

JACQUES LACAN

Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory

*Edited by
Slavoj Žižek*

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Jacques Lacan (1901–80) is undoubtedly the central figure of psychoanalysis in the second half of the twentieth century. He not only revolutionized the psychoanalytic practice (through, among other things, the sessions of variable length); in his “return to Freud”, he also deployed a global reinterpretation of the entire psychoanalytic theoretical edifice, based on the results of structural linguistics and semiotics. This reinterpretation changed the entire field of the scientific debate: some of his formulas (“The unconscious is structured like a language”; “Desire is the desire of the Other”, etc.) acquired an almost iconic status, like Einstein’s $E = mc^2$. The least one can say about Lacan is that nobody was undisturbed and unaffected by his work: even those who passionately oppose him have to take stance towards him.

In what, then, does Lacan’s main achievement consist? Prior to him, there were two main interpretations of Freud, the positivist one (psychoanalysis is a version of determinism, the “science of mind”), and the hermeneutic one (psychoanalysis is a spiritual endeavour, the procedure of discovering the “deeper meaning” of psychic phenomena). Lacan rejected both these readings, as well as any reduction of psychoanalysis to simple psychiatry and the tool of social conformism (as in the American “ego psychology” of the 1950s). He read Freud as a key figure in the history of human thought, on a par with names like Plato, Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard and Heidegger. For Lacan, psychoanalysis totally changed the way we should understand fundamental notions like “subject”, “cause”, and “reality”: what Lacan made clear is that, although Freud was not a philosopher, his discovery, if taken seriously, simply makes a whole series of philosophical concepts and theories IMPOSSIBLE.

One of Lacan’s key puns is that the only irrationality he admits is that of the irrational numbers in mathematics – a clear indication that the Freudian Unconscious has nothing whatsoever to do with the Unconscious of *Lebensphilosophie* (i.e. with the notion of man’s soul as the dark abyssal site of primordial irrational drives). For Lacan, the true scandal of the Freudian discovery is not that it is “irrational”, that our rational conscious mind is at the mercy of wild blind passions, but that even the unconscious is in a

specific way fully *rational*, discursive, “structured like a language”. This, however, in no way entails that Lacan is just another “pan-culturalist”, reducing all psychic life to a symbolic interplay: his name for that which resists symbolization is the Real, paradigmatically the Real of a trauma whose impact shatters the symbolic co-ordinates of the subject’s horizon of meaning. This leads Lacan to propose the triangle of Imaginary–Symbolic–Real as the elementary matrix of the human experience: “Imaginary” is the deceptive universe of fascinating images and the subject’s identifications with them; “Symbolic” is the differential structure which organizes our experience of meaning; “Real” is the point of resistance, the traumatic “indivisible remainder” that resists symbolization.

Furthermore, the entire triad reflects itself within each of its three elements. There are three modalities of the Real: the “real Real” (the horrifying Thing, the primordial object, from the look into Irma’s throat in the dream, which opens Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*, to the Alien in Ridley Scott’s film of the same name), the “symbolic Real” (the real as consistency: the signifier reduced to a senseless formula, like the quantum physics formulas which can no longer be translated back into – or related to – the everyday experience of our life-world), and the “imaginary Real” (the mysterious *je ne sais quoi*, the unfathomable “something” on account of which the sublime dimension shines through an ordinary object). The Real is thus effectively all three dimensions at the same time: the abyssal vortex which ruins every consistent structure; the mathematized consistent structure of reality; the fragile pure appearance. And, in a strictly homologous way, there are three modalities of the Symbolic (the real – the signifier reduced to a senseless formula, the imaginary – the Jungian “symbols”, and the symbolic – speech, meaningful language), and three modalities of the Imaginary (the real – fantasy, which is precisely an imaginary scenario occupying the place of the Real, the imaginary – image as such in its fundamental function of a decoy, and the symbolic – again, the Jungian “symbols” or New Age archetypes). This triad of the Real – Symbolic – Imaginary also determines the three modes of the subject’s decenterment: the Real (of which neurobiology speaks: the neuronal network as the objective reality of our illusive psychic self-experience); the Symbolic (the symbolic order as the Other scene by whom I am spoken, which effectively pulls the strings); the Imaginary (the fundamental fantasy itself, the decentered imaginary scenario inaccessible to my psychic experience).

Crucial here is the distinction between the Real and reality: far from being synonymous, the two are mutually exclusive. What we experience as “reality” – the daily life-world in which we “feel at home” – can only stabilize itself through the exclusion (“primordial repression”) of the traumatic Real, and this Real then returns in the guise of fantasmatic apparitions which forever continue to haunt the subject.

Such a rereading of Freud was extremely influential: it gave rise to passionate discussions not only in France, but also in the United Kingdom and

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the USA, in Germany, Italy and Latin America, and including Japan and Eastern Europe, not only in the field of psychoanalysis itself, but also in philosophy, social sciences and cultural studies. Consequently, any critical assessment of Lacan's work should present the entire scope of the raging Lacan-debate in its four main domains: psychoanalytic theory and practice; philosophy; social sciences; cultural studies. However, since even the scope of four thick volumes is limited, the choice of texts aimed at theoretical saliency rather than covering every minor debate, the main goal being to reprint texts which prove that Lacan is still ALIVE, able to trigger debates that matter.

INTRODUCTION

First things first: what one should always bear in mind is that Jacques Lacan was foremost a psychoanalyst – a theoretician and practitioner of the art of psychoanalysis. Even when, in his writings, he proposed a detailed reading of philosophical or literary classics, one can always easily discern a clinical notion in the background: the reading of Plato's *Symposium* deals with transference; Kierkegaard is referred to in order to clarify the status of repetition, etc. While the focus of this first volume is on the burning questions of how the psychoanalytic practice is affected by recent social and ideological shifts, it also tries to provide a taste of the lively, often violent, debates among Lacan's pupils – the reason why the Lacanian movement is often described as a political Party caught in factional struggles.

The opening texts are two systematic expositions of Lacan's fundamental concepts: Jacqueline Rose's analysis of "The Imaginary", and Martin Thom's elaboration of the thesis which, in the view of most of the academic public, identifies Lacan, that of "The unconscious structured as a language". After these systematic expositions, texts that deal with specific clinical categories: first, hysteria, since the confrontation with the hysterical feminine subject was the birthplace of psychoanalysis (Moustapha Safouan, Gerard Wajeman, Michel Silvestre). Then a chapter from Darian Leader's *Why Do Women Write More Letters Than They Post*, an introduction into the vicissitudes of the feminine hysteria, which combines popular style with the highest conceptual stringency. Next, obsessional neurosis (Charles Melman, Jacques-Alain Miller), and perversion (Octave Mannoni's seminal "*Je sais bien, mais quand meme . . .*" and Jean Clavreul). The next block focuses on the psychoanalytic process itself. The two chapters from Serge Leclaire's *Psychoanalyzing* deploy the thesis that the analytic interpretation does not aim at providing the meaning of the symptoms but at isolating the elementary signifying formula which condenses the patient's relationship to enjoyment; Jean Laplanche's "Interpretation between determinism and hermeneutics" contains an extraordinary account of the Freudian notion of "deferred action"; finally, Anne Dunand's "The end of analysis" introduces order into the apparent confusion of Lacan's different determinations of the

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concluding moment of the analytic treatment. The final three texts again return to a more general topic: Kirsten Hyldgaard and Bruce Fink deal with the relationship between the subject and the Other in Lacan, while Jean-Claude Milner tackles the key epistemological problem of the scientific status of Lacan's theory.

THE IMAGINARY

Jacqueline Rose

Source Cohn McCabe (ed.) *The Talking Cure* New York: St Martin's Press (1981), pp. 132–161.

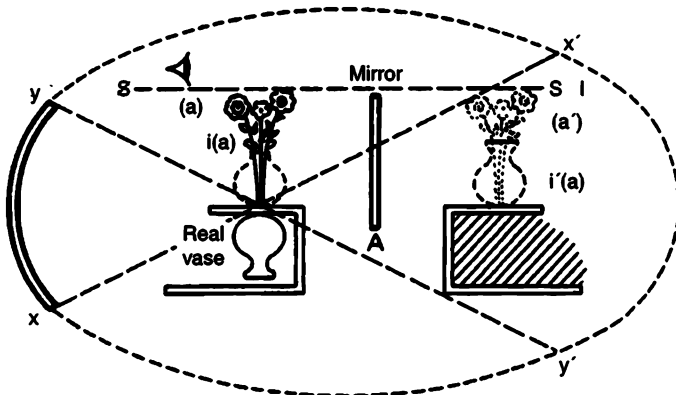


Figure 1

I cannot urge you too strongly to meditate on the science of optics . . . peculiar in that it attempts by means of instruments to produce that strange phenomenon known as *images*, unlike the other sciences which carry out on nature a division, a dissection, or anatomical breakdown. (*Le Séminaire* I: 90)

. . . in so far as it is an optical schema, the model is precisely unable to indicate that the look, as a partial object *a*, is deeply hidden and unattainable to the same extent as I am unable to see myself from the place where the Other is looking at me. *Scilicet* no. 2/3: 120

This article attempts to do three things: (1) to place the concept of the Imaginary as used in recent papers on film theory back in its psychoanalytic context; (2) to show how the psychoanalytic literature from which it has been

drawn has itself undermined the concept as an original reference to an autonomous psychic instance; (3) to suggest that this partial collapsing of the Imaginary throws into question the use of the concept to delineate or explain some assumed position of plenitude on the part of the spectator in the cinema.¹

The proliferation of references to psychoanalysis in recent literature on the cinema is probably exceeded only by the number of references to the camera and geometrical optics in the literature of psychoanalysis itself. These references could be said to fall broadly into two main categories:

1. The relationship between the observer and the camera/mirror/screen/microscope, taken as the model for the psychic apparatus; in which case the stress is on 'virtuality', referring either:

(a) to positions within the apparatus:

we should picture the instrument which carries out our mental functions as resembling a compound microscope or a photographic apparatus, or something of the kind. On that basis, psychical locality will correspond to a point inside the apparatus at which one of the preliminary stages of an image comes into being. In the microscope and telescope, as we know, these occur in part at ideal points, regions in which no tangible component of the apparatus is situated. (*SE* v: 536)

(b) to the status of the object to be recorded in relation to that of the apparatus:

When you see a rainbow, you are seeing something purely subjective. You can see it at a certain distance where it joins the surrounding scenery. It is not there. It is a subjective phenomenon. And yet, thanks to a photographic apparatus, you will be able to record it quite objectively . . . Is it not true to say that the photographic apparatus is a subjective apparatus constructed entirely through the assistance of an x and y which inhabit the domain in which the subject lives, that is the domain of language? (*Le Séminaire* I: 91)

(c) or to the status of the image itself:

The interest of what I have called *the mirror stage* is in its manifestation of the affective dynamism whereby the subject primordially identifies with the visual *Gestalt* of its own body . . . an ideal unity, or salutary *imago*. (*E* 113, 18–19)

In each of these cases, the virtual nature of image, object, or apparatus seems to be displaceable; the experiment of the 'inverted vase' can be used to produce a virtual image of an upright real image of a real object, which is in fact

upside down and out of sight (cf. p. 142 for explanation of the stages of the experiment).

2. The subject as producer of symptoms, taken as the metaphors for a repressed signifier, where the emphasis on the visual image can refer to:

- (a) complete foreclosure of symbolic or verbal representation, as in the case of hallucination;
- (b) scenic substitution, as in the case of the screen memory;
- (c) regression through the mental apparatus during sleep to the visual cathexis of mnemic traces as immediate perceptions. (In this last case, the comparison with the symptom only becomes legitimate if the visual cathexis of the image is related to its latent content, and hence to the dream as compromise-formation).

Any appeal to these references by film theory has to ask whether they are simply generalisable as references to the subject's constitutional drive towards fabrication, or whether they can act as the point of a more precise dialogue between psychoanalysis and analysis of the cinema, in which the relationship of spectator to film could be seen as the formal microcosm, and reiteration, of this fictional insertion of the subject into its world. The conflation of the optical language of projection and identification as specified in Lacan's concept of the Imaginary with the looser connotation of the term as some form of fictional narrative has made this concept the nodal point of such an encounter; 'identification' again often being used loosely to refer to the assumed compliance of the film with the desire of the spectator (also assumed).

The foundations of Lacan's concept of the Imaginary first appear in his paper 'The Mirror Stage' (*E* 93-100/1-7), which takes as its major reference point Freud's 1914 paper 'On Narcissism-an Introduction' (*SE* xiv: 73-102). 'On Narcissism' will therefore form the (belated) starting-point of this discussion, the myth of Narcissus being especially apt to delineate that moment in which an apparent reciprocity reveals itself as no more than the return of an image to itself.

I

In 1914, Freud's original postulate of an opposition between sexual libido and ego or self-preservative interest had been challenged by a body of psychic disorders, loosely called schizophrenia or daementia praecox, and which Freud preferred to call paraphrenia to cover both daementia praecox and paranoia, in which the sexual libido withdrawn from objects of the external world and redirected on to objects of phantasy in neurosis, was simply displaced on to the subject's ego with no intermediary substitutes. The presence of what appeared to be purely ego-directed libido, with the corresponding

shift of emphasis to this question of direction, veered dangerously close to the Jungian concept of libido as a pure energetic reservoir distinguishable only according to the direction of its moments. It was in order to anticipate and forestall this interpretation of ego-libido that Freud makes his crucial distinction, in the paper on narcissism, between auto-erotic instincts (the child derives its first sexual satisfaction auto-erotically, that is, from its own body) and the ego as a separate function:

The auto-erotic instincts, however, are there from the very first; so there must be something added to auto-eroticism—a new psychical action—in order to bring about narcissism. (*SE* XIV: 77)

For Lacan, it is this moment which sets up the ego as an imaginary instance:

The *Urbild*, which is a unit comparable to the ego, is constituted at a specific moment in the subject's history, from which the ego begins to take up its functions. In other words the human ego is constituted on the foundations of the imaginary relation. The function of the ego, Freud writes, must have *eine neue psychische . . . Gestalt*. In the development of the psychic organism, some thing new appears whose function it is to give shape to narcissism. Surely this marks the imaginary origin of the ego-function? (*Le Séminaire* I: 133)

—a specific *Urbild* or construct, therefore, which from then on functions as the instance of the Imaginary, commanding both the illusory nature of the relationship between the subject and the real world, and the relationship between the subject and the identifications which form it as 'I'. The confusion at the basis of an 'ego-psychology' would be to emphasise the relationship of the ego to the perception-consciousness system over and against its role as fabricator and fabrication, designed to preserve the subject's precarious pleasure from an impossible and non-compliant real. The various shifts in Freud's own use of the concept from *Studies on Hysteria* (*SE* II) (1893–5) where it is presented as an ideational mass, to its complete delineation as a separate function in the final topography (*The Ego and the Id*, 1923) (*SE* XIX: 12–66) partially lend themselves to such a confusion. Lacan grafts his concept of the Imaginary on to the moment at which the fortification of the ego is conjoined with the possibility of deceptive self-reference in the concept of narcissism. In the 1936 paper 'The Mirror Stage', the relationship between narcissism and ego-formation 'reverses': the ego itself becomes the reflection of a narcissistic structure grounded on the return of the infant's image to itself in a moment of pseudo-totalisation. In Section II of the *Écrits*, narcissism will be taken as the starting-point for three constitutive moments—that of the ego, of the function of recognition in its capacity to engender a

potentially infinite number of objects in the world, and of the correlative functions of aggressivity and libidinal object-choice.

