taubman, called “disavowal knowledge.” According to Taubman (2011), this knowledge challenges approaches in teacher education and teaching because it disrupts the assumption of “the simple induction of students into conventions, culture, and social ideals” (p. 22). For him, disavowal knowledge--the knowledge of and from the unconscious--allows us to understand the unpredictable nature of teaching and learning. Without acknowledging the unconscious, education has been caught in a vicious cycle (Taubman, 2011). This cycle, as argued by him, is a “repetition compulsion that results, in part, from a failure of memory” (p. 8). When we repress and ignore the knowledge of and from the unconscious, we engage ourselves to repeat compulsively the very effort that keeps us stuck.

Simultaneously, he envisions a pedagogy that endorses the unpredictable and spontaneous that can respect and understand our own desires and those of each student, while recognizing and cherishing the uniqueness of each student. For Taubman, this particular pedagogy needs to consider both teacher and students’ subjectivity: “We want to advocate for particular pedagogical practices, but we resist turning them into recipes that ignore teachers’ and students’ subjectivities, particularly the vicissitudes of the unconscious” (Taubman, 2011, p. 7).

This split between the conscious and unconscious might be analogous to the division between night and day. Knowledge of and from the unconscious disrupts our current educational discourses, truncating “the aspiration to create the smoothly functioning machines with which current educational discourses are so enamored” (Taubman, 2011, p. 23). To transform society through democratic education or teaching social justice may require the consideration of disavowal knowledge (Taubman, 2011). Thus, for Taubman (2011), psychoanalysis stresses “the otherness in thinking” (p. 23), quoting Roudinesco (2001), a new interpretive models created by one’s thought, which can avoid “linear sequential thinking and experimentally testable hypotheses” (p. 23).

The Concept of Psychic Speech

Drawing on the psychoanalytic concepts from Lacan, the concept of disavowal knowledge from Taubman, and other scholarly works, I propose the psychoanalytic concept of psychic speech to understand teaching and learning, emphasizing a synthesis of certain aspects of the unconscious at the core. While being “the unaware lack” in oneself that is ineluctable and transferential, this psychic speech informed by the ideas of psychoanalysis and education focuses on a simultaneity of two aspects: **first**, derived from the chain of signifiers, psychic speech manifests as recurring patterns in one’s life, embedded in one’s unconscious thoughts and desires and compulsively repressed by the conscious; **second**, this psychic speech recognizes the existence of surplus, emphasizing “the object” within the subject, both as one’s most primitive internality as first cause and a remainder of the symbolic demand upon oneself yielded during the process. As “the stranger” in oneself, psychic speech goes beyond the rational appeal, connecting to a remote prototypical meaning, lack of articulation and expression. It addresses the absence, unaware otherness, a felt lack in oneself.

This psychic speech emphasizes a simultaneity of three aspects: **first**, it manifests as recurring patterns in one’s life, embedded in one’s unconscious thoughts and desires. The recurring pattern or repetition, is derived from the chain of signifiers (in)formed by the subject’s lack. Lacan (2002) defines the signifying chain as an association and combination of signifiers, coupled in diverse ways, “like the links by which a necklace firmly hooks onto a link another necklace made of links” (p. 145). This signifying chain is “a lived journey” of connection. The chain grips its course moving beneath events, moments, memories, from past to future, from fantasy to symptom and it (the chain of signifiers) affords experiences, a rhizomatous structure of experiences which are layered, mediated, and regenerated throughout one’s life in a particular way. For me, the recurring pattern informed by signifier (or desires) resembles “remote resonance,” as this pattern is detached from the signified and not directly deductible from the signified. Such “a remote resonance” transports itself in accordance with the principal of “belongingness,” through the work of attunement. According to Wang (2020), being attuned means one feels tangled, related. Though complicated and detoured, the recurring patterns always points to a foundation source in oneself, in which one moves through various webs that are interlaced, superimposed, endlessly moving toward an ultimate telos (or non-telos). Gliding under a chain of signifiers, the subject is pinpointed by way of detouring relativism through attunement. For me, this repetition has the great potential to transform, to transcend, as I will discuss in the following section. Hence, psychic speech is manifested through a language of repetition that stands as unintelligible and inaccessible to us.

Second, this psychic speech recognizes the existence of surplus. In this paper, surplus instead of one’s material life is the ontology of psychic life, emphasizing the object within the subject. For Lacan (2002), it is a remainder of the symbolic demand. It is the “hard kernel,” according to Žižek (1993), “which resists any process of modelling, simulation or metaphorization” (p. 44). This hard kernel, Grace (2022) argues, exists “as surplus to the model” (p. 82), independent of the rationality of the

model. For Lacan, this hard kernel is *objet a*, what he conceives as the “root” in the structure of human subjectivity. This *objet a*, a remnant of jouissance that is surplus, is “not contained within the divided subject’s coordinates of ‘reality,’ yet functions as the cause of ‘desire.’” (Grace, 2022, p. 82)

