

2.33 The Concept of the Child as Portrayed through Lacan's Mirror Stage

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ABSTRACT

Frenchman Jacques Lacan can be considered one of the greatest psychologists of the second half of the 20th century. His main research interest was the "re examination of Freud" Lacan's primary concepts focused on the 'imaginary', 'symbolic' and 'real'. The concept of 'imaginary' was concerned with a stage in childhood which is referred to as the mirror stage which is considered a psychological significant and revolutionary stage.

According to Lacan the child enters the symbolic stage after the mirror stage via the oedipus era. The symbolic world is here referred to as the world of language. He improved his theories on the 'imaginary' through his observations of animal behavior patterns.

Lacan's studies indicate that a child passes the mirror stage between 6 to 18 months. This stage is divided into three categories, and he explains here how the child perceives reality. In the first stage the child acts on the belief that the reflection he sees in the mirror are true. In the second stage the child realizes that his reflection is just a mirror image and not the truth, but does not realize that it is a reflection of himself, in the third stage the child realizes that the reflection in the mirror is his mirror image (reflection) and that it represents him.

Lacan states that the child reaches a state of great happiness after realizing that the reflection in the mirror is that of his own. Our relationship with the world and life commences after realizing this perception. Hence we see that the child reaches self realization after viewing his mirror reflection. Lacan further state that individuals "ego" or consciousness is formed during this stage. Through comparison with another image the child forms his own sense of ego. Since the child realizes that the mirror reflection is none other than himself he equates the reflection and a perception of himself. This research therefore is proof that Lacan is indeed one of the greatest psychologists of our time.