What does Lacan mean, therefore, when he states that the ego is an imaginary function? In what way is his concept of the Imaginary distinct from the point, stressed as early as 1895 by Freud in his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (SE 1: 295–397), that the establishment of perceptual identity by the ego allows reality to be set up only to the satisfaction of the pleasure principle?

In his seminar of 1954, Lacan introduces the case-history of a six-year-old boy, named as Robert, as relevant to the psychoanalytic distinction between neurosis and psychosis. The case is presented by Rosine Lefort, who describes her patient as he first appeared to her at the age of three years and nine months in a state of hyperagitation aggravated by the complete motor and linguistic incoordination. I will not go into the details of the child's development through analytic treatment, but will stop at one of the first behavioural manifestations of the patient to be presented by the analyst: 'Unco-ordinated prehension—the child would throw out his arm to grasp an object and if he missed it, he would not be able to rectify his movement, but had to start it again from scratch' (*Le Séminaire* 1: 108). Lacan seizes on this factor as revealing that the subject's control of objects is not dependent on its visual capacity, but on the *synthesis* of this with the sense of distance, their coordination dependent on its ability to conceptualise its body as total; the rectification of the child's motor inco-ordination during analysis is taken to demonstrate the relation 'between strictly sensori-motor maturation and the subject's functions of imaginary control' (*Le Séminaire* 1: 122). The early emphasis by Lacan on *Gestalt*, on the child's ability to represent its body to itself, is, therefore, not simply a notion of some comforting if illusory poise, but is directly linked at this stage in his theory to its ability to control its world in a physical sense. In fact, one of the key factors of the mirror-stage is that the child is in a state of nursing dependency and relative motor incoordination and yet the image returned to the child is fixed and stable, thereby anticipating along the axis of maturation. Robert's incapacity is therefore a type of regressive paradigm of the mirror-stage where the absence of image leads to a failure in the function of bodily co-ordination. What is important here is the relationship between control, and an auto-synthesis based on a projected image of the subject, a relationship confirmed by the behavioural phenomenon of transitivity, in which the child imitates and completes the action of the other child in play:

those gestures made up of fictive actions whereby a subject redirects the imperfect effort of the other's gestures by confusing their distinct application, those synchronies of specular captation, all the more remarkable in that they anticipate the complete co-ordination of the motor apparatuses which they bring into play. (*E* 112/18)

Taking off from the behavioural confirmations of the mirror-stage, Lacan then reads it back into a structure of subjectivity, whose basic relation is that between a fragmented or inco-ordinate subject and its totalising image (the structural equivalent of the metonymic relation part for whole). In order to vehicule the image, the subject's own position must be fixed (in the first stage of the inverted vase experiment—cf. Fig. 1.—the eye must be inside the cone formed by a generating line joining each point of the image *i(a)* to the surface of the spheric mirror). It is from this fixity, and the images that are thus produced, that the subject is able to postulate objects of permanence and identity in the world.²

The mirror stage is, therefore, the focus for the interdependency of image, identity and identification: 'We have only to understand the mirror stage *as an identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when it assumes an image' (*E* 94/2). As a result of identifying itself with a discrete image, the child will be able to postulate a series of equivalencies between the objects of the surrounding world, based on the conviction that each has a recognisable permanence. Identification of an object world is therefore grounded in the moment when the child's image was alienated from itself as an imaginary object and sent back to it the message of its own subjecthood. It is the process of enumeration and exchange which sets off from this point that will inform Lacan's later concept of linguistic insistence, defined as a process which starts off from this position of a signifier which was primarily evicted from its own place.

The narcissistic mode of identification has as its corollary both the libidinal object-tie and the function of aggressivity. Lacan refers to Weissman's theory of the germ-plasm as confirmation of Freud's distinction between the subject as individual ego and the subject as the member of a species whose sexual function it is to privilege the type, and stresses that sexual drive depends on a recognition of appropriateness or typicality (rarely is sexual drive aroused by a member of another species).

In Freud's 1914 paper, narcissism became the prototype of a form of object choice based on the subject's own image(s) and was opposed to the anaclitic, where sexual desire was attached to self-preservative interest and hence selected its object according to the image of provider or protector. Lacan's emphasis places narcissism not only in opposition to the anaclitic form of object choice, but actually at the root of the minimal recognition necessary to ensure the subject's sexual engagement. Thus libido, far from being an energetic or substantialist concept, is constitutionally bound to the Imaginary: 'We call libidinal investment that which makes an object desirable, that is, what leads to its confusion with the image we carry within us, diversely, and more or less, structured' (*Le Séminaire* 1: 162). What this means simply is that access to the object is only ever possible through an act of (self-)identification.³ At the same time this relation of the libidinal

object-tie to identification reveals perhaps at its clearest the paradox that the subject finds or recognises itself through an image which simultaneously alienates it, and hence, potentially, *confronts* it. This is the basis of the close relationship between narcissism and aggressivity, and Lacan turns to Klein for confirmation of the aggressive component of the original imaginary operation. The child expels objects which it fears as dangerous: 'Why dangerous? For exactly the same reason as it is dangerous for them. Precisely *en miroir*, the child reflects onto them the same destructive capacities which it feels itself to contain' (*Le Séminaire* I: 96). It then turns to other objects, distinguished from and related to the first by means of an imaginary equation:

Different objects from the external world, more neutralised, will be posed as the equivalents of the first, will be related to them by an equation which, note, is imaginary. Thus the symbolic equation [faeces—urine] which we rediscover between these objects arises from an alternating mechanism of expulsion and introjection, of projection and absorption, that is to say, from an imaginary game. (*Le Séminaire* I: 96)

Lacan goes on to make a distinction between projection and introjection, which will be discussed later. The point here is that the expulsion and absorption of objects in a Kleinian sense acts as the aggressive counterpart of the subject's discovery of itself in an alienated and alienating image which presents itself as dangerous and hence potentially as a rival. The final Oedipal identification of the subject with his or her rival (the parent of the same sex) is only made feasible by this primary identification which places the subject in a position of auto-rivalisation. The death instinct can be reformulated at this stage by Lacan as stemming not only from the submission of the individual to factor x of 'eternal life', but also from the libido's obligatory passage through the Imaginary, where it is subjected to a master image, and ultimately to the image of the master (the Oedipus complex).

Two factors emerge from this preliminary delineation of the Imaginary—the factor of aggression, rivalry, the image as alienating on the one hand, and the more structurally oriented notion of a fundamental mis-recognition as the foundation of subjectivity, with the image as salutary fiction, on the other. The division is in a sense arbitrary, and the two are bound by the concept of the ego as the instance of negation, presented by Freud in his 1925 paper of that title (*SE* XIX: 235–9) as the symbolic equivalent of the original expulsion mechanism whereby the subject builds itself and its world. The mirror-phase demonstrates this process whereby the subject negates itself and burdens/accuses/attacks (*charger*) the other, and this has its corollary in the analytic setting where inclination towards the imaginary relation between analyst and analysand is always the sign of a resistance to signification:

it is to the extent that the being's admission fails to reach its destination that the utterance carries over to the axis where it latches onto the other . . . The subject latches onto the other because what is struggling for utterance fails. The blocking of the utterance, in so far as something perhaps makes it fundamentally impossible, is the pivot where, in analysis, speech tips over entirely onto its original aspect and is reduced to its function of relating to the other. (*Le Séminaire I*: 59–60)

The emphasis on verbal communication⁴ belongs here to Lacan's distinction between the Imaginary and the Symbolic, in their relationship to the third category, the Real. Before discussing these categories, it is necessary to show how the concepts which have so far emerged from that of narcissism can be further broken down into ideal ego and ego ideal on the one hand, and into the three types of identification put forward by Freud in Chapter 7 of *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (*SE* xviii: 105–10) on the other, since it is on to these further distinctions that the Lacanian triptych will be charted.

In his paper on narcissism, Freud goes on to discuss the relationship of the ego to repression, in that the ego becomes the guardian of that narcissistic self-regard lost with the insertion of the infant into a social world, and hence only retrievable by the setting-up of an image on which the subject will model itself. It is in the paragraph which describes this process, through which the subject conforms to an image which is, and can make it, the centre of its world, that the distinction between ideal ego and ego ideal appears:

The subject's narcissism, makes its appearance displaced on to this new ideal ego, which, like the infantile ego, finds itself possessed of every perfection that is of value . . . He is not willing to forego the narcissistic perfection of his childhood . . . he seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego ideal. (*SE* xiv: 94)

The distinction would seem to correspond to choice (b) and (c) of the four alternative narcissistic object choices:

- (a) what he himself is (i.e. himself);
- (b) what he himself was;
- (c) what he himself would like to be;
- (d) someone who was once part of himself (*SE* xiv: 90)

—the ideal ego corresponding to what 'he himself was', and the ego ideal to what 'he himself would like to be', at the moment at which they can be identified as disjunct. The ideal ego would therefore be a projected image with which the subject identifies, and comparable to the imaginary captation

of the mirror-phase; the ego ideal would be a secondary introjection whereby the image returns to the subject invested with those new properties which, after the 'admonitions of others' and the 'awakening of his own critical judgement' (SE XIV: 94) are necessary for the subject to be able to retain its narcissism while shifting its 'perspective'.

The distinction here is that between projection as related to *Gestalt*, and introjection as invariably accompanied by the speech of the Other,⁵ that is, to introjection as a symbolic moment, and the basis on which the further social investment necessary for the formation of the super ego will intervene. Significantly, when Freud introduces category (c), he adds the proviso that it will not be justified until a later stage in the discussion, the point at which he introduces the concept of the super ego.

The ideal ego will therefore be what the subject once was, the ego ideal what it would like to be in order to retrieve what it was, this being achieved by the introjection of someone who was once part of itself, the movement between them being the attempt to present-ify (make present or actual) their relation (what the subject is (a)). What Freud is describing is the impossible and continually reasserted attempts of the subject to maintain the imaginary fiction of its own totality through which it was primordially constituted. The problem of a clash between an existential and formal ego ideal is raised, during the March 1954 seminar on this topic, by Leclaire:

either displacement of the libido takes place once more onto an image, an image of the ego, that is, onto a form of the ego, which we call ideal, since it is not like that of the ego as it is now, or as it once was—or else we call the ego ideal something which is beyond any one form of the ego, something which is strictly speaking an ideal, and which approximates more to the notion of idea or form. (*Le Séminaire* I: 156)

The formal moment of the ideal ego is its structuration at the primary point of the mirror-phase, and the distinction between ideal ego and ego ideal resolves itself into the two moments of that phase, that of the corporeal image, prior and resistant to symbolisation, and that of the relation to the other, ultimately dependent on such symbolisation (the Other).

The experiment of the inverted vase is Lacan's illustration of these distinctions. It falls into two stages, the first of which is a fairly well-known experiment of geometrical optics (see Figure 2 facing).

By means of a spheric mirror, a real and inverse image can be produced of a vase which is upside down and concealed from sight. The image does not require an interposed screen for its observation but merely that the observing subject be situated in line with the point where the rays of light reflected off the mirror converge. This is the corporeal image of the subject and Lacan describes it as primary narcissism: 'This first narcissism is situated, if you

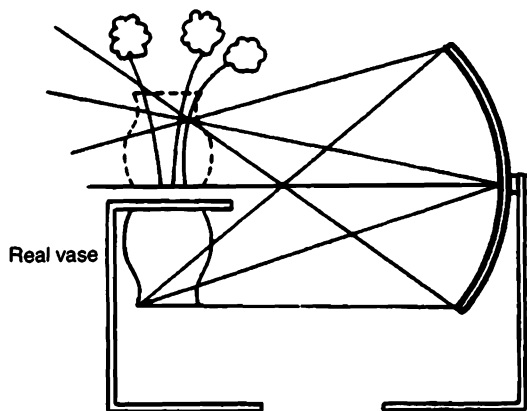


Figure 2

like, on the level of the real image of my schema, in so far as that image makes it possible to organise the whole of reality within a certain number of preformed frames' (*Le Séminaire* I: 144).

The corporeal image is identical for all mechanisms of the subject, and gives form to its *Umwelt*, in so far as it is a man or woman (and not, say, a horse). The unity of the subject depends on that image, and it becomes the basis for all future projection. The image of the upside down vase reversing itself into a position where it contains the diversity of the separate flowers (the original experiment is in fact the other way round) makes the experiment especially apt to demonstrate the slight access which the subject has to its own body.

In the second part of the experiment (Fig. 1), a virtual image is produced by means of a second mirror placed in front of the real image; the observer is now placed in such a position that he or she can see this virtual image without being able to see the real image of which it is the reflection; at each point it is the subject's necessary remove from the source of its own 'imagery' that is stressed. The virtual image is the place of secondary narcissism which enables the subject to situate its imaginary and libidinal relation to the world: 'to see in its place, and to structure as a function of that place and its world (. . .) its libidinal being. The subject sees its being in a reflection in relation to the other, that is to say, in relation to the ego ideal' (*Le Séminaire* I: 144-5).⁶

The relationship posited here is given striking corroboration by Freud's own comment in a footnote to *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*: 'A path leads from identification by way of imitation to empathy, that is, to the comprehension of the mechanism by means of which we are enabled to take any attitude at all towards another mental life' (*SE* xviii: 110n2)—especially when taken in conjunction with his separate observation on the

'narcissistic origin of compassion (which is confirmed by the word itself)' (*Mitleid*) (*SE* xvii: 88).

How then does this place and structure inform the subject's future identifications? In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud sets out to explain the relationship between this introjected ego ideal and the socialisation of the subject in a further group identification between egos. Taking the group phenomenon as the culmination of the deceptive function of identification, Lacan reformulates the question:

how an object reduced to its most stupid reality, and yet assigned by a certain number of subjects the function of common denominator, thereby confirming what we will call its function as token, is capable of precipitating the identification of the ideal ego straight into that idiotic power of mis-chief that it basically reveals itself to be. (*E* 677)

The power of the ego ideal to propel the subject into a position of dual submission to the master image introjected as ego ideal, and to those egos with which it posits itself as equivalent, becomes the starting-point for a second set of questions about the effective modes of identification, and their relationship to a demand which attempts to posit its own sufficiency, to retrieve or reconstitute a position of plenitude, and desire, the concept now introduced which gradually undermines this certitude.