Kordela (2007) argues that this surplus is differential (non)substance. Drawing on Spinoza’s thesis of one substance that capacitates both the universal form and particular instances, Kordela (2007) maintains that this substance is surplus, “a differential (non)substance” (p. 605). It is “non-entity, or non-substance,” Grace (2022) notes, “a third term authorizing the possibility of both the universal and the particular” (p. 85). For Kordela (2007), differential non-substance (surplus) are “both values and physical beings because its attributes are value and sensation” (p. 678). Surplus, or Being, “is the immanent cause of all that exists” (Kordela, 2007, p. 627). Quoting Grace (2022), “In this way, Kordela states that Being (surplus) is the first cause...as the one differential (non)-substance, it is the secular replacement of God, following Spinoza” (p. 85). Thus, it is, not derived from experience, but as given and inherent part of oneself, it partakes in one’s dynamic formation. This substance might be similar to passionate attachment (Butler, 1997) and pure knowing in Chinese culture, as I will explicate more in the following.

However, “Lacan’s focus seems to be on surplus solely in its form as remainder” (Grace, 2022, p. 84). Such a remainder is drawn from a process, “which is fundamentally enabling (or disabling)” (p. 84). For Lacan, that *objet a* is an effect of discourse, a product of a certain social history that remains intelligible to rationality; however, he does not assume any differential substance or non-substance (Grace, 2022). Surplus “thwarts” at every turn in one’s life.

Thus, in this paper, the surplus exists as an immanent cause that enables or disables, as well as a result of non clean-cut as remainder in Lacan’s sense. My sense of surplus is twofold: first, it is one’s most primitive internality as first cause; second, it is a remainder of the symbolic demand upon oneself yielded during the process, at the same time an effect of one’s most primitive internality. For Lacan, remainder is an effect of discourse, I would argue that remainder in Lacan’s sense is also an effect of one’s primitive internality. The remainder is the effect of how the first cause contextualizes and personifies in oneself, an intersection of one’s internality and the external particulars. The first cause derives its effect in the process of particularization in oneself as one moves through many turning points of life. Compared to Lacan’s sense of remainder, my sense of surplus (remainder) tends to emphasize more the primitive internality, which manifests as unconscious intuitive knowledge or understanding (for example, moral knowledge). In the next section, I will associate this remainder with the Chinese concept of pure knowing to illustrate one possible form of remainder. For me, this pure knowing is akin to what Butler (1997) refers to as passionate attachment. Both of them attend to certain feeling and knowledge, prior to conscious knowledge.

In my sense of psychic speech, this surplus can be conceived as one’s unconscious generative filters. This unconscious generative filter remains hidden or detached to our rationality, existing as unapproachable and inaccessible realm in oneself. It is the immaterial materiality in oneself and it ultimately pertains to, and is determined by, one’s internality.

To sum up, integrating in a particular way the influences of discourses, social and cultural norms mediated through levels of self, and family and school, my sense of psychic speech constitutes one's unique psychic ontology. It is similar to awakening inwardness, discussed by Wang (2020). Psychic speech remains unarticulated, unrecognized, and unstructured. Compared to disavowal knowledge discussed by Taubman (2011), it adds an element of witness system in oneself, functioning all the time without being noticed, while being informed and mediated by one's experience. Psychic speech is one's unconscious system that filters, selects, denies and accepts. However, it may come to conscious as one knows more of self, and explore more of self, possibly through the method of *currere*—writing autobiographically (Pinar, 1975, 2011).

How will this psychic speech have impact on students and teaching? There are two characteristics of psychic speech that may disrupt the educational discourses: "remote resonance" and "generative filters" metaphorically. Through the work of attunement, the remote resonance conveys "messages" in accordance with the principal of "belongingness," which is being superimposed and merged between the existing and the emerging. It follows the signifying trail, emphasizing "irrationality," a non-meaning, a unique "logic" of one's psychic ontology. Also, it is certain consistency governed by one's desire. However, psychic speech may be latent, not knowable to oneself if without exploration. Moreover, it is a generative filter as well, a remainder of the symbolic demand as well as the immaterial materiality in oneself, a latent sense of self (unaware by oneself) that is open to transcendence, open for the real to break in. It ultimately pertains to one's internality. In the following, I will further illustrate how this psychic speech interferes with the discourses.

Why does Education Discourse (interpellation) Fail?

In my story, seemingly, my students were not sitting and waiting to be "taught." Why did the educational discourse not work? Did I as a teacher resist knowing their students? How can teachers understand their students in a deeper and better way?

According to Dolar (1993), these are the two entities not covered by the mechanism of interpellation: "the symbolic subject (the one not based on recognition, the empty space that Lacan marks \$) gliding under the chain of signifiers and the objectal surplus (*objet a*)" (p. 91). The signifying chain interrupts the discourse, and *objet a* both as a cause and effect (in the process of operation) partakes in the interruption as well. Both of them constitute one's particularity. In what follows, based on Dolar (1993), I will further illustrate how my concept of psychic speech both as "remote resonance" and "generative filters" contribute to understanding the failure of interpellation. However, my understanding of surplus as "generative filter" is different from that of Dolar and Lacan.

