

Emile Meyerson's Philosophy of Science in Lacan's Early Theories

Authors : Hugo T. Jorge, Richard T. Simanke

Abstract : Lacan's work addresses overarching issues concerning the scientific intelligibility of the subject in its philosophical sense. Even though his reflection is not, strictly speaking, philosophy of science, it contains many traits that are typical of this branch of philosophy. However, the relation between Lacan's early thought and the philosophy of science of the time is often disregarded or only incompletely accounted for in Lacanian scholarship. French philosopher of science Emile Meyerson was often implicitly or explicitly referred to in Lacan's works, yet few publications can be found on their relationship. The objective of this paper is to contribute to the analysis of this relationship, indicating some of its possible implications. For this, the convergence between Meyerson's doctrine of science and Lacan's works between 1936 and 1953 is discussed, as well as the conditions under which Lacan's reception of Meyerson's ideas take place. In conclusion, it is argued that this convergence allows for the clarification of important issues in Lacan's early work, such as the concept of imago, his views on the nature of truth, and his thesis of the anthropomorphism of natural sciences. Meyerson's argument for the permanence of common sense within science makes Lacan's claims on the anthropomorphism of natural sciences more understandable. Similarly, Meyerson's views on the epistemological shortfall of the Principle of Identity sheds some light on Lacan's 1936 critique of associationistic concepts of engram and truth and may be at the origins of his antirealist and anti-idealist stances. Meyerson's Principle of Identity is also related to some aspects of Lacan's concept of imago. The imago understood as the unconscious condition for the identity in time of family figures in childhood, would be an excellent expression of the Principle of Identity. In this sense, the Principle of Identity may be linked to the concept of imaginary as developed by Lacan in the 1950s. However, Lacan considerably distorts Meyerson's views in his 1936 critique of Freud's concept of libido. Finally, a possible relationship between Lacan's late concept of the real and Meyerson's concept of the irrational is suggested.

Keywords : imaginary, Lacan, Meyerson, philosophy of science, real

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