Freud posits three types of identification:

- (a) identification as the original form of emotional tie with an object;
- (b) regressive identification as a substitute for a libidinal object-tie by means of introjection of the object on to the ego;
- (c) identification which arises with a new perception of a (repressed) common quality shared with some other person who is not the object of the sexual instinct.⁷

I will start with the first form of identification to illustrate the problems which emerge from this new breakdown in relation to what has been presented so far, before going on to discuss them separately in terms of the Lacanian categories.

Freud first makes a distinction between identification and desire (object choice), giving the former precedence over the latter:

In the first case one's father is what one would like to *be*, and in the second he is what one would like to *have*. The distinction, that is, depends on whether the tie attaches to the subject or the object of the ego. The former kind of tie is therefore already possible before any sexual object choice has been made. (*SE* xviii: 106)

By making the small boy's pre-Oedipal identification with his father the model of primary identification, Freud clearly anticipates Lacan's stress on the alienating function of identification, and its close links with a potential rivalry which seeks to eliminate its object. Freud confirms the link by making this identification with the father, that is the primary socialisation of the subject, a derivative of the first, oral, phase of development:

Identification, in fact, is ambivalent from the very first; it can turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone's removal. It behaves like a derivative of the first, *oral* phase of the organisation of the libido, in which the object which we long for and prize is assimilated by eating and is in that way annihilated as such. (*SE* xviii: 105)

Introjection of the ego ideal has its purely libidinal equivalent in the mechanism of incorporation, which acts here as a double reference to the cannibalistic relationship between mother and child (later to be stressed by Klein), and to the totem meal, where absorption of the father's body leads to the appropriation of his status and name. Only the first part of this dyad can strictly speaking be termed incorporation, since the second is its ritualised and social derivative, and is therefore related to the introjection of the ego ideal which had been defined as necessarily bound to language.

The totem meal now appears as a ritual symbolisation of the transcendence of those forms of rivalry (Oedipus as a secondary rivalisation) which only appear at the point where identification becomes contaminated with the question of desire. This question appears excluded from the unmitigated demand characteristic of the oral and anal phases of development which imply the possibility of the total incorporation or mastery of the object (the fiction of plenitude). Lacan reads the three types of identification posited by Freud in terms of the gradual intrusion of the axis of desire on to the axis of identification, an intrusion which can be measured against the shift from the drives of demand (oral, anal) to those of desire (scopic, invocatory) in which the physical distance of the object reveals the relation between subject and object to be necessarily disjunct. Note that it is precisely at the moment when those drives most relevant to the cinematic experience as such start to take precedence in the Lacanian topography that the notion of an imaginary plenitude, or of an identification with a demand sufficient to its object, begins to be undermined. The three forms of identification can tentatively be equated with three moments which correspond to the Lacanian division Real, Imaginary, Symbolic:

- (a) privation (demand directed to a lost object);
- (b) frustration (demand which cannot be given its object);
- (c) castration (demand for which there is no object).

Each type of identification is thus taken as the model for a mode of relation (primary object-relation, regressive identification with libidinal object, identification between egos), a structure of insufficiency (privation, frustration, castration), and a tension between demand and desire with a corresponding set of alternative drives.

What is important here is that the demand of the subject is in each case directed outwards to an external object, and it is the relationship of this demand to the place of the object it claims that becomes the basis for identification. The earlier emphasis on ideal ego inevitably fades as both incorporation and introjection obscure the plane of a projected or objectifiable totality. The precedence of the Real in the Lacanian scheme, as the point of the subject's confrontation with an endlessly retreating reality, signals this definition of the subject in terms of an object which has been lost, rather than of a totality which it anticipates.

The reference for this can again be taken from Freud, in the path that leads from his early remarks on the loss of the object which characterises the infant's relation to the world (*The Project for a Scientific Psychology* (SE I: 366–7)) to the concept of repetition elaborated in the *Fort Da* game (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*) (cf. SE XVIII: 14–17). Thus in the first instance Freud indicates that the child's first utterance (the cry) is predicated on the missing object which it thereby represents, and in the second that the infant only finds or constitutes itself through the articulation and the repetition of the loss of the object in play: '... the alternation presence/absence only *makes sense* to the extent that the infant can identify itself with the reel of cotton as absent, which presupposes the logical foundation of its identification to a signifier which is missing' (*Scilicet* no. 2/3: III). Taken together these instances point to what Lacan will call the constitution of the subject in the moment of its splitting (hence *Ichspaltung*), a moment which we can already discern in the fiction of self-representation—the subject sees itself as a whole only by being placed *elsewhere*—of the mirror-stage. It is the loss of the object and the relation of the subject to this loss—the knots which the subject gets into in its attempts to elide or re-place it—that Lacan terms the structure of desire.

II

At this point the two-dimensional optical schema is no longer adequate since the object is visible, or rather on the same dimension as the image which is its substitute. What is now needed is a means of representing the essential disjunction between the imaginary and the lost object as existing on a separate plane. The author of 'The Splitting of the Subject and Its Identification' (*Scilicet* no. 2/3: 103–36) takes the torus or solid ring to represent this disjunction, since operation or movement carried out on its surface circumscribes a central void which determines the limits of that movement while remaining essentially outside it. I will use these diagrams together with the

first optical schema, as I think they most clearly illustrate the inadequacy of that schema and the need to reformulate the question of the subject in relation to the object of the scopic drive. The subject is now defined no longer in terms of reflection (the image) but in terms of differentiation (cuts, joining, disjunction).

The author of 'The Splitting of the Subject' quotes Freud to show how identification in itself depends on a repetition which can only be the mark of its own difference: 'The identification is a partial and extremely limited one and only borrows a single trait from the person who is its object' (*SE* XVIII: 107). This single trait is the 'unique' trait since the whole series will depend on its pure repetition; the idea of unity is here rigorously dissociated from the idea of totality, at the basis of the earlier concept of *Gestalt*, and attached to the structural concept of a unit as a single element in an already functioning enumeration system. It is therefore called a unary rather than a unique trait, since it can only be articulated as that which is apparently identical. The example drawn on here is de Saussure's 8.45 Geneva-Paris express (de Saussure 1972: 151/1974: 108) which, although it can manifestly be a different train from that of the previous day, is yet identifiable as the same since it is different in function from the rest.

Thus Freud's remark, made in reference to the second form of identification, is extrapolated as the indication of a potentially structuralist concept of identity, where each element is distinct from its own origin, different at each new instance of its repetition, and identical only in its opposition to all the other elements in the signifying chain. This concept was obviously implicit in Lacan's stress on the determinate role of the 'other' image in the mirror-phase; here it represents a new emphasis on *coupure* or splitting, of which the compulsive repetition of trauma will be the clinical counterpart: '... we see here a point that the subject can approach only by dividing itself into a certain number of agencies' (*Le Séminaire* XI: 51). The movement away from a stress on illusory totality and identity, to identity as a function of repeated difference can thus be seen as representing a shift in Lacan's emphasis from the Imaginary, to the structure of linguistic insistence as already underpinning moments prior to its intervening symbolisation.

The first diagram (Fig. 3) shows the relationship of demand to privation, the circles repeating themselves in a helix around the ring representing demand in its repetitive function, while showing

- (a) that demand cannot attain itself, but increases its distance from its point of departure at each turn, thereby testifying to its incapacity to seize the object which supports its own movement;
- (b) that the point at which demand does meet up with itself is the point at which it has outlined the central void, but *without knowing it*, since it has no point of contact outside its own surface.

THE IMAGINARY

Here the subject identifies with the all-powerful signifier of demand from which it is indistinguishable; but already unable to signify the lost unit except by repeating it as different, it fades before that signifier.

In the second drawing (Fig. 4), the subject thinks it has gone the round of its own space, but fails to distinguish between the space interior to its outer surface, and the central void which it has simultaneously circumscribed without realising it. The diagram illustrates the distinction between idealisation—a 'complete' rotation—and desire—a central void—of which there is no knowledge.

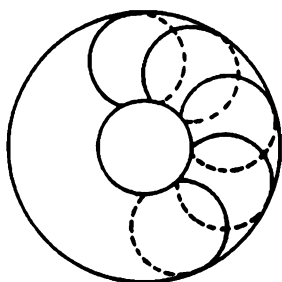


Figure 3

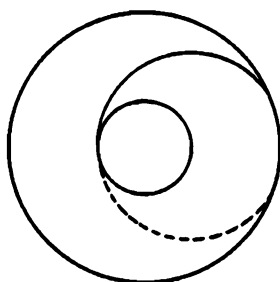


Figure 4

Turning next to Lacan's optical schema, the emphasis is now placed on the second mirror A, manipulate by the Other (*Autre*), so that whereas the first image depended on the fixity of the observing subject, the second virtual image is a function of the relationship between the rotation of mirror A and the field of space behind it. The distinction between projection and introjection, the image emitted and received, is now reinforced by the intervention of the Other as the locus of speech, which, investing the ego ideal with language, sets it up for subsequent identification with the Law. This role of the Other.

- (a) undermines the autonomy of the primary *Gestalt*;
- (b) reveals its own position as exponent of desire, which means that it is seen to be determined by the same loss or void as that which underpins the demand of the subject itself.

The Imaginary can now be defined in terms of this intrusion of the Other, and the corresponding tension between the assumed plenitude of A and its gradual emergence as incomplete. Lacan criticises his first schema in these terms:

we would be wrong to believe that the big Other of discourse can be absent from any distance taken up by the subject in its relation to the

other, which is opposed to it as the small other, as belonging to the imaginary dyad. (E 678)

This Other is now even referred back to the primary moment of the mirror-stage:

For the Other, the place of discourse, always latent to the triangulation that consecrates that distance, is not yet so as long as it has not spread right into the specular relation in its purest moment: in the gesture with which the child in front of the mirror, turning to the one who is holding it, appeals with its look to the witness who decants, verifying it, the recognition of the image, of the jubilant assumption, where indeed *it already was*. (E 678)

The permeation of the Other over the specular relation therefore reveals the necessity of *appeal*, and hence the structural incompleteness of that relation, and then, through that, the irreducible place of desire within the original model:

The problem is that our model throws no light on the position of the *object a*. For as an image for a play of images, it cannot describe the function which that object receives from the symbolic . . . *a*, the object of desire, at the starting point at which our model situates it, is, as soon as it begins to function there . . . the object of desire . . . Which is why, reflected in the mirror, it does not only provide a as the standard of exchange, the currency whereby the other's desire enters into the ideal ego's moments of transitivity. It is returned to the field of the Other as exponent of the desire in the Other. (E 682)

Thus the object is missing from the Other, while this still acts as the place wherein the subject alienates its own image and simultaneously grounds its desire.

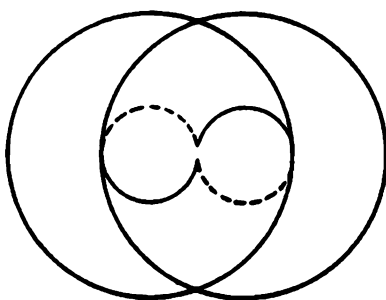


Figure 5

In a next stage, the subject, having gone the round of its own impossibility, will simply displace on to the Other its conception of a full subjectivity or plenitude which it addresses to the Other as demand. Fig. 5 is the model of frustration, as that moment when, basing its desire in this alienating image, the subject finds that its own demand as subject is identifiable with the desire of the Other; and the demand of the Other identifiable with its own desire. The outer circle of repetition can be seen to coincide with the central void of the secondary torus to which the first makes its appeal. This can be taken as the new model for the imaginary structure, manifested most clearly in transference, when the neurotic directs its demand to the object of desire, the one object that cannot be demanded, and simultaneously submits its desire to the Other's demand; this latter expectation is recognisable as the basis for the impositions of the super ego. The author of 'The Splitting of the Subject' defines this relationship:

It is this very moment that reveals what it is that binds the Other to the imaginary function, since it is through its identification to the specular image that the subject of privation now comes to differentiate, from those circles which can cancel each other out on the surface of the torus, those which are irreducible because they circumscribe a void. (*Scilicet* no. 2/3: 121)

In this way, the subject relies on the Other in the imaginary relation, not to constitute a full identity, but in order to circumscribe a void identified with the Other's demand; the object of desire at this point appears to be concealed within that demand, which acts as the metaphor for the unary trait. Specular identification replaces a previously undifferentiable series of repetitions with this new equivalence. The rigour of the subject's conformity is not due to the cancellation of a void, but to the simultaneous differentiation and displacement of that void which such identification permits. This mode of identification corresponds to the regressive mode of identification which is a substitute for the lost libidinal object tie; the subject identifies with the object of its demand for love.

In the final stage of the topography, the object of desire has been stamped as the effect of the impossibility for the Other to reply to demand. Henceforth 'the object is no longer an object of subsistence, but object of the ek-sistence of the subject: the subject there finds its place outside of itself, and it is to this function that the *objet a* of the first rivalry will ultimately be led' (*Scilicet* no. 2/3: 123). The moment of castration is that in which the Other reveals itself as exponent of desire or false witness, and it represents the final collapse of the Other as the guarantor of certitude. Desire is now the point of intersection between two demands, and is left over as that which simply cannot be signified. This form of identification could be defined as that which arises with a new perception of a common quality shared with

someone who is not an object of sexual desire; it is identification now conditioned by its function as support of desire.

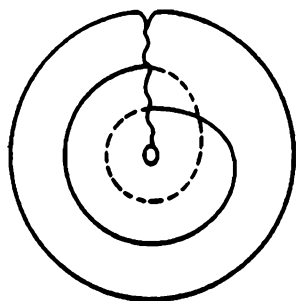


Figure 6

Having now demonstrated the distinction between the optical schema, as positing an autonomous Imaginary, and the torus as revealing the irreducible nature of the object of desire, the author of 'The Splitting of the Subject' points to the need for a diagram which could illustrate the possibility of grasping internally to the model this irreducible void, which is now defined as the object of the analytic process (the subject's advent to desire). The model used is the cross-cap or projective plane. By means of a cut the model can be split into two separate parts, one of which will seize its central point and the other of which will appear as a Moebius strip. The latter now represents specular identification, the former the subject in its relation to desire. The model is difficult, but two basic factors should be retained:

(a) the cut which constitutes the subject in its dependent relation to the object of desire also allows the subject to *detach* itself from the specular illusion;

(b) the cut which detaches this fragment also determines the topological properties of the fragment which remains; hence the specular illusion as apparently separate, but always the *effect* of the basic structure of desire:

the essential factor is that the *coupure* which detaches the object is that which simultaneously determines the topological properties of the fragment which remains and which does have an image in the mirror. (*Scilicet* no. 2/3: 132-3)

It is to the way in which this radical cut or *coupure* informs the structure of specularity itself, the subject's position in relation to the image rather than to the image it vehicules, that Lacan addresses himself in that part of his 1964 seminar entitled 'The Look as *objet petit a*' (*Le Séminaire* xi: 65-109/

67–119). Projective geometry is now used to show the presence or insistence of desire inside those very forms which are designed to reproduce or guarantee the specular illusion itself (image, screen, spectator).