First, Unconscious, Subjectivity, and Repetition

Murillo (2018) asks the question: “Can the discourse of structural macro categories of the social and the economic effectively and sustainably interpellates the individual subject?” (p. 17) Can educational discourses sustainably interpellate students, and mold their identity? For Rose (1983), resistance to identity lies at the heart of psychic life and the unconscious reveals its failure:

“[F]ailure” is something endlessly repeated and relived moment by moment throughout our individual histories. It appears not only in the symptoms, but also in dreams, in slips of the tongue and in forms of sexual pleasure which are pushed to the sidelines of the norms. Feminism’s affinity with psychoanalysis rests above all ... with this recognition that there is a resistance to identity which lies at the very heart of psychic life. ... (p. 9).

Thus, discourse always fails due to the unconscious (Rose, 1983). According to Taubman (2011), the knowledge from the unconscious reveals to us “what we do not know, how we are always already implicated in what we do know and what we resist knowing” (p. 23). Such knowledge helps understand why and how we resist knowing and what we do not know through examining the unconscious. Lacan articulates the unconscious as a “thinking” unconscious which, similar to Freud, has the power to penetrate through our daily use of language, as a parallel process in which our speaking and “unconscious thought” move with one another (Ryan, 2022, p. 131). Discourses derive their effects from the unconscious (Lacan, 2006, p. 701). And the unconscious exists as “quasi-mathematical inscriptions... [that] don’t mean anything” (Fink, 1996, p. 21). To approach the unconscious, the work of the analyst is to unravel the mathematical structure at work in one’s unconscious and bring the analysand to one’s own truth, which is completely different than meaning (Ryan, 2022). As Fink (1996) denotes,

The unconscious is not something one knows, but rather something that is known. What is unconscious is known unbeknownst to the “person” in question: it is not something one “actively,” consciously grasps, but rather something which is “passively” registered, inscribed, or counted. And this unknown knowledge is locked into the connection between signifiers; it consists in this very connection. This kind of knowledge has no subject, nor does it need one. (p. 15)

According to Lacan (2006), the signifier “represents a subject for another signifier” (S11, p. 207), and it always refers another signifier and is without any referent. Thus, every signifier “comes from cancelling which is so essential” (Lacan, 2017, Seminar V, p. 10), however forming a signifying chain that always loses its trace. The subject dwells in such a signifying chain:

The subject is nothing other than what slides in a chain of signifiers, whether he knows which signifier he is the effect of or not. That effect – the subject – is the intermediary effect between what characterizes a signifier and another signifier, namely, the fact that each of them, each of them is an element. We know of no other basis by which the One may have been introduced into the world if not by the *signifier as such, that is, the*

signifier insofar as we learn to separate it from its meaning effects" (Lacan, 1998, Seminar XX, p. 49-50).

For Lacan (2002), the primacy of signifier was what marks the uniqueness of the human and differentiated itself from language for it does not indicate the simple conveyance of meanings or for the purpose of communication. More exactly, "the signifier, irrelevant of meaning, void of fixed signified or referent, refers to the integral incompleteness or the lack that accounts for the subject" (AHRC, online). Thus, is the subject being constituted by the chain of the signifier that is only accessible when it is being "uttered" in its own way? In this structural analysis of the signifying chain, instead of focusing on the substance or result of the connections between signifiers, Lacan tends to be more interested in the very connections that run through themselves (Ryan, 2022). The signifying chain produces metonymic meaning that "insist in the movement from one signifier to another" (Evans, 1996, p. 190). As argued by Lacan (2006), "the unconscious becomes a chain of signifiers that repeats and insist somewhere, interfering in the cuts offered by actual discourse and the cognition it informs" (p. 799). Freud reminds us that the unconscious, which are not that different from dream work, presents themselves through metonymy, metaphor and displacement (Murillo, 2018).

The signifying chain exists metonymically, transcending the perceivable and the rational. While the signifying chain is not directly deductible (but deeply related) to experiences (signifier chain affords experiences and optimizes experiences), it "corresponds to" one's experiences—a rhizomatous structure of experience which is layered, mediated, and regenerated throughout one's life in a particular way.

One's subjectivity is accessed through the signifying chain (Lacan, 1998). "In analytic practice, mapping the subject in relation to reality, such as it is supposed to constitute us, and not in relation to the signifier, amounts to falling already into the degradation of the psychological constitution of the subject" (Lacan, 1998, Seminar XI, p.142). Psychoanalysis helps understand the specificity characterized by the signifying chain and a subject in psychoanalysis lies in one's specificity related to one's experiences and its particular meaning the subject has rendered to. Thus, one's particularity is revealed, possibly, through the repressed signifiers in the unconscious. The possibility for understanding repressed signifiers begins with "these momentary flashes of signification, and the acceptance of responsibility for that which interrupts" (Ryan, 2022, p. 135). During this process of signification, the subject comes to emerge at the intersection of both personal and social.