III

In the four seminars grouped under the heading ‘The Look as *objet petit a*’, Lacan uses a series of models and anecdotes to challenge what he calls the idealising presumption whereby the subject assumes it ‘can see itself seeing itself’, persistently referring back to its own subjectivity a ‘look’ which manifestly pre-exists its intervention as subject. The Imaginary itself, through which the subject sets itself up as subject and the other as object, can be seen to contain a potential reversal—the subject is constituted as object by the Other—for which the structure of specularity is now taken as the model.

The dual screen relationship of the spectator in the cinema, described by Metz (1975a; 1975b)—the screen on to which the film is projected and the internalised screen which introjects that imagery—is the exact counterpart of that process whereby the subject is endlessly ‘pictured’ or ‘photographed’ in the world:

in the scopic field, the look is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture.

It is this function which lies at the heart of the subject’s institution in the visible. What fundamentally determines me in the visible is the look which is outside. It is through the look that I enter into the light, and it is from the look that I receive its effect. From which it emerges that the look is the instrument through which the light is embodied, and through which—if you will allow me to use a word, as I often do, by breaking it up—I am *photo-graphed*. (*Le Séminaire* xi: 98/106).

Thus the subject of representation is not only the subject of that geometrical perspective whereby it reproduces objects as images:

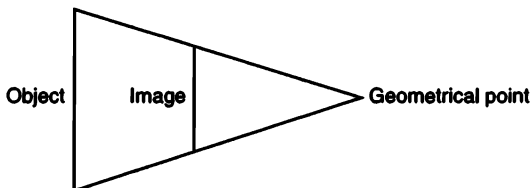


Figure 7

it is also represented in that process, illuminated by the light emitted by the object of its own look, and thereby registered simultaneously as *object* of

representation. Lacan relates the anecdote of the fisherman who pointed at a can of sardines floating on the water, and, turning to the young Lacan with a laugh, said: 'You see that can? Do you see it? Well, it doesn't see you!' (*Le Séminaire* XI: 89/95). Lacan attributes his discomfort at the 'joke' to his sudden realisation of the alien 'figure' he made within that community; but he goes on to use the anecdote to illustrate the *schize* between the eye and the look, since if the can couldn't see him, yet, as the converging point of the light which it emitted back to the observer, it was in a sense *looking* at him:

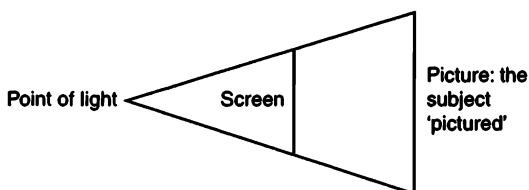


Figure 8

The introduction of the screen demonstrates:

1. The subject's active intervention in the imaginary relationship, in which it is seized by the object of its look:

Only the subject—the human subject, subject of desire which is man's essence—is not, unlike the animal, entirely taken in by this imaginary capture. He manages to locate himself within it. How? To the extent that he isolates the function of the screen and plays off it. Indeed man knows how to play with the mask as that beyond which there is the look. The screen acts here as the site of mediation. (*Le Séminaire* XI: 99/107)

2. The role of desire within that relationship; an object veiled from sight by an over-intense light can be discerned only if a screen is interposed which partially obscures that light and/or the observing subject; the screen thus blocks the subject from the light in order to expose its object, and the 'look' of that object is seen to emerge only in this moment of partial elision:

As soon as the subject attempts to accommodate itself to this look, it becomes that punctiform object, that vanishing point of being with which the subject confuses its own failing. Thus, of all the objects through which the subject can recognise its dependency in the register of desire, the look specifies itself as that which cannot be grasped. (*Le Séminaire* XI: 79/83)

The screen therefore serves a dual function, as locus of the image off which the subject will play in an attempt to control its imaginary captation, and as

a sign of the elusive relation between the object of desire—the look—and the observing subject: ‘The subject presents itself as other than what it is, and what it is given to see is not what it wants to see. It is in this way that the eye can function as *objet a*, that is, on the level of lack’ (*Le Séminaire* XI: 96/104). It is this look, as object of desire, which already functioned as a question mark over the asserted triumph of the mirror stage: ‘What is manipulated in the triumph of the assumption of the image of the body in the mirror, is that object, all the more elusive in that it appears only marginally: the exchange of looks’ (*E* 70). The super-imposition of Lacan’s two triangles:

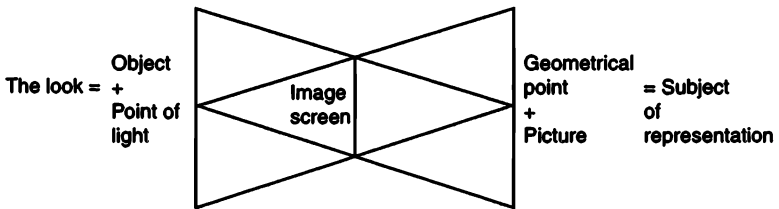


Figure 9

illustrates the conjunction of screen and image which now reveals the elision both of the inaccessible object and of the subject as the guarantor of certitude: ‘. . . in so far as the picture enters into a relation with desire, the place of a central screen is always marked, which is precisely the means whereby, in front of the picture, I am elided as subject of the geometrical plane’ (*Le Séminaire* XI: 100/108). Even the first triangle which demonstrated the laws of perspective contains a potential reversal, since the lines drawn from the object on to a surface to produce an image of that object, can be redirected onto a further plane to produce a gross deformation or anamorphosis. Conveniently for Lacan’s demonstration, the most famous pictorial illustration of anamorphosis—Hans Holbein’s *The Ambassadors*⁸ not only challenges the subject’s fixed relation to the picture, since it is only as the subject withdraws that the object can be discerned, but also demonstrates this challenge on the level of its content, since the object perceived as the subject moves aside is a human skull.

This whole section of the seminar appears as a repeated collapsing of the imaginary relation into desire, here related to death as the zero point of the subject. This central role of desire is read by Lacan into the passage in *Being and Nothingness* in which Sartre describes the observer at the keyhole, suddenly startled by the sound of approaching footsteps from his complacency as *voyeur* (1943: 317–19/1966: 347–50). The subject is not just caught by a look which subjects it and cancels its position as ‘pure’ observation; it is caught by a look which it cannot see but which it imagines in the field of the Other; and it is literally caught in the act, which is not an act, that is, in its role as *voyeur* or support of desire.

The *voyeur* is not, therefore, in a position of pure manipulation of an object, albeit distant, but is always threatened by the potential exteriorisation of his own function. That function is challenged three times over: first, by the fact that the subject cannot see what it wants to see (it is this which becomes the conditioning factor of voyeurism which deliberately distances its object); secondly, by the fact that it is not the only one looking; thirdly, that the reciprocity implied in this is immediately challenged, since the subject can never see its look from the point at which the other is looking at it. These three moments can be seen to correspond to the three moments of privation, frustration and castration: the subject is depossessed of its object, the subject posits a full equivalence between itself and another subject, the subject is led to realise that this apparent reciprocity is grounded on the impossibility of complete return.

IV

The gradual ascendancy of the question of desire over that of identification in Lacan's theory seems to raise several issues of potential importance for film theory. It is no coincidence that the late emergence of the concept of 'splitting' in Freud's own work (the 1927 paper on 'Fetishism' (*SE* XXI: 152-7) and the 1938 'The Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence' (*SE* XIII: 275-8)) is echoed in Lacanian theory by the movement from a concept of *Gestalt* to one of identity as a function of repeated difference. It does seem to me that certain propositions made by Christian Metz in his article 'The Imaginary Signifier' (1975a/1975b) could be questioned in terms of that movement, and I will conclude by tentatively suggesting where this article diverges from his position.

Metz's article sets itself the question 'What contribution can Freudian psychoanalysis make to the study of the cinematic signifier? Its most important aspects for this discussion are the sections on the theoretician's relation to the film object (described in Kleinian/Lacanian terms as the imaginary restoration of the 'good' object which the critical activity endlessly destroys and repairs), and the spectator's relation to the image on the screen (described more specifically in terms of Lacan's concept of the mirror-stage).

Metz distinguishes identification in the cinema from the primary identification of the subject with its body in the mirror, since the spectator's own body is not seen on the screen and, as a subject, it has already passed through this primary identification; it can therefore recognise objects in the world without needing to see itself as such. The spectator's identification with the image and/or characters on screen is therefore described as secondary, the subject's identification being primarily with the camera itself. This is the phantasy of the all-perceiving subject (subject and centre of the look) which is thus seen to be inscribed within the very apparatus of cinema itself. This same phantasy can be recognised in an idealist ontology of film which sees

the development of cinema as an increasingly realistic appropriation of the world. Metz rightly challenges this 'delusion' or 'idealising presumption' (Lacan) of the centred subject, but he remains largely within the terms of the theory he is criticising. Thus for Metz, what deludes the subject is the sense of a perceptual mastery of the world, whereas what the spectator is in fact seeing are mere images demanding to be recognised as real (verisimilitude). The subject is, therefore, deluded by the nature of the perceptual phenomena, rather than by its very position as origin or centre of vision.

This stress on the absence of the object seen has as its corollary a notion of a full non-imaginary relation to the object, and the assigning of the invocatory and scopic drives to the realm of the imaginary *because of* the distance which underpins their relation to the object. As we have seen above, however, the scopic and invocatory drives, which could be said to specify the spectator's relation to the cinema, simply reveal the absence of the object which underpins the drive *per se*, rather than being characterised by an absence which can be equated with the physical absence of the object from the cinematic screen. What follows are a number of differences with Metz's arguments which lead on from these remarks:

1. Inasmuch as the Imaginary becomes conditioned by the object of desire exposed in the field of the Other, the Imaginary cannot simply be equated with Klein's 'good' and 'bad' objects, even if the imaginary game she describes is at the basis of the first moments of that function.

2. The fact that the subject's own body is not on the screen does not necessarily distinguish its experience from that of the mirror stage; the subject never specularises its own body as such, and the phenomenon of transitivity demonstrates that the subject's mirror identification can be with another child.

3. The relationship of the mirror stage to the structure of the look is not a sequential one; the emergence of the latter in Lacan's theory throws into question the plenitude of the former in its very first moments, where the Other is not just the sign of an intervening symbolisation but also the exponent of desire; one cannot, therefore, refer to the mirror stage as primary identification, and to that of the look as secondary identification which is primary in the cinema; the question of secondary identification needs to be examined more closely in relation to Lacan's reading of the three modes of identification posited by Freud.

4. Since the structure of specularity undermines the Imaginary topic, certain aspects of that structure cannot be taken as marginal instances of the cinematic experience:

- (a) The relationship of the scopic drive to the object of desire is not simply one of distance but of externalisation, which means that the observing subject can become object of the look, and hence elided as subject of its own representation (the *œil derrière la tête*² could therefore be the means

whereby the subject's position as spectator in the cinema is continually threatened); the illusion at the basis of the subject 'seeing itself seeing itself' does not only appear in the meta-activity of critical analysis, but is raised and challenged by the operations of the specular illusion *per se*.

- (b) The intervention of the specular relation in the imaginary plane demonstrates that the structure of subjectivity, grounded on a decisive *coupure*, is in itself fetishistic: (i) fetishism has virtually no connection with Klein's 'good' object (Metz 1975a: 52/1975b: 72), since the third term necessary to its formulation is completely excluded from her description of the child's paranoid-schizoid and then depressive relationship to the mother; (ii) fetishism cannot be placed as a marginal instance of the cinematic experience, manifested by a passion for technique (Metz 1975a: 51-2/1975b: 71-2), but must be re-centralised in relation to the subject's precarious control of that experience, precisely because that control is first affirmed by the subject's apparent centralisation in the cinema as subject of the geometrical plane; Metz's points about scopic perversion therefore need to be referred directly to those relating to the 'all-perceiving subject'; equally, the disavowal and affirmation which he ascribes to the reality status of the objects portrayed on the screen, and secondarily to the subject's critical posture in relation to the film, need also to be related to a query hanging persistently over the subject's position as centralised Ego.

5. All these points could perhaps be formulated in relation to the ambivalent function which Lacan ascribes to the screen itself, as the locus of a potentially ludic relationship between the subject and its imaginary captation, and the simultaneous sign of the barrier between the subject and the object of desire.

6. Finally, what Metz says of the 'presentified absence' of the object in the cinema, is, as he points out, equally applicable to any pictorial representation. Whether the density of the sensory register in the cinema makes this any more true of the cinema can perhaps best be queried by the story of Zeuxis and Parrhasios, used by Lacan to illustrate the distinction between lure or decoy and *trompe-l'œil* or illusion; Zeuxis draws grapes on to a wall which act as a bait for unsuspecting birds, but Parrhasios goes one further by painting a veil on to a wall so effectively that Zeuxis turns to him and asks what lies behind it; in order to dupe a human subject: '... what one presents to him or her is a painting of a veil, that is to say, something beyond which he or she demands to see' (*Le Séminaire* xi: 102/112).

Notes

- 1 This article was written in 1975 in response to a specific demand—for some clarification of the concept of the Imaginary which was being fairly loosely imported into

certain areas of literary, and specifically filmic, criticism, at a time when works by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, from which it had been taken, were relatively unavailable in this country.

The main body of the article is therefore a fairly straightforward exposition of the concept within psychoanalytic theory. At the same time as it was being written, Christian Metz wrote his seminal article 'The Imaginary Signifier' on the pertinence of the concept of the Imaginary for study of the cinematic signifier, his interest reflecting a shift within semiotic theory from the concept of code and film product to that of textual system and production, a move which signalled a new attention to the position of the subject in relation to the cinematic apparatus within film theory. Some of Metz's arguments are taken up in a final brief section of the article published here.

I have modified the text only slightly where necessary for sake of clarification; where some aspect of the article seemed to require more serious modification, the reader has been referred to a footnote. I would like to thank Ben Brewster and Juliet Mitchell for their comments on the original draft, which was presented as a British Film Institute educational seminar paper in November 1975.