Thus, for Butler (1997), the signifying chain is the immaterial condition for one's subjectivity. Milner (1995, cited in AHRC online) adds that the signifying order matures itself as a chain, and every chain possesses the specific marks of its formality. The symbolic nature of the signifier that allows itself to transcend in language rests in a materialism irreducible to an account of raw incipient matter (Milner, 1995, *ibid*). The signifier is not material as part of the symbolic order. For Dolar (1993), "sense and subject did not spring up from materiality but from the Symbolic that regulated it" (p. 91). Subjectivity arises from immateriality. As argued by Butler (1997), "Subjectivity arises immaterially from a material ritual performance, but this can happen only on the condition that a logic precedes and

supports this ritual performance, an immaterial logic, one which encodes and reenacts the idealizing effects of introjection” (p. 126). Quoting Dolar (1993), Butler thus criticizes Althusser for ignoring the dimension of subjectivity that remains radically immaterial, banned “from appearance within materiality” (p. 126). Hence, “The Other who is lost, introjected, who is said to become the immaterial condition of the subject, inaugurates the repetition specific to the symbolic, the punctuated fantasy of a return that never is or could be completed” (Butler, 1997, p. 127). She then notes that according to Dolar, interpellation can only explain the formation of the subject in a partial way with the dimension of immateriality elided. The signifier (the other) is the immaterial condition of the subject. Dolar (1993) thus says, “Althusser covers up this non-materiality by talking about the materiality of institutions and practices” (Dolar, 1993, p. 89). The signifiers are significant elements to the subject’s construction (Ryan, 2022).

The signifying chain creates the pathway for unconscious desire, as illustrated by Lacan (2006): desire only exists at the metonymic referral of one signifier to another. The desire produces a linguistic and symbolic structure, which pervades throughout one’s course of life and insists from somewhere else (Ryan, 2022). For Lacan, the subject ascends from the unconscious desire: “Woven into this desire are complex themes of alienation, lack, separation, and psychosis, but desire, and specifically, desire for the other, lies at the heart of Lacanian subjectivity” (Ryan, 2022, p.136). This unconscious desire locates effect in a myriad of personal and social processes, remaining unreachable to us. However, it is this desire that accounts for the persistence of the subject in his own discourse. With the unconscious desire that is metonymically represented, the subject “aimed at a designated destination, even if it has already reached it a thousand times or (and this may be even more exasperating) even if this destination keeps receding indefinitely” (Ruti, 2012, p. 14, as cited in Ryan, 2022). In this view, we are preoccupied with our desires and destined to “compulsively repeat the traumatic structures in an effort to fulfill our set of unmet desires” (Ryan, 2022, p.139). Thus, unconscious desires (as ratio of signifier according to Lacan) engage us in endless repetition that stands “unintelligible and inaccessible to us” (p.144). This unconscious desire is what enables remote resonance in us, manifested as constant repetition. How can we inhabit in transcendence incurred by repetition?

Thus, the subject repeats again and again. However, how can one transcend if we keep repeating? According to Ryan (2022), the Lacanian understanding of repetition provides openness to transcendence. It happens through the cessation of the symbolic and the eruption of the real (Ryan, 2022). For Lacan, the real is the impossibility beyond the realm of appearance and images, as a boundary that one remains to cross, however never succeed. Can the inquiry of impossibility provide pathway to possible? In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan (1998) approaches the real in terms of compulsion and repetition, “that which always return to the same place” (p. 49). Žižek (1989) associates trauma with the real and argues that the Real is Lacan’s traumatic kernel. The Real denotes an impossible, traumatic kernel of reality that resists full symbolization or representation within the symbolic order of language and culture (Žižek, 1999). The Real cannot be directly perceived or experienced, but rather a gap in our symbolic reality that

unsettles our efforts to understand the world (Zizek, 1989). Thus it resides outside of our conscious awareness, and cannot be manifested as clear understanding. As the fundamental, indescribable, boundary of human existence which makes us feel disoriented, it can only be approached indirectly through the gaps and fissures in the symbolic order, as argued by van Haute and Geyskens (2017). Through the repetition that “opens one to the haunting specter” (Ryan, 2022, p. 148), the Real intrudes into our lives and pushes us to find or see or embrace something new certain not-yet knowledge.

Repetition in symbolic realm allows one to ask fundamental questions that may prompt self-becoming and exploration of access to oneself. For example, one may ask: Why does it always happen to me this way? Can I change this situation and how? Moreover, repetition leads one to witness one’s past experience, which may alter one’s symbolic structure (for example, adding or deleting certain signifiers), which may lead to a reconfiguration. The movie *Everything Everywhere All at Once* might be a manifest example of the impossibility of the real in which the woman can cross the multi-universe and experience a different life in different universe, which is impossible for us who live on the earth. In reality, one may experience the Real as one faces a dilemma that is unavoidable, engaging with the impossible. However, each failure and dilemma leaves us “the unveiled trace,” allowing us to see the world alternatively, pushing us closer to the truth. The concept of “repetition” seems to seek returning to the past, to the original, corresponding to the remote resonance. For Lacan, the transcendence here is “not a lust for something otherworldly, but of allowing repetition to break the symbolic and, through those gaps, allow space for the Real to break-in so we can encounter ourselves again, but differently” (Ryan, 2022, p. 151). This breaking in creates a space, a sensed one, extended one.