- 2 Note that Janet (quoted by Lacan) compared the formal stagnation of the images thus produced to the frozen gestures of actors when a film is halted in mid-projection (i.e. when it is not a film).
- 3 Cf. Freud on identification in relation to love and hypnosis, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Chapter 8, 'Being in Love and Hypnosis' (SE xviii: 111-6).
- 4 *Le Séminaire* I: 159. Certain points should perhaps be clarified here. At this stage in Lacan's work the relation between the Imaginary and the Symbolic was often posed as a sequence—from the image (fixed, stable) to language or the word (the means of intersubjective communication). Since language is properly the domain of psychoanalysis, it is easy to see the relation between this and analytic practice. Resistance has two meanings here—as a reference to the stranglehold of the imaginary relation (hostility, rivalry, etc.) and as the refusal of the subject to relinquish that position and enter the domain of language. Language is therefore conceived of as a (potentially full) speech which breaks the impasse of the imaginary relation. However, this notion of language, which also informs the distinction between ideal ego and ego ideal (the speech of the Other) discussed below, undergoes a crucial alteration in Lacan's own work, which also affects that between the terms Imaginary and Symbolic. At the point where language ceases to be a potentially full speech and is seen as a structure or set of differences based on a primary absence, there can no longer be a simple progression from the Imaginary (mis-recognition) to the Symbolic (mediation, recognition), since the emphasis is now on the 'splitting' which is constitutive of language itself. It is this conceptual shift which the article goes on to describe in Part II.
- 5 Lacan seems to take his reference for this distinction from Freud's own comment that the 'admonitions of others' are 'conveyed to him by the medium of the voice' (SE xiv: 94-6), thus again on a concept of language as the medium of intersubjective communication (cf. note 4 above):

What is my desire? What is my position in the imaginary structuration? This position can only be conceived in so far as a guide is found beyond the imaginary, on the level of the symbolic plane, of the legal exchange which can only be embodied through verbal exchange between human beings. This guide who governs the subject is the ego ideal. (*Le Séminaire* I: 162)

- 6 The use of the other (small o) here is problematic given the earlier definition of the ego ideal in its relation to language; the author of the *Scilicet* article (cf. Part II) uses Other throughout; certainly there is a shift in Lacan's own usage from the small *a* as a reference to the imaginary other (*autre*) to its use as a reference to absence (the *objet petit a*). I take these shifts as indicative of the intrusion of the symbolic Other back over the imaginary relation. Cf. commentary by Jacques-Alain Miller, 'Table commentée des représentations graphiques', *Écrits* (2nd edn): 903–8:

the real image, henceforth designated as i(a), represents the specular image of the subject, whilst the real object *a* supports the function of the partial object, precipitating the formation of the body. We have here a phase prior to the mirror stage (according to an order of logical dependency)—*a phase which presupposes the presence of the real Other*. (p. 904, my emphasis)

- 7 The problem of sexual difference clearly informs the first two categories, since the second type of identification is obviously the prototype for the girl's identification with the lost primordial object (the mother), in fact one of the examples which Freud gives for category two is the male homosexual's identification with the mother. However, he also gives that of Dora's symptomatic identification with her father's cough (*SE* VII: 82–3), which shows that the second category is a pivotal point for identification based on sexual identity, and identification related to the repression of a secondary object of desire (the father). The third form of identification is illustrated by the 'smoked salmon' dream (*SE* IV: 147–51), in which the dreamer identifies with the woman she has unconsciously posited as her sexual rival. The relationship of this form of identification to a repressed object of desire, no longer an object of demand, is here clear (cf. Lacan's discussion of this dream in 'La direction de la cure et les principes de son pouvoir': 620–6/256–63); this form of identification could also be taken as the model for the post-Oedipal identification of both girl and boy with the parent of the same sex.
- 8 The picture forms the front cover of *Le Séminaire* XI.
- 9 This phase of André Green's is quoted in Metz (1975a: 35/1975b: 52).

THE UNCONSCIOUS STRUCTURED AS A LANGUAGE

Martin Thom

Source: Cohn McCabe (ed.) *The Talking Cure*. New York: St Martin's Press (1981), pp. 1-44.

I

This paper is concerned with Jacques Lacan's statement 'the unconscious is structured like a language'. It is a reading of Freud through Lacanian spectacles, a reading that refers to those aspects of the work of de Saussure and Jakobson that informed Lacan's original concept of the unconscious chain. It is an inadequate account in so far as it reduces the complexity of Lacanian theory in favour of a clarity that can only mislead. This simplification derives in large part from this article's reliance on a paper by Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire, entitled 'L'Inconscient: une étude psychanalytique' (1961/1972).

At the time at which the first versions of this paper were written¹ the Laplanche/Leclaire article was considered, both by myself and by others, an accurate representation of Lacanian psycho-analysis. In Part II of the present paper I present a criticism of the misreading of Lacan that was in evidence both in the Laplanche/Leclaire paper and in my reading of it. The two parts of this paper are closely linked, in that I try, in the second part, to put right certain misconceptions that mar the first.

The talking cure

Anna O. (Bertha von Pappenheim) dubbed Freud's therapeutic method 'the talking cure', and it is there—from the mouth of one who is to be cured—that psychoanalysis founds its own discourse. Yet, in the third and fourth decades of the century, there were all too many analysts who acquiesced in the repression of this aspect of psychoanalysis. In contrast to this, Lacan's *Discours de Rome* of 1953 is concerned above all with the patient's word:

'Whether it sees itself as an instrument of healing, of formation, or of exploration in depth, psychoanalysis has only a single medium, the patient's speech' (E 247/40). But the talking cure is characterised not by bringing the symptom to consciousness: it is made word. It is the insistence of the letter that causes the symptom to stand out 'in relief' against the subject's body, and it is because psychoanalysis has a structure adequate to this discourse that it succeeds in eliminating the symptom. Yet this success is not attributable to the good faith or love of the analyst. The analyst does not direct the consciousness of the patient, for the patient's ego is not synthetic or totalising. Caught up in language and in the imaginary captures that language takes for its own, the analyst directs a cure, and in the analytic situation his own being (through the transference and counter-transference) is also put into question (E 586-7/227-8).

This article is therefore concerned with the capture of the human animal within 'the nets of the signifier', so that it is then an animal gifted with speech, gifted even in that despotic sense that Marcel Mauss elicits. Once within the clutches of a Symbolic order whose existence precedes that subject's birth, it has no choice but to be as torn as the sign itself is. Broken in two, as the Greek etymology for Symbol (συμβολον) indicates (cf. E 380), the subject is condemned to search for a totality whose essence (since it inheres only in relations) can only elude it. But where in Freud is there a discussion of signifier and signified, of the linguistic aspects of the unconscious? This question is uneasily answered, for one can either answer everywhere or nowhere. It is everywhere, in that there is hardly a page of Freud's writing that does not make reference to language and to symbol. It is nowhere, in the sense that the structural linguistics that Lacan refers to is not yet born when Freud produces his major texts on the unconscious formations (on the dream, the lapsus, the joke). There is instead a reference to nineteenth century philology and to linguistic science that fits hardly at all with structural linguistics. Yet, reference to language and to its operations there is in plenty, and if Freud used linguistic concepts that are now of no use to us, his actual practice as analyst of unconscious formations was modern. Thus, even as early as *Studies on Hysteria*, the clinical study that Freud wrote with Breuer, there are definite linguistic insights as regards the working of the psychic apparatus.

However, it is in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that we find a way forward to a linguistic formulation of the nature of the unconscious. Freud there makes a clear division between the manifest dream-text and the latent dream-thoughts. The manifest dream-text is the text of the dream that the subject assembles on waking, whereas the latent dream-thoughts comprise the more complete dream underlying the former: 'The dream-thoughts and the dream-content are presented to us like two versions of the same subject matter in two different languages' (SE IV:277). The unconscious is presented here as a different language underlying the manifest language. The

dream-content is described as a 'transcript' of the dream-thoughts 'into another mode of expression' and we are asked to 'compare the original and the translation'.

Condensation and displacement

To make Freud's thought clear, we should concentrate, as he does, on the operations that link the manifest content of the dream to the latent dream-thoughts. The two key operations are those of condensation and displacement.

I will consider condensation first. If we compare the manifest content of the dream as we assemble it upon waking, or again as it is told to the analyst, with the latent dream-thoughts that are teased out of the words and silences in the analysis itself, we find that the latent dream-thoughts are far more extensive than the manifest content. To put it simply, the manifest dream is laconic. It has been condensed, and radically so. Many of the examples given in *The Interpretation of Dreams* are approximately four or five lines long, whereas the dream-thought that Freud draws out of them, like the endless stream of silk scarves tied to each other that a magician draws from his hat, are often four or five pages long. Condensation is immense, in fact so immense that interpretation is never final. If we take any one element in the manifest dream we find that it is condensed, it is 'over-determined'. When we say that it is over-determined we mean that it has multiple connections with other elements in the latent dream-thoughts. Freud notes in his analysis of the dream of the 'botanical monograph' (*SE* iv: 169-76), that the word 'botanical' led 'by numerous connecting paths, deeper and deeper into the tangle of dream-thoughts'. Because the word is so heavily over-determined, it is described as 'a regular nodal point in the dream'. Elsewhere Freud uses the term 'switchword' to describe the same idea, and in this metaphor the idea of a 'points' system is evoked, where the word is seen as a kind of switch located at the intersection of several different tracks or pathways.

Displacement, the second key operation in the formation of dreams, refers to the fact that 'the dream is, as it were, differently centred from the dream-thoughts' (*SE* iv: 305). Elements which are central to the manifest content may be peripheral to the latent dream-thoughts. In the same way, elements which are crucial to the latent dream-thoughts may be completely absent from the manifest text. It is the work done by the patient in his free association that allows us to retrace the connections between the two systems. Displacement is therefore a form of 'distortion', a distortion made necessary by the existence of 'censorship' between the different systems of the psyche.

Metaphor and metonymy

According to de Saussure (1972/1974), any linguistic sign involved two modes of arrangement, combination and selection. Combination refers to the fact that each sign is made up of constituent parts and can only occur with other signs. De Saussure stressed the linear nature of the signifying chain (1972: 102; 1974: 70)²—in fact it is the second property he singles out for emphasis after the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign. It is combination that unites the links of the signifying chain, one to each other, and once they have been combined they are in a relation of contiguity to each other.

The axis of combination is concerned with the message. It is diachronic and can best be represented horizontally. It represents in Saussurean terms, speech rather than language, event rather than structure.

The other mode of arrangement of a linguistic sign is known as selection and it refers to the selection of signs from a set. Any selection from a set implies the possibility that another sign might be substituted in its place. It is naturally assumed that selection and substitution are both aspects of the same operation.

The axis of substitution is concerned with the code, and can best be represented as vertical. It represents language (*langue*) rather than speech (*parole*), structure rather than event. It is essential to note that, in normal speech, the two axes operate in conjunction. It is only in language disorders that we can clearly perceive the separate nature of the two modes of arrangement. Thus, it was through his study of the different kinds of aphasia that Jakobson was able to distinguish one from the other (Jakobson 1971).

From his study Jakobson concluded that there are basically two poles of language, the metaphoric and the metonymic, and that these two poles are linked to the two modes of arrangement of the linguistic sign. Depending on the type of aphasia (contiguity disorder; aphasia disorder) the sufferer would tend to produce a kind of language centred either on the metaphoric or the metonymic poles.³

The concepts of metaphor and metonymy developed by Jakobson are used in a slightly altered form by Lacan to account for the mechanisms by which the unconscious is ordered. It is therefore asserted that the Freudian concepts of condensation and displacement are directly homologous with the Jakobsonian definitions of metaphor and metonymy (*E* 495/148). To explain how this homology works I want now to consider the dream that is analysed by Laplanche and Leclaire in their 1961 paper.

Philippe's dream

The dream given in this article (it is in fact one of two) is taken from a session that an obsessional patient spent with Serge Leclaire. The text is as follows:

La place déserte d'une petite ville; c'est insolite, je cherche quelque chose. Apparaît, pieds nus, Liliane—que je ne connais pas—qui me dit: il y a longtemps que j'ai vu un sable aussi fin. Nous sommes en forêt et les arbres paraissent curieusement colorés, de teintes vives et simples. Je pense qu'il y a beaucoup d'animaux dans cette forêt, et comme je m'apprête à le dire, une licorne croise notre chemin; nous marchons tous les trois vers une clairière que l'on devine en contrebas.

The English translation (an English translation) is as follows:

The deserted square of a small town; it is unfamiliar, I am looking for something. Liliane appears, barefoot—I don't know her—she says to me: it's been a long time since I've seen such fine sand. We are in a forest and the trees seem curiously coloured with bright and simple colours. I think to myself that there must be plenty of animals in this forest and just as I am about to say it, a unicorn crosses our path; all three of us walk towards a clearing that one can just make out down below. (1972: 136)

This dream-text on its own tells us almost nothing. Without the free association of the dreamer it is worthless. It has its fragile beauty and nothing more. This fact cannot be stressed too much. In the text, the significance of the words present in it is not given to us, but is discovered in the process of analysis. The precise formation of the dream derives from several sources: (1) events of the previous day, which, in the context of the dream are described by Freud as 'daytime residues'; (2) stimuli originating from within the body, in this case the need to drink (the subject having eaten salted herrings the previous evening); and (3) events from the past, and, in particular, memories stretching far back into childhood. Freud describes dreams as 'hypermnemonic', and insists on the permanence of the memory-trace within the psychic apparatus. As early as 1895, in *The Project for a Scientific Psychology*, he had stressed that no psychology worthy of the name would lack a theory of memory, that such a theory would in fact be the very foundation of an adequate psychology. This assertion is fully borne out by the subsequent development of Freud's theory of the psychic apparatus, and by the accounts of the mechanisms of repression that he gives. These problems are discussed in greater depth in my second paper. Here I proceed with the analysis of Philippe's dream.

Events of the previous day

These were present in the dream in two forms: (1) daytime residues; and (2) internal somatic excitations.

There were various daytime residues, in the form of memory traces of what Philippe had done the previous day, that contributed to the formation of the dream. Philippe had in fact taken a walk the previous day in the forest with his niece Anne. They had noticed, at the bottom of the valley where the stream ran, traces of deer and roe-deer where they came to drink. On this walk, Philippe remarked that it was a long time since he had seen (*il y a longtemps que j'ai vu*) heather of such a rich flaming colour. These daytime residues play a significant part in the dream, as can be ascertained by glancing back at the original text.

As far as somatic excitations are concerned, we notice that Philippe had eaten some herrings that evening and therefore had a *need* to drink. Dreams, it will be remembered, are described by Freud as the guardians of sleep. In this case, the dream guards Philippe's sleep against the organic fact of his thirst, against his physiological need to drink. The dream guards his sleep by fulfilling a (repressed) wish. It cannot fulfil his need to drink: only liquid can do that. The dream fulfils a (repressed) wish or desire to drink (a desire that is inscribed on one of the subject's memory systems) and subsumes the (temporary) organic need of the subject's body within its own (timeless) trajectory.

Childhood memories

The first memory was of a summer holiday when he was three years old. He tried to drink the water which was flowing in a fountain. He cupped his hands together and drank out of the hollow that his cupped hands formed. The fountain was in the square (*place*) of a small town and had a unicorn (*licorne*) engraved in the stone.

The second memory was of a walk in the mountains when he was three years old. The walk was tied to the memory of imitating an older child cupping his hands and blowing through them, imitating the sound of a siren. This memory was also associated with the phrase *il y a longtemps que j'ai vu*.

The third childhood memory was of an Atlantic beach (*plage*) and again the phrase *il y a longtemps que j'ai vu un sable aussi fin*. This was associated with Liliane—a barefoot woman in the dream who said precisely that.