Through repetition, one seems to situate in a “far away land” now. This ontology (where one’s subjectivity is situated) is the far away land where one’s fantasy “sprouts”, where the past residue still unfolds, where one dwells between the desired and the undesired, between the existent and the non-existent, between the time and timeless. The ontology is one’s expanding focus, one’s specificity, like a ripple effect that brings about the expanding circles. Therefore, repetition renders us freedom, and transcendence through a “circular avenue.” In the repetitive “return,” each encounters the “moment” at which the finite and the infinite meet, the possibility and impossibility are interwoven, a threshold pointing to a new direction. And one who continually repeats may reach toward transcendence, contingent upon one’s ability to reconstruct one’s subjectivity. As one is able to engage in reflection, one may be able to reconstruct one’s subjectivity. Such reflection means learning from one’s past, one’s mistakes and working toward a goal of future, while understanding one’s ontology of reality, one’s uniqueness, one’s interiority.

Interpellation fails because of the interruption of signifiers (or one’s repressed desire)—under which what the symbolic subject (the one not based on recognition, the empty space that Lacan marks $\$$) glides, the failure of which is experienced through the effect of signifiers, as argued by Dolar (1993). If the interpellation does not coincide with the immaterial logic that surrounds and grounds one’s subjectivity, one which “encodes and reenacts the idealizing effects of introjection” (Butler, 1997, p. 126), interpellation may fail. It is the void subject gliding along the signifying

chain described by Dolar (1993). This void drives the subject to tediously search for what seems to be lacking, for that which can cover the void, but since such a state of full wholeness is impossible, ontologically speaking, the subject is destined to repetitiously seek to belong/identify (Glynos & Stavrakakis, 2008, pp. 260-261).

For the subject, a chain of signifiers “repeats and insists in somewhere” (Lacan, 2006, p. 799). The recurring patterns—the constant pursuit for desire--sustain as “a remote resonance,” in which one moves along various chains of signifiers that are interlaced, superimposed, and endlessly corresponding to an ultimate foundation. Such recurring patterns occur in accordance with the principal of “belongingness” as the repetition points to a certain foundational source—one’s lack, a remote resonance through constant referral of desires. The repetition caused by the lack disrupts the discourse.

Thus, such a repetition presents itself as more truthful reality from which one approaches one’s own reality. For Butler (1997), the psychic domain is “ontologically distinct from the social and is defined as the remainder that the notion of the social cannot take into account” (p. 123). The psychical life is characterized by a multifaceted process of mediation, and we are not the immediate result of social realities (Elliot, 1991, p. 77). In other words, one’s psychic reality is mediated by the chain of signifiers that repeat, which corresponds to the signified in deductible way—that is, a complex process of mediation and repetition. To understand psychic reality “as either biologically or culturally determined” is to become ensnared into “the utopianism of the psyche”—a concept proposed by Rose (Elliot, 1991). She further argues that “If such determinism existed there would be no psychic conflict, no repression, no resistance, no unconscious...” (Elliot, 1991, p. 78). To approach such a psychic reality, we need what Taubman calls the emancipatory approach. As argued by Taubman (2011), as a teacher, we have to consider the idiocracy of students’ subjectivity while we teach.

Psychic speech is thus the “remote resonance” manifested as the recurring patterns in one’s thoughts and behaviors, a non-directly felt existence, and does not express itself directly, mediated by layers of experiences and social influences (conventions and law). It is detoured, latent, manifested as recurring thinking and a behavior pattern. While acknowledging the transcendence character of Lacan’s concept of repetition, my concept of psychic speech, as discussed previously, put much emphasis on repetition as a generative, expanding space—a psychological ontology that contains oscillation, change, and detouring contingency. Such an ontology exceeds what is currently lived and perceived and never excludes attunement, moreness, and transformation.

This repetition may destabilize one’s ego, however it may open an avenue to true self-understanding—self-knowledge. Self-knowledge in this paper is the unconscious inner world, unarticulated, beyond recognition, informed and mediated by one’s experience. It may be opposite to one’s ego. Lacan defines ego as a system that consists of “that set of defenses, of denials, of dams, of inhibitions, of fundamental fantasies which orient and direct the subject” (Lacan, 1988, p. 17). Ego is one’s conscious denial system; yet self-knowledge is one’s unconscious system that filters, selects, denies, and accepts. Self-knowledge can come to the conscious as one

knows more of self, and explores more of self, maybe through the method of *currere* (Pinar, 1975)—writing autobiographically.

Second, Ideological Interpellation, Remainder and Symptom

Beyond the signifying chain that may disrupt discourse negatively, is there anything that interrupts discourse? According to Dolar (1993), it is the remainder (surplus), a concept Dolar inherits from Lacan. In the following, based on Lacan and other scholarly work on surplus (remainder), I will explicate how this surplus fails interpellation.