In the course of the analysis Philippe took apart the name Liliane and separated it into the two components, Lili and Anne. Anne, as we already know, was his niece, and Lili, his mother's cousin. Lili had actually been with him on that Atlantic beach when he was three years old, at the beginning of those same summer holidays when he had been taken to the town with the fountain and the unicorn engraved on it. It is important to bear the French not the English words in mind, and to note the various 'homophones' (between *Lili* and *licorne*, *place* and *plage*, etc.). These linguistic connections will be shown to be more and more significant as the work of interpretation advances.

We have already seen that, if, as Freud has said, all dreams are the fulfilment of a repressed wish, then this dream, from all angles, finds its centre, its unity, in the need or desire to drink. On that hot July day, when he was three, Philippe had said again and again, and with great insistence, '*J'ai soif*' or '*choif*', Lili, his mother's cousin, used to tease him, and say '*Alors, Philippe, j'ai soif?*', and it became a kind of formula, and the sign of a joking relationship between them: '*Philippe-j'ai-soif*'.

At this point, this nodal point, we remark that Philippe's thirst is (at the least) doubly determined. It derives organically from his *need* to drink that night when he dreamt the dream, but it also derives psychically from the *desire* to drink which the *demand* emanating from the Symbolic has caused to be inscribed in him, in the waxen surface of his memory. Since dreams are 'hypermnemic' (Freud), since they permit a privileged regression to that point at which childhood memory appears to constitute its unthinkable origins, we are concerned with the 'primal' (and therefore mythically constituted) formation of *desire*. We are concerned with the point of entrance of the drive into psychical life. Dreams, and indeed lapses, are a privileged path, a royal road back to that mythical moment at which 'difference' is established and the global calibration of signifier to signified almost obscures the continuing effect of the death drive, of 'affect', as it operates with redoubled fury in the very heart of representations.

As I have said, need has no place in psychical life. Only the 'representatives' or 'delegates' of need may enter the agencies of the mind. If we consider Philippe's dream, we can identify the ideational representative of the oral drive, which is 'the first to be distinguished in post-natal development' (Laplanche and Leclaire 1961: 104; 1972: 140). At the level of need, Philippe was easy to feed and easily satisfied, but we are not concerned with need but with the fixation of drives to their ideational representatives. We are concerned with both death and sexuality, although the representative of the death drive is most clearly discernible in the dream left unanalysed here. We find two representatives of the oral drive in the dream. One is a gesture, the other a formula. They are not present in the manifest content of the dream but can only be identified after free association.

The gesture 'registered' or 'inscribed' as an image is that of cupping the hands together in a conch shape to produce a siren call. We learn from the analysis that this gesture is tied to the cupping together of the hands at the fountain of the unicorn and thus signifies 'quenched thirst'. The second representative of the oral drive is the formula *J'ai soif*. It is a kind of representative in this boiling hot summer of Philippe's ego. The formula is also associated with Lili, as we saw in the narration of the third childhood memory (of the Atlantic beach), elicited in the course of the analytic session. Since we are concerned with the oral drive, we are by definition concerned with the problem of thirst, and in this context it is important to note that the acoustic chain 'Li' is common to both *Licorne* and Lili, the woman who

listens to his cry of thirst and is in a position, it seems, to receive his word. It seemed like that to Philippe because Lili was seen by him to have an 'ideal' marriage, and she thus represented the idea of a harmony and satisfaction not present in Philippe's mother's marriage. A harmony and satisfaction doubly associated with the acoustic chain 'Li' in French: for 'Li' can be metonymically connected with *lit* (bed), and Lili with *lolo*, which signifies 'milk' or 'breast' in French baby talk.

The unconscious structured like a language

When Lacan claimed that the unconscious was structured like a language, he seems to have meant exactly what he said:

The analysable symptom, whether it be normal or pathological, is distinguished not only from the diagnostic index but also from any imaginable form of pure expressivity in that it is supported by a structure which is identical to the structure of language. And by that I do not mean a structure to be situated in some sort of so-called generalised semiology drawn from the limbo of its periphery, but the structure of language as it manifests itself in the languages which I might call positive, those which are actually spoken by the mass of human beings. (E 444)

When Lacan asserts that the symptom is upheld by a structure that is identical to the structure of language, one has to try to measure the weight of the term 'identical'. There are certain objections to this term implicit in Freud's writings and I want to consider these objections before continuing the argument.

Freud wrote of language as operant in the preconscious, and in the secondary process (which is at work in the preconscious), but the processes he considered to be operant in the unconscious were of a very different sort. The fact of there being no negation, no logic, no syntax, and no time in the unconscious makes it hard for us to accord any process there the status of a language as spoken by 'the mass of human beings'.

There was a language in the primary process, Freud stressed, but it was the language of psychosis, and of dreams in their regression to the form of images:

in schizophrenia *words* are subjected to the same process as that which makes the dream-images out of latent dream-thoughts—to what we have called the primary psychical process. They undergo condensation, and by means of displacement transfer their cathexes to one another in their entirety. The process may go so far that a single word, if it is specially suitable on account of its numerous

connections, takes over the representation of a whole train of thought. (*SE* xiv: 199)

Here, in the 1915 paper on 'The Unconscious' we clearly have some kind of conception of an unconscious structured like a language. As Ricœur points out (1970: 400), 'the problem is to assign an appropriate meaning to the word "like"'. Is language a privileged model that we compare with the structure of the unconscious? Or does the term 'a language' merely mean that the unconscious is structured with reference to language as it is in operation in the preconscious and conscious?

Thing-presentations and word-presentations

In his analysis of the relations between the different agencies of the psychic apparatus Freud introduced a new terminology in 1914/15 (in the Papers on Metapsychology). He distinguished sharply between what he called 'thing-presentation' (*Sachvorstellung*) and 'word-presentation' (*Wortvorstellung*). It is significant that the nuances of these terms were often lost in early translations, which would render *Vorstellung* as 'idea' and not as 'presentation'.⁴

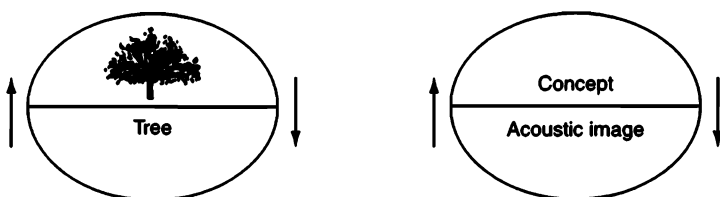
Thing-presentations are essentially visual, they are perceptual entities, images or memory-traces. Freud's account of them in *The Ego and the Id* as 'optical memory residues' shows in fact how little conflict there is between this new terminology and the terminology of inscription that runs constantly through Freud's writing from 1895 onwards, whereas in 1915 he had been quite adamant that the new terminology rendered the old one redundant. Word-presentations are essentially 'auditory'—'In essence a word is after all the mnemonic residue of a word that has been heard' (*SE* xix: 21)—and in this sense may be aligned with the acoustic chain as analysed by de Saussure.

Freud expressed the relation between the thing-presentation and the word-presentation, and their participation in the different agencies in this way: 'The conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone' (*SE* xiv: 201). The unconscious presentation is stated here to be 'the presentation of the thing alone'. In what sense can this kind of presentation be said to be linguistic? The linguistic sign has two basic components, the concept and the acoustic image.⁵ How may the thing-presentation be aligned with this conception? It should be clear by now that Freud, working with another linguistics altogether, was uncertain, and that not all of his statements are consistent with each other. He was at least clear in his own mind that the thing-presentation could not attain consciousness without being 'bound' to a word-presentation and the thing-presentation would seem to be simply the Saussurean concept, as in the formula:

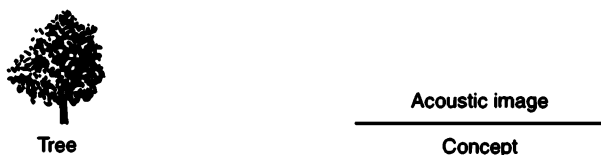
| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| <u>concept</u> | <u>signified</u> |
| acoustic image | signifier |

initially set out by de Saussure in his *Cours* (1972). However, it is clear from Freud's own writing that he would not have been happy with a two-tiered formula and would have wished to suggest that there is some sort of signifying chain in action in the unconscious too. This paper is largely concerned with the different attempts that have been made to formulate clearly Freud's often fleeting perceptions as to the relation between the unconscious and language.

The original formula of de Saussure places the signified above the signifier, thus:



Lacan, for reasons related to the nature of repression and the unconscious, reverses this formula:



Using the symbols 'S' and 's' to represent signifier and signified, Lacan then writes the formula in this way:

S (signifier)
s (signified)

The formula is inverted because Lacan holds that the signifier has priority over the signified, and that sense is therefore constituted through the relation between signifiers (*E* 498/150). Like Lévi-Strauss (1950), Lacan would argue that meaning is created by a chain of signifiers that, in its globality, created meaning *d'un seul coup* (in one go). When the two global registers (S/s) were created in that cruci-formation to which myths and dreams bear witness, Lévi-Strauss argues that a 'supplementary ration' was necessary to support symbolic thought in its operations (1950; xlix). For, given that the two

registers are created simultaneously 'as two complementary blocks',⁶ human thought could only appropriate otherness through 'a surplus of signification'. This excess represents the margin beyond language that makes of language something more than 'a name-giving system or a list of words, each corresponding to the thing it names' (de Saussure 1972: 97/1974: 65). For, such a theory of 'labelling' would imply that the signified was a thing in itself rather than a concept, and that implication would be anathema to Lacan as to de Saussure.

Lacan is, however, actually concerned to modify the de Saussure of the *Cours*. He rejects the Saussurean illustration of the relation existing between signifier and signified because it suggests to us that 'the signifier answers to the function of representing the signified'. Lacan would hold, rather, that meaning springs from (metonymic and metaphoric) relations between signifiers. Rather than being a 'representation', meaning in Lacanian psychoanalysis is a question of production. Lacan justified his emphasis on the Saussurean conception of the signifier by referring to de Saussure's stress on 'the incessant sliding of the signified under the signifier' (*E* 502/154). For Lacan, the signified becomes less and less important simply because it eludes us, it slips away from us. The intrusion of the signifier into the domain considered to be that of the subject thinking itself is a necessary effect of the subversion of the subject that Lacanian theory demands. Just as it is impossible to admit that the subject bathes in the radiance of its own thought, so also is it mistaken to construct the two distinct entities 'language' and 'thought' in order to fuse them later as if they were in the service of some perfectly calibrated celestial machine. For Lacan is concerned with the prior existence of the signifying order and with the effects of that priority on consciousness. He is concerned with the (metonymic) movements of language and the progressive-regressive movement of desire that insists there, with the (metaphorical) blossoming as the chain is momentarily suspended and that which is suspended from it intrudes.

In the section of the *Cours* that treats the mutability of the linguistic sign (1972: 104-13/1974: 71-8), de Saussure writes of a loosening of the bond between the acoustic image and the concept, of a shift in the relation between the two. His examples are of changes in Old German and Modern German, or between classical Latin and French (viz. the Latin *necare* (to kill), becomes the French *noyer* (to drown)). These are clearly changes that take place over long periods of time, indeed whole centuries. The inference, however as far as Lacan is concerned, is quite clear: 'Language is radically powerless to defend itself against the forces which *from one moment to the next* are shifting the relationship between the signified and the signifier' (*italics added*) (de Saussure 1972: 110/1974: 75). It is the change 'from one moment to the next' in the relation between signifier and signified that allows Lacan to superimpose Saussurean linguistics on to the Freudian dream-text. The dream-text is a finely spun web of linguistic

interconnections, yet analysis cannot exhaust it. Analysis of a dream is indeed interminable. Yet, at certain points, the work is halted. It runs up against 'nodal points' which are, in Freud's words, 'unplumbable'. For Lacan, these nodal points are points at which the two registers (S/s) are anchored to each other: he describes them as *points de capiton* (as raised buttons on a mattress or an armchair). These *points de capiton* are the points at which need is represented in psychical life, and in anchoring the two 'chains' to each other 'they bring to a halt the otherwise indefinite sliding of meaning' (E 805/303). Lacan compares the analyst to a fisherman who 'is fishing in the flow of the pre-text', but who cannot hope to catch the actual movement of the fish. The signified is here marked with a bar (\bar{s}) because it is always receding, disappearing.

As I have said, the bar in Lacan's formulae represents the repression of the signified, and therefore the maintenance of the signifier and the signified as two radically separate orders. In de Saussure's *Cours* the bar does not have a value of this sort but is simply the line that separates the two chains. For Freud, the preconscious and the unconscious are both separated and linked; there is a 'censorship' separating them and yet derivatives of a repressed element do cross the bar. Indeed, if we are to avoid the 'psycho-physical parallelism' against which Freud warned, this crossing has to occur. If certain passages (following the image of the Russian censorship) are blacked out, there are aspects (derivatives) of the original text that can still be deciphered in spite of the obliterations on either side. Thus, the pure linearity of the signifying chain, as de Saussure described it in the *Cours*, has to be modified so as to include the intrusions of another chain that lies beneath it and insists that it be read: 'There is in effect no signifying chain which does not have, as if attached to the punctuation of each of its units, a whole articulation of relevant contexts suspended vertically, as it were, from the point' (E 503/154). This 'other' chain that lies beneath, and is suspended vertically from particular points, is composed of signifiers that have fallen to the rank of signifieds. To understand what is meant by this it is necessary to consider the connection between metaphor and repression.

Metaphor and repression

In metaphor, as Lacan sees it, a new signifier replaces the original one. The original signifier then falls to the rank of the signified (E 708). If we represent the new signifier as S' , we can illustrate the process diagrammatically:

STAGE I:

\underline{S} (original signifier)

s (original signified)

STAGE II:

$\underline{S'}$ (new signifier)

\bar{S} (original signifier fallen to the rank of the signified)

To understand these diagrammatic representations, it is vital to remember that we are here concerned not just with the structure of language, as it is analysed by linguists, but with repression. In a language without repression, things would be just as the linguist describes them, but since Freud we have learnt that intrusions (of slips, jokes, etc.) into the text of daily life make stage 1 S/s a purely hypothetical case: 'In a language without metaphors, there would indeed be relations of signifier to signified which may be symbolised by S/s; but there would be no equivocation, nor any unconscious to decipher' (Ricoeur 1970: 401). Lacan describes repression as a snag or rip or rent in the tissue of speech and such snags make it difficult to sustain a structural linguistics as pertinent to psychoanalysis if such a linguistics is constructed solely on the basis of a bar separating an acoustic chain from a conceptual one. the general Freudian category of 'distortion' demands some recognition, for it was Freud's achievement in the monographs on dreams, jokes and parapraxes to show that there was a locus of language to which the conscious subject was, in Lacan's word, 'excentric'.

Repression, for Lacan, 'is' metaphor. The snag in the tissue marks the place where the original signifier is, as it were, vertically suspended. It has been 'displaced' and has fallen to the rank of the signified. Once it has fallen (and the topographic idiom is, I think, faithful to this process) it persists as a repressed signifier itself. This persistence and insistence of a repressed chain is precisely what gives poetry the quality of saying what it says as much by what is not there as by what is. Thus, in 'The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious', Lacan asserts de Saussure's interest in poetry some years before his writing on the uses of the anagram in Greek or Latin poetry was first published: 'But one has only to listen to poetry, which Saussure was no doubt in the habit of doing, for a polyphony to be heard, for it to become clear that all discourse is aligned along the several staves of a score' (*E* 503/154). There is, however, a slight problem involved in equating metaphor and repression. It is this: if metaphor is seen as corresponding to repression, the existence of a repressed chain suggests that, from the paradigmatic axis, only two elements are involved (the new signifier, S', and the original signifier fallen to the rank of the signified, S). Thus, whereas the paradigmatic axis is defined by the possible substitution of all its elements, one from another, the concept of repression would seem to endow certain signifiers with a more privileged position than that of others along the paradigmatic axis. But just as there is no language without metaphor so also—if one excludes the form of aphasia that Jakobson terms contiguity disorder—there is no language without metonymy. Since metonymy affects both the message and the code, it is the metonymic movement of language that connects the repressed chain of signification with the rest of the elements in the code. In Lacanian terms, this movement is the movement of desire, and it is the restlessness of this desire that psychoanalysis sees as intruding on language. Lacan's position therefore represents a subversion of the science of language and those linguists who

criticise his work from the point of 'normal' language are really missing the point (*E* 467).

Another approach to the problem of the fixity that the metaphor/repression equation seems to ascribe to the workings of language is that developed by Laplanche and Leclaire in their analysis of Philippe's dream. They argue that the persistence and insistence of a repressed chain demands representation in terms of four levels instead of the two that are shown to us by de Saussure.

These four levels divide up into what Laplanche and Leclaire call the Preconscious and the Unconscious Chains:

$$\begin{array}{rcl} \frac{S'}{s} & \text{The Preconscious Chain} & \\ - & & \\ \frac{S}{S} & \text{The Unconscious Chain} & \end{array}$$

This formula represents the relation between the preconscious and the unconscious in a way that allows one to make a close correlation between metaphor and repression. Yet this diagram's meaning cannot be grasped without reference to Freud's own writings on the nature of repression. I will also have to consider the problem of the origins of the unconscious and the relation of this origin to language. Until these problems are tackled the meaning of the lower half of the diagram, where there is a signified that is apparently its own signifier, can only elude us.

Repression

If the formulation of the concept of the unconscious was the crucial event in the history of Freudian psychoanalysis, repression too was a concept indispensable to its development. It is worth noting that Stekel abandoned the concept of the unconscious and repression too—'the cornerstone on which the whole structure of psychoanalysis rests' (*SE* xiv: 16). In discussing this cornerstone my key points of reference are to the two papers of 1915, on the unconscious and on repression, respectively.

In considering repression one is necessarily led to consider the relations between the systems of the psyche as Freud defined them, the relations between the unconscious and the preconscious, and between the preconscious and the conscious. I have already looked at these relations in terms of presentations, in terms of 'word-presentations' and 'thing-presentations', and have shown how persuasively the terminology of structural linguistics has been used to describe these concepts.

The fact is that repression, although described by Freud at one point as 'a failure in translation', demands some kind of use of energetic terms. The

initial definition in the 1915 paper—that ‘*the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away, and keeping it at a distance from the conscious*’ (SE xiv: 147)—is quite a mild expression of the force with which a censorship must be invested.

Freud divides repression into two phases, primal repression, and after-repression or repression proper.

Repression proper

In repression proper, the presentation which is repressed is affected by two different ‘forces’. It is, first of all, repulsed by the preconscious system, and cathexis is withdrawn. Secondly it is attracted by a chain already existing in the unconscious (the repressed chain of signification, i.e. S/S in the diagram above), a repressed chain to which it is attracted. Some explanation then has to be made for primal repression. To understand the relation between repression proper and primal repression it has to be accepted that our reconstruction of it is necessarily a fictional one.

Primal repression

Freud was intensely preoccupied with the problem of origins, a preoccupation that on occasion overrides his more Saussurean concerns. In the case of primal repression, since it is so closely concerned with the entrance of the drive into psychical life, it is of especial interest to Freud. If this primal repression happens—at least as a mythical event—then we have to postulate a kind of mythical state apprehended not through experimental psychology, nor through psycholinguistics, but through the archaeology of the subject that psychoanalysis represents.

Briefly, what happens in the primal repression is this. The ideational element is refused entrance to consciousness but is (as representative of the drive) inscribed in the unconscious. A *fixation* is then established—‘the representative in question persists unaltered from then onwards, and the instinct (drive) remains attached to it’ (SE xiv: 148). With this fixation, the instinct (drive) accedes to the order of the signifier. The idea of fixation expressed here, since it so explicitly suggests an immutability, can be compared to Freud’s model of the psyche as a ‘writing-machine’ on to whose mnemonic systems traces are inscribed. It is the ideational representatives of death and sexuality that are fixed in primal repression and Ernest Jones’s claim that there is a limited range of symbolic reference in the unconscious (life, death, one’s kinsfolk, one’s body) can only be understood in terms of this meeting between the body and the signifier.⁷

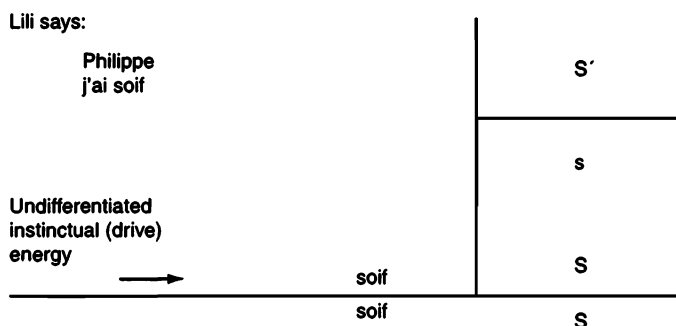
In the case of Philippe, whose dream we have been considering, the formula (*J’ai*) *soif* becomes the representative of his need—it represents the oral drive, such that his need to drink is from then on inextricably entangled with

his desire. With the primal repression, the unconscious is mythically constituted. It is the unconscious chain created at this point that underlies and supports language. The psychoanalytic evidence suggests that this unconscious chain is constituted through the agency of certain 'key-signifiers'. These key-signifiers, operating as hinges between the universe of rules and that of blind need structure human language. Here is how Laplanche and Leclaire conceive of key-signifiers:

In the formula for metaphor, it is necessary here to concede of the existence of certain '*key-signifiers*' placed in a metaphorizing position, and to which is assigned, because of their special weight, the property of ordering the whole system of human language. (1961: 116/1972: 160)

The key-signifier here, (*J'ai*) *soif* (*choif*) is then the one that because of its 'particular weight' organises Philippe's insertion into the symbolic order, the order of language. The myth can be reconstructed.

Prior to his entrance into the symbolic order—and we can note in passing the presence of the *je* in the formula, which, in grammatical terms, is a shifter, and through its duplex structure, its duplicity, organises the relations between message and code in human language—(Jakobson 1963: 176–97) we can imagine Philippe as a child who simply existed within the non-signifying world of his own need. In this (mythical) time, to have thirst is simply to be engulfed in a blind need which is then satisfied by taking in the wanted thing. Suddenly, with Lili's joking remark, *Philippe-j'ai-soif*, the world is rendered significant, and what had been a blind instinctual impulse is caught 'in the nets of the signifier'. This is illustrated diagrammatically as follows:



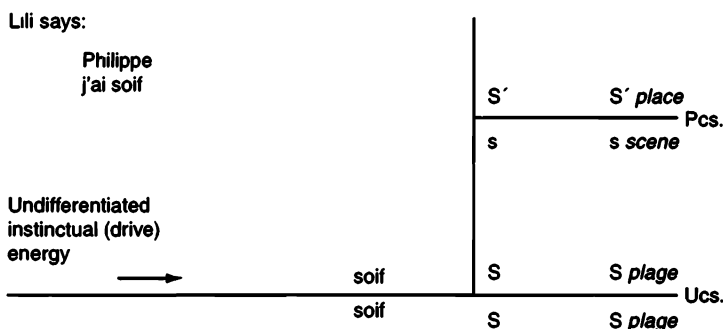
Thus (*J'ai*) *soif* is one of the kernels of Philippe's unconscious. The work of analysis, in its untiring elimination of the outer husk, will always come up against this 'knot of signification'. It is a 'point of umbilication' (Lacan) because it is so radically over-determined. Thus, it should be noted that Philippe's memory is of Lili saying '*J'ai soif*'. His insertion into the symbolic

order occurs then, through the mediation of another whose name (Lili/lolo: 'breast', 'milk' in French baby talk) invokes his dual relation with his mother. However, it is also significant that the name 'Lili' was not Philippe's aunt's name at all, but merely the affectionate nickname by which she was known by her husband, and by her husband alone. Thus, the desire to drink, around which Philippe's dream is organised, is multiply over-determined. Besides the desire to drink, there is in play Philippe's desire for Lili, Lili's own desire to drink and Lili's desire for her own husband. Since Philippe was one of those children who said *moi-je* (i.e., he had not mastered the use of 'shifters') the formula *J'ai soif* signified the dizzy moment in which he was to move from a narcissism, where Lili/lolo was merely an extension of his being, to a symbolic order that placed the other under the hegemony of the Other. If it was Lili who had been the mediating element in this transformation that would have been because the spell of the dual relation with the mother would have to give before an order organised in terms of an Oedipal structure of three separate persons. In such a structure, being is not narcissistic closure (i.e. *moi-je*), but a locus of subjectivity in language that cannot be appropriated. However, regression from the symbolic to the imaginary is always possible. For, as need is transformed into desire through demand, the radical lack of being of the child whose organism has been altered (from a calyx of bright, only partially centralised slivers of light, into the fused silver of a total mirror-recognition) is re-inscribed at the level of the signifier, whose movement itself invokes the flaw it labours to conceal.

Indeed, if the formula (*J'ai*) *soif* is able to act as the kernel of the dream, if it is so heavily over-determined, it is because the derivatives of the repressed representative of the drive do still find their way into language. If there is sufficient 'distortion' of the derivatives to overcome the censorship then they have free access to the preconscious and conscious, and in the process of free association Freud notes that the analysand goes on spinning associative threads 'till he is brought up against some thought, the relation of which to what is repressed becomes so obvious that he is compelled to repeat his attempt at repression' (*SE* XVI: 149-50).

In Philippe's dream it is possible to identify some of the derivatives of the instinctual representative (*J'ai*) *soif*. In the manifest text of Philippe's dream the word *place* appears. Here is how this particular signifier can be related diagrammatically to what is suspended vertically from it (see facing diagram).

This diagram again gives the four-tiered formula and represents metaphor (repression) as the superimposition of signifiers. The new signifier (*place*) is superimposed on to the original signifier *place*, which has fallen to the rank of signified. The signified is the scene (*scène*) where the action takes place and here it is of course confused with the original signifier *place*. Our problem is one of conceptualising a four-tiered system in terms of a two-tiered signifier/signified system. As I have already noted, since all language involves



metaphor (repression), there will be no language that is not underpinned by a repressed chain of signification. The radical condensation of the dream-work is in fact the result of the crossing of the Saussurean bar between the language of conscious and preconscious and that operating in the repressed chain. Condensation operates, as it were, vertically, between a signifier and another signifier that has fallen to the rank of the signified. Condensation is then a feature of language that is never completely there, but exists somewhere between the work of distortion and the work of interpretation, the latter in its guise simply reversing the former:

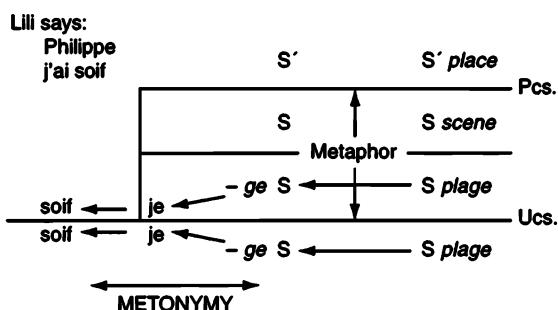
The creative spark of the metaphor does not spring from the bringing together of two images, that is, of two signifiers equally actualised. It flashes between two signifiers one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present through its (metonymic) connection with the rest of the chain. (*E* 507/157)

The operations of metaphor and metonymy are therefore, as I had emphasised in the discussion on Jakobson, mutually interdependent. If metaphor creates a superimposition of signifiers, metonymy effects a continual sliding of signifiers: '... the one side (*versant*) of the effective field constituted by the signifier, so that meaning can emerge there' (*E* 506/156). The point is that metonymy, for Lacan, concerns only the relations between signifiers, it does not concern the signified at all, for the signified is continually slipping away underneath.

The nature of metonymy can be better understood by returning to the diagrammatic representation of Philippe's dream. I have already attempted a description of the fiction of primal repression. I have also shown how it is that a signifier such as *place* exists by virtue of a signifier that it has displaced—*plage*. Or to put it another way, we have seen how the original signifier *plage* is in a metaphorizing position with regard to the signifying chain 'above' it. Since we are concerned with what Freud calls the 'derivatives' of

the repressed instinctual (drive) representative, we need to trace the connections between the right and left-hand side of the diagram.

Freud's initial point in separating out the two different kinds of repression was quite simply a logical one. If it was argued that, for repression to occur, the 'presentation' had not only to be repulsed by the preconscious but also to be attracted by a chain already existing in the unconscious, then a primal repression had to be postulated. The associative chains connect the already existing chain in the unconscious to the (distorted) derivatives of the repressed instinctual representative around which the unconscious chain is organized



Thus, when the work of distortion is undone, we find the original signifier/signified relation *plage/scène*. The final syllable *ge* is phonetically linked to the *je* in the *J'ai soif* of the unconscious chain, and we can therefore postulate a metonymic sliding to the left of the diagram, from *plage/plage* to *-gel-ge* to *jelje* and so to *(J'ai) soif*.

II

In the original version of this paper I concluded with a summary of my doubts as to the nature of the unconscious chain. These doubts (and confusions) were, for the most part, to do with the use of the term 'signifier'. What exactly was the link between its usage in linguistics and its usage in psychoanalytic theory? In relying overmuch on the Laplanche/Leclaire paper I was led to answer this question in too reductive a manner. Instead of preserving the tension between the forms of knowledge that linguistics and psychoanalysis each produce, I tended to suppress it—the signifying chain was reduced to an elementary signifying unit, and, since I was working with Freud's papers on metapsychology from volume XIV of the *Standard Edition*, I was led to think of it in terms of the distinction between a word-presentation and a thing-presentation.

It is clear, however, that Lacan always writes very explicitly of the signifying *chain* and firmly rejects the quest for an elementary signifying unit. Both

the discussion of the Saussurean relation between signifier and signified, in 'The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious', and the 'elementary cell' (E 805/303), posited in 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire', are good evidence for this assertion. If you look carefully at the 'graphs' that Lacan uses to illustrate this 'elementary cell' it is quite clear that they do not imply an anchored relation between one signifier and one signified. They concern, rather the retroactive effect of the code on the message and the syntactic disturbances that then ensue.