Surplus (or remainder), for Lacan, is defined “as the leftover, the remnant left behind by the introduction of the symbolic in the real” (Evans, 1996, p. 127). Milner (1995) argues that it falls out of the cut of symbolic castration, however, its formal properties can be inferred from the rationality of the signifier (ARHC online). In the constitution of the subject through its subjection to the signifier, remainder remains. It is the “hard kernel,” according to the Lacanian scholar Žižek (1993), “which resists any process of modelling, simulation or metaphorization” (p. 44). This hard kernel, Grace (2022) argues, exists “as surplus to the model” (p. 82) with its extimate locus: extimacy using Lacan’s neologism. Hence, remainder is both exterior or interior, or neither exterior or interior. As said by Dolar (1993):

The remainder is neither exterior nor interior, but not somewhere else either. It is the point of exteriority in the very kernel of interiority, the point where the innermost touches the outermost, where materiality is the most intimate. It is around this intimate external kernel that subjectivity is constituted. Lacan has, as always, coined a fine word for it: extimacy.

The notion of “extimacy” devised by Lacan (1959-1960) describes “this central place, this intimate exteriority, this extimacy, which is the Thing” (p. 167, as cited in Pavón-Cuéllar, 2014). It is both intimate and exterior. In reality, the extimacy gives meaning and structure to the external thing, as “the navel, the source of the world, as it is for us” (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2014, p. 662). It is “the ‘personal’ interior, origin and horizon of the ‘impersonal’ exterior, the ‘subjective’ beginning and the end of the ‘objective’ environment” (p. 662). It addresses one’s own particularity in response to external contingency. Thus, this extimacy exists as immaterial materiality, going beyond materiality. The structure of extimacy is perfectly expressed in the topology of the torus and of the Möbius Strip (Evans, 1996).

Later, Lacan calls this extimacy an *objet a* (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2014, p. 662), a remnant of jouissance that is surplus and is “not contained within the divided subject’s coordinates of ‘reality,’ yet functions as the cause of ‘desire’” (Grace, 2022, p. 82). For Lacan, this *objet petit a* forms “the nucleus of the fantasm around which desire will be lured” (Boothby, 2013, p. 165). The *objet petit a* is, thus, “the void around which desire circulates, the non-object in the guise of an additional object”. (Žižek, 2019, pp. 253-4). It is not an actual object, but a constitutive lack, “a cut free from the material relation and circulates in the signifying chain” (Boothby, 2013, p. 166). It is the lack that produces the desiring subject “stuck” in the work of signifiers, that

is, it is the unattainable object that *causes* one to desire and as well “harness” the desire in a particular way, which leaves the desiring subject no chance to exit. The *objet petit a* is the void or lack one unconsciously seeks in the hope that the fulfillment of this missing part of oneself will give oneself a sense of completeness. As argued by Žižek (1989), “...the *objet petit a*, as the original lost object which in a way coincides with its own loss, is precisely the embodiment of this void” (p. 178). It is a constant search for the missing object. For Lacan, the subject (\$) —the ‘barred’, empty subject) and the object-cause of its desire (the leftover which embodies the lack that ‘is’ the subject) closely relate to each other. In Lacan’s words, “The world of our experience, the Freudian world, assumes that it is this object, *das Ding*, as the absolute Other of the subject, that one is supposed to find again. It is to be found at the most as something missed. One doesn’t find it, but only its pleasurable associations” (Lacan, 1992, p. 52). Dolar (1993) also calls us to think of the lack in the subject as a remainder produced by the cut of the signifier. As he stated, it is “the remainder produced by the subjectivation” (p. 77).

While associating with Lacan’s idea of remainder, both Dolar and Butler critique Althusser’s conception of interpellation. Butler (1997) points out that, for Lacan, identity can never be fully grasped by the symbolic due to “the incommensurability between symbolic demand (the name that is interpellated) and the instability and unpredictability of its appropriation” (p. 96). As argued by Dolar (1991), ideological interpellation never completes the clean cut and always produces a remainder. For Dolar (1993), Althusser’s account of interpellation fails to consider the remainder produced in the operation, “the nonsensical materiality that exists for the subject as the limit of sense” (p. 91). In this operation process, Dolar (1993) writes, “there is a part of the individual that cannot successfully pass into the subject, an element of ‘pre-ideological’ and ‘presubjective’ *materia prima* that comes to haunt subjectivity once it is constituted as such” (p. 77). Butler (1997) explains:

In fact, this “*materia prima*” never *materializes* in the Althusserian sense, never emerges as a practice, a ritual, or a social relation; from the point of view of the social, the “*materia prima*” is radically *immaterial* (p. 120).