The search for an elementary signifying unit implies the search for a sign, and it is in emphasising the distinction between sign and signifier that Lacan repudiates this search. An imaginary narrative will explain this distinction best. Suppose a car with blacked-out windows and a driver who is a trained musician. In this total darkness he will have to play for his life. For there is a code, a 'score', and if he follows it, note for note, the machine that encases him will not come to grief. The 'score' is therefore, according to Peirce's definition, a *sign* (or a series of signs) for it represents something (the road) to someone (the driver). Notice how, in this fable, the sign permits control and conscious manipulation. Notice too that fidelity to the score is all that is required. It is not a question of style, of *dueñde*, the road is a red carpet unrolled by the divinity for any perfect sight-reader. Yet Lacan deliberately avoids this usage of the term *sign* and opts for the term *signifier*—'the signifier represents the subject for another signifier'. In this formulation, the subject is displaced with respect to the signifying chain, which exists ever ahead of it and subverts its claim to represent either itself or an object in language. At the risk of constructing a kind of palimpsest I want to consider this question once more, and to comment again on the original Laplanche/Leclaire article in order to show how it is that a too great reliance on its formulations tends to obscure certain crucial aspects of Lacan's interpretation of Freud.

If this endless recasting should seem a tedious exercise it is worth bearing in mind that it has been a common mistake, and not mine alone, to regard the Laplanche/Leclaire article as an adequate representation of Lacan's work. It was central to the 1960 Congress of Bonneval and was subsequently translated into English and Spanish. Its influence did doubtless stem from the clarity of its exposition, and one would therefore have thought that, given hindsight, criticism would be a simple matter. But the task is actually more complicated than one would at first suspect. In her book, *Jacques Lacan* (1970/1977), Anika Lemaire analyses the article at some length, and I had at first thought that it would be enough to summarise, in this second part—as Lemaire does—the aspects of the article that represent a divergence from Lacan's own teaching. But it is as if one pupil had fallen (Laplanche) and the other one had been saved (Leclaire); the logic of that grace, withheld or granted, is not analysed. Lacan himself has on several occasions disowned the article, and in so doing he has tended to imply the same clear-cut division

between the two, a division that would coincide with an institution's edict (Lemaire 1970: 9–20/1977: vii–xv).

My initial and most obvious concern is to understand Lacan's thought by reference to that of certain of his pupils, but my wish to interpret the relation that links a teacher's work to that of his followers will necessarily run up against certain obstacles. I do not know exactly how the different psychoanalytic institutions reproduce themselves through training analyses, and am therefore stranded between an anecdotal history of factional dispute and fission—which I distrust—and an adequate theory of the symbolic conditions ordering that history. This theory exists only in an inchoate form, and there is, beyond this difficulty, another one. For, in any theoretical argument in psychoanalysis, I feel constrained—at one moment or another—to be silent in the face of a clinical practice of which I know so little. When the argument touches, as this one does, on the nature of psychosis, it is a little awkward to imagine oneself assuming the caution and reticence of a science in the same manner as one had assumed its confidence and garrulousness. Yet one is still permitted, outside of all reference to clinical practice, to consider a series of theoretical statements and to try and construct a logic of the discrepancies that arise there. This permission is more particularly granted in those periods in which psychoanalysis enjoys a rapid and triumphant advance. For the dislocations between the work of this or that pupil are also, in such periods, enormously instructive; their stumblings will tend to mirror the ones that we would for ourselves, in the face of a difficult teaching, imagine. Between 1957 and 1960 Lacan wrote a series of major texts and these, together with the seminars whose basic formulations they condense, laid the groundwork for what people now call Lacanian psychoanalysis. Laplanche and Leclaire's article is, for this reason, of especial interest. This interest lies both in its claim to represent Lacan's theory at that date and also in the fact that Lacan has disowned certain aspects of it.

His statements on this article have been predominantly concerned to correct an error of Laplanche's that derived from his transposition, in too literal and frozen a form, of a formula that had been used by Lacan to account for the structure of psychotic speech. These statements are elaborated by Lemaire in her book, and, as I have suggested, there is a sense in which the orthodoxy of one pupil and the heresy of another are taken to be self-evident facts.

In this second part I have also given a fairly comprehensive criticism of Laplanche's contribution to the original 1961 paper. One effect of Laplanche's formulations was to drive a wedge between the structure of neurosis and psychosis as they are understood in Freud's writing, and my criticisms of Laplanche here therefore demand a discussion of the technical vocabulary used first by Freud and then by Lacan, in the analysis of psychosis. It is clear that Freud had sought to define a mechanism peculiar to psychosis and it is also clear that Lacan's 'On a Question Preliminary to any

Possible Treatment of Psychosis' (E 531–83/179–225) is meant as a return to this. But the existence of a mechanism peculiar to psychosis does not in itself cast the psychotic back into a realm beyond understanding and beyond therapeutic intervention. Whilst Lacan's preliminary questioning hinged on the possibility of understanding what it was that was being said, Laplanche's formulations make it quite impossible to grasp the logic of paranoid psychosis and, in terms of linguistic structure, the production by Schreber of a *Grundsprache*, a basic language (SE XII: 23). In this second part I try to demonstrate this and also to avoid attributing a kind of substance to the unconscious. Linguistics will not be given the privileged status that an excessively structuralist interpretation of Lacan had led me to impute to it in the first part of the article.

Primal repression

At a critical moment, then, in 'L'Inconscient: une étude psychanalytique', Laplanche argues for the division of the primal repression into two separate stages, as if the unconscious required two different levels of symbolisation in order to come into being (1961: 117–18/1972: 161–62). In the first of these stages there is a net of signifying oppositions thrown over the subject's universe but there is no anchorage of signifier to signified. Laplanche defines this stage as a mythical one but accepts that the kind of language that is in evidence in paranoid psychosis represents it well enough. In that use of language there is, he writes 'an uncontrollable oscillation of a pair of differential elements' (1961: 118/1972: 162). It is the second level of symbolisation to which Laplanche accords the description of primal repression (Freud) or metaphor and it is that creates the ballast that is lacking in a psychotic's world:

It is that which really creates the unconscious, by introducing that ballast which will always be missing in a unilinear language, and which is lacking—to a greater or a lesser extent—in the symbolic world of the schizophrenic. The signified is from then on caught in specific meshes, at certain privileged points: the indefinite oscillation of + and –, O and A, 'good' and 'bad', right and left, comes to a halt. (1961: 118; 1972: 162)

According to Laplanche, this anchorage is manifested in the existence of 'key-signifiers' (eg. *soif* in the Philippe case-study in Part I) or of an unconscious chain and it is these that enable the neurotic to speak rather than being spoken, because the unconscious provides the ballast for language to work. Thus, for Laplanche, the unconscious is the condition necessary for language. However, for Lacan, it is quite clearly language that is the condition for the unconscious.⁸ To account for the confusion that has occurred

here, I want to look in more detail at Laplanche's division of the process of primal repression into two stages, a division that corresponds to the four-tiered formulation as presented in Part I.

By dividing the process of the primal repression into two stages Laplanche is able to obscure the question of the fixation of the drive to the signifier, and therefore the function of the death drive in the human unconscious. In addition, this division misrepresents Lacan's work on psychosis in that it tends to drive the psychotic back into an unplumbable domain irretrievably separate from neurosis.⁹ But Laplanche's most critical misconceptions derive from the excessively rigid schematisation that he gives of formulae that were originally presented as being 'good to think with': one can, I believe, compare Lacan's use of graphs, schemae and formulae in the 1950s with Freud's own use of a schema in Chapter VII of *The Interpretation of Dreams* to represent the psychic apparatus. It is only in this chapter that some of Freud's boldest speculations as to the structure of the psychic apparatus are first *publicly* stated. The first properly topographic conceptualisation of the psyche occurs here and in presenting it Freud is careful to contrast the speculative nature of this chapter with the more solid ground of the previous ones. But in presenting a graphic representation of the psychic apparatus he warns that one should not mistake the scaffolding for the building.¹⁰ This warning as to the usage of such devices would seem to me to apply to Lacan's work also: his schemae, his graphs, his formulae are all intended (if one transposes the terms used) 'to make the complications of mental functioning intelligible by dissecting the function and assigning its different constituents to different component parts of the apparatus'. In the 1961 article of Laplanche and Leclaire there is a confusion of just the sort that Freud had anticipated. The concept of the *points de capiton* and the *formula of the metaphor* are both taken too far from the contexts in which they were originally developed and they are thus irremediably altered.¹¹ The point is, of course, that diagrams have the power to fascinate the person who looks at them, but the bizarre complexity of the different 'graphs' militates against that kind of imaginary capture. For, by the time one has thought one's way through to a term-by-term transposition of the Freudian and (nascent) Lacanian terminology on to the vectors of the graph, the graph will have served its purpose and one will be able to *say* what it *does*. The vectors are then cords to the frame of a Lazarus: he may have looked death in the face but his body will only at the gift of the word arise. The concept of the *points de capiton* has therefore to be considered in relation to the diagrammatic representations that first nurtured it. Once it is properly understood—as an attempt to grasp the mechanisms whereby discourse is synchronically and diachronically punctuated—it could as easily as not be jettisoned. It is clear that Laplanche attributes an excessive concreteness to the concept and that this concreteness in its turn implies a too absolute division between neurosis and psychosis (where one is anchored and the other not).¹²

For what Laplanche has called a lack of anchorage and has therefore reduced to the non-pinning of a particular signifier to a particular signified should more properly be understood as a fault in discourse that affects the speaking subject's relation to the two orders (signifier, signified) in their entirety. In the highly dense pages of the 1961 Laplanche/Leclaire article in which the concept of the *points de capiton* is first cited, Laplanche slips a little too quickly between the various writings from which these different formulations were abstracted. His first citation of the S/s formula derives from Lacan's 'The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason since Freud', but having asserted, with Lacan, the radical distinction between signifier and signified that the Saussurean bar establishes, a distinction that implies the endless shifting of one order beneath another, he then proceeds to modify that distinction by reference to the concept of the *points de capiton*. In the endless sliding of one order beneath another, the order of the signifier, since it is not anchored to the signified, can only refer to itself: each signifier therefore *is* by reference to its differential relation to every other, and it is only as a totality that the order of the signifier enters into relation with the order of the signified. But Laplanche, since he divides the process of primal repression into two stages, fails to see that what he terms a fiction (the myth of language in a reduced state) is fictional only in the sense that it is constructed backwards at the moment of fixation of the death drive to the signifier, or, more exactly, at the moment of the 'abolition' of the paternal signifier. The imprisonment of the schizophrenic within a symbolic universe that is divided into left and right, good and bad, light and dark, derives from the pre-existence of the Symbolic order and of the subject's relation to it. Fiction it is not, when winged creatures beat out your name in 'the courts of the sun'. It is rather the failure to assume one's name by sacrificing the most narcissistically invested (if imaginary) part of one's body that leads hallucinatory figures to return in the real, flooding through the unstopped. For not assuming one's name and therefore one's thirdness (for the signifier is handed down by another) one is condemned to repeat a chant with two terms, oneself and a God (Leclaire 1958: 397-8). There is no need though, to posit a prior and fictional stage: if the psychotic is 'spoken' and can no longer assume his own messages (they return to him in an inverted form—they begin as a declaration of love, 'I love him', and return as 'he hates me') it is because of a disordered relation to the 'treasury of signifiers'. This fault in primal repression can be illustrated by the acts of naming to which another of Leclaire's patients, Pierre, was forced to submit. On coming to a particular session he announced that he had called his mackintosh 'Beaujolais'. He explained that he called it this because his wife had said how pretty (*joli*) it was when he had purchased it, but once he had heard this he was assailed by doubts. Why had she not commented at the same time on *his* pleasing appearance, and if she had not done so was it not because the compliment about the mackintosh was really addressed to a lover of his

wife's youth, called 'Jo'? In order therefore, to eliminate the hazards connected with the fact that the mac had been called *joli*, Pierre called it 'Beaujolais'—in order to signify that he, Pierre, was *beau* and Jo was *laid*. His delusions of jealousy therefore took the form of an act of magical naming. But the naming is a troubled one, the signifier will not hold. For the container of flesh and blood that he seeks to label is his own body, and he is forced to be ever mediating (as *Jo/Je*) the rival claims of beauty and of ugliness. A fault in the order of the signifier allows any metonymy at the level of phonetic resemblance to flood the body, and he is therefore condemned to be ever vacillating between his own supreme claim to beauty and the troublesome fact that lesser mortals are needed to acknowledge it. It is therefore a particular tilt to the ratio that links the discourse of those already installed in the world to the paternal metaphor that gives the signifier the opportunity to draw in (as by breath) the container/contained dialectic peculiar to the narcissistic ego.

And so Pierre continues to elaborate on the name of the mac: he dubbed it 'Apolloche'. This represented his desire to be *beau comme Apollo* but at the same time he had to call it 'Apolloche', for Apolloche, like Beaujolais, contained the name of another rival, 'Polo'—if Pierre was as Apollo, Polo was then *moche*, 'ugly'. It is thus by essentially magical means that he wards off the dangers that the signifier, in making contact with another, invariably brings. For want of a resolution to dual structures of narcissism, Pierre is condemned to wear a name instead of bearing it. But Laplanche's 'fiction of a language in a reduced state' says nothing about the mechanisms that are at the origin of the linguistic structures peculiar to psychosis. It simply divides a mechanism's two aspects into two temporal stages, and this temporal division is a critical misrepresentation of what primal repression is. Most crucially, it divides the body from the signifier, whereas Lacan's concept of the paternal metaphor (inseparable from the formula of the metaphor) is intended as an account of the shock delivered the narcissistic ego by the Symbolic order. Consider, in addition, Laplanche's brief citation of the *Fort Da* game. Laplanche cites it in the context of his 'fiction of a language in a reduced state' and separates it from the metapsychological commentary in which it was originally embedded. Since Leclaire's divergence from Laplanche in the original 1961 paper is expressed in terms of the differing interpretations one might give of the fixation of the death drive to the signifier I want here to approach the *Fort Da* game in terms of that metapsychological account. By means of this preliminary discussion of the problem of the death drive I hope to clarify the subsequent account that I will give of Laplanche's use of the concept of the *points de capiton* and of the formula of the metaphor.

The death drive

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud isolated, more explicitly than thitherto, a phenomenon that he called *Wiederholungszwang* (the compulsion to repeat) (*SE* xvii: 1–67). His previous references to repetition had been explicitly concerned with the phenomena that emerged in the course of an analytic treatment (repetition and remembering occurred in inverse ratio to each other) and treated repetition as an effect of the transference: with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud elevated the compulsion to repeat to the status of the *daimonic*. The examples that Freud produces are interpreted as evidence for the operations of a death drive that works