This *materia prima* is remainder and such a remainder is delivered by the desire of the Other, a residue that is barred from appearance (Butler, 1997). Butler (1997) then notes that according to Dolar, interpellation can only explain the formation of the subject in a partial way with the dimension of immateriality elided. For Dolar (1993), it is “the part of the ‘individual’ that could not be subjectified, the object within the subject” (p. 88). It is the remainder of the real in oneself. To illustrate, Dolar uses the example of love: “...there is remainder involved in the mechanism of interpellation, the left-over of the clean cut, and...this remainder can be pinpointed in the experience of love” (p. 85). She views the concept of love as being beyond interpellation because it occurs outside the materiality of ritual or law. As argued by Butler (1997), “Love is beyond interpellation precisely because it is understood to be compelled by an immaterial law—the symbolic—over and above the ritualistic laws that govern the various practices of love” (p. 127). Compared to social forms of love, for Butler, the passionate attachment to existence tends to be more eternal, which she terms as pre-conscience. Butler (1997) maintains that Dolar’s explanation

leaves “unexplained the passion that precedes and forms conscience, that precedes and forms the possibility of love, one that accounts for the failure of interpellation fully to constitute the subject it names” (p.129). For Butler (1997), it is the passionate attachment to existence that fails interpellation: “If conscience is one form that the passionate attachment to existence takes, then the failure of interpellation is to be found precisely in the passionate attachment that also allows it to work” (p. 129). Thus she argues that “Interpellation is ‘barred’ from success...by its inability to determine the constitutive field of the human” (p. 129). In other words, the remainder for Butler is produced due to the unique constitutive field of the human, which is beyond interpellation, beyond its ability to determine—something that is called pre-conscience.

This remainder (or surplus) is “the non-phenomenal ‘kernel of interiority’” (Butler, 1997, p. 122). She further interprets that, “In Dolar the ideality of this kernel of interiority sets the limit to both materialization and subjectivation; it constitutes the constitutive lack or the non-symbolizable Real” (p. 122-123). This remainder is non-material, for it never emerges as a ritual or practice from the point view of the social (Butler, 1997); simultaneously it is material as “the nonsensical materiality” as the limit of one’s sense, as argued by Dolar (1993). A lack in the subject as a remainder produced by the cut of the signifier does not produce “the flawless interiority of an autonomous subject” (Dolar, 1993, p. 77). Manifested as symptom as well as excess, the very flaw in the interior is the subject (Dolar, 1993).

However, for Butler, remainder seems to be also related to one’s innermost quality or traits—one’s passionate attachment to existence. Butler’s sense of remainder seems to stress a primitive entity in oneself, being similar to “pure knowing” in Chinese culture. In Chinese philosophical thought, pure knowing (*liang zhi*) means innate knowledge, or intuitive moral knowledge. This concept comes from Mencius who believed that it is impossible for a person to lack sympathy. For him, “if one is without the feeling of sympathy, one is not human” (Mencius, 1A:6). As Wang Yangming (1992) argues, “pure knowing is just the emotions of approval and disapproval; approval and disapproval is just like and dislike” (p. 111). Thus, pure knowing inherently exists in people’s minds. It is moral awareness and arises naturally.

For me, Butler’s sense of remainder seems to be akin to the concept of surplus proposed by Kordela (2007). Drawing on Spinoza’s thesis of one substance that capacitates both the universal form and particular instances, Kordela (2007) argues that this substance is surplus, “a differential (non)substance” (p. 605). This differential (non)substance contended by Kordela, is “non-entity, or non-substance, a third term authorizing the possibility of both the universal and the particular” (Grace, 2022, p. 85). For Kordela (2007), differential non-substance (surplus) are “both values and physical beings because its attributes are value and sensation” (p. 678). Surplus, or Being, for her, “is the immanent cause of all that exists” (Kordela, 2007, p. 627). Quoting Grace (2022), “In this way, Kordela states that Being (surplus) is the first cause...as the one differential (non)-substance, it is the secular replacement of God, following Spinoza” (p. 85). Thus, it is not derived from experience, but as given and inherent part of oneself, it partakes in one’s dynamic formation. For Kordela, being (surplus) is “the one and the same time both cause and effect” (Grace, 2022, p. 86). However, “this ‘surplus’ is not the one, single, overarching term that authorizes the

economic and the linguistic worlds we inhabit” (Grace, 2022, p. 86). I tend to agree that the being is the first cause, but not the all-encompassing one. With this being, the subject still experiences other options or possibilities. For Kordela, surplus (being) as differential substance is an innate, immanent, non-phenomenal quality. It is mediated through one’s dispositions, feeling, and thinking. It might be also akin to protomeaning discussed by Stavrakakis (2007), which is described as “an inherent and irreducible ability to create representations” (p. 52). He then associates it with what Castoriadis (1987) calls “the radical imagination”, which is anterior to and governs “every organization of drives, even the most primitive ones” (p. 287, as cited in Stavrakakis, 2007).

However, “Lacan’s focus seems to be on surplus solely in its form as remainder” (Grace, 2022, p. 84). Such a remainder is drawn from a process, “which is fundamentally enabling (or disabling)” (p. 84). For Lacan, that *objet petit a* is an effect of discourse, a product of a certain social history that remains unintelligible to rationality; however, he does not assume any differential substance or non-substance (Grace, 2022). However, while acknowledging the remainder produced in the process of operation, Kordela and Butler both emphasize remainder as certain (non)substance (or being), the innermost difference possessed by everyone. Thus, one dwells in an irreducibly first-personal way.

Thus, in this paper, the surplus exists as an immanent cause that enables or disables, as well as a result of non clean-cut as remainder in Lacan’s sense. My sense of surplus is twofold: First, it is one’s most primitive internality as first cause; second, it is a remainder of the symbolic demand upon oneself yielded during the process, at the same time an effect of one’s most primitive internality. For Lacan, remainder is an effect of discourse, I would argue that remainder in Lacan’s sense is also an effect of one’s primitive internality. The remainder is the effect of how the first cause contextualizes and personifies in oneself, an intersection of one’s internality and the external particulars. The first cause derives its effect in the process of particularization in oneself as one moves through many turning points of life. Compared to Lacan’s sense of remainder, my sense of surplus (remainder) tends to emphasize more the primitive internality, which manifests as unconscious intuitive knowledge or understanding (for example, moral knowledge).

For me, this surplus, is caused by and is one’s innate (inner) make-up as well, and it is one’s uniqueness, one’s limit of senses. It is pre-conceptual, more innermost, generic, a plenitude of unconscious thinking, feeling and imagining. It is the psychic ontology that is unique and different from the social reality. It is because of this remainder that the interpellation may fail. It works as a generic, generative filter as the subject may constantly transform.

This surplus, which can be conceived as one’s unconscious generative filter, thwarts interpellation. This unconscious generative filter remains hidden or detached to our rationality, existing as unapproachable and inaccessible realm in oneself. It constitutes one’s unique psychic ontology. It is the immaterial materiality in oneself, a growing sense of self that is open to transcendence, open for the Real to break in. It is one’s unconscious system that filters, selects, denies, and accepts. However, it may come to the conscious as one knows more of self, and explore more of self, possibly through the method of *currere* (1975)—writing autobiographically.

Summary

Therefore, as Dolar (1993) argues, the following are the two entities not covered by the mechanism of interpellation: “the symbolic subject (the one not based on recognition, the empty space that Lacan marks \$) gliding under the chain of signifiers and the objectal surplus (*objet petit a*)” (p. 91). The signifying chain interrupts the discourse, and *objet petit a* both as a cause and effect (in the process of operation) partakes in the interruption as well. Both of them constitute one’s particularity. In this paper, this psychic speech extols particularity instead of universality, while recognizing the fluidity between particularity and universality. The particularity emphasizes that one’s psyche is unique, experientially contingent, informed by one’s own situatedness and one’s inwardness. One’s own situatedness involves the influences of social and cultural discourses and through understanding oneself, we can have access to the broader social and cultural context. The universality as a historical and cultural edifice informs one’s situatedness, in other words, particularity. To further illustrate, the teacher’s understanding of the particularity of students—deeply related to the unconscious assumption on teaching and learning—has a great impact on students’ learning.

The failure of interpellation also makes it transparent that there is always a gap between one’s psychic reality and the social, cultural, and biological reality. As argued by Elliot (1991), ideology (discourse) comes to play a role in one’s psychic reality, but there is no causal relationship between them. Collective aspects of reality may participate but none of them can determine one’s psychic reality—my understanding of psychic speech—since the subject has been mediated by multiple processes in which each process, personal or social, are interlaced with others. As pointed out by Elliot (1991), Lacan’s understanding of subjectivity entails dual processes: the individual make sense of themselves through personal and socially defined processes of signification (Elliot, 1991). For me, Elliot’s sense of personal and social processes emphasizes how discourse works between the repressed signifier and “imaginary self.” Self as a “local context” crystalizes the effect of the signifiers.

Discussion and Conclusion

My sense of psychic speech—aiming toward understanding the subject of the unconscious—locates oneself along one’s chain of signifiers and within the surplus that is the kernel in oneself, the non-sensical (im)materiality that bounds one’s subjectivation.

Metaphorically, psychic speech can be portrayed as the remote resonance and the inner filer. The remote resonance tends to be the primary approach to one’s psyche, a bridge leading to one’s innermost (unconscious desire or lack). Remote resonance conveys “messages” in accordance with the principal of “belongingness,” which is being superimposed and merged between existing and the emerging, through one’s attunement. It follows the signifying chain, emphasizing “irrationality,” a non-meaning, a unique “non-logic” of one’s psychic speech. Also, certain pervading consistency exists governed by one’s desire. However, it may be latent, not knowable

to oneself if without exploration. Moreover, the psychic speech as a surplus seems to be a generative inner filter as well. Both as a cause and effect, it is the immaterial materiality with (non)substance in oneself, a latent sense of self (unaware by oneself) that is open for the real to break in. It ultimately pertains to one's internality.

The two characteristics of this psychic speech may disrupt the educational discourses. Therefore, Taubman (2011) writes that "We want to project a curriculum that ushers students into the Good, the True, and the Beautiful as we interpret these, as well as the useful, but we resist a set curriculum standardization and the fixed pedagogical protocols that neglect students' uniqueness, agency, and idiosyncrasies, and that overlook the press of contextual factors, and the palpable ebbs and flows of class-room life" (p. 7). Such a psychic speech helps understand the fluidity between boundaries, those of the conscious and unconscious. Thus, penetrating through the reality is the psyche, subject to unconscious desire and one's surplus (substantial difference), repeating itself again and again toward transcendence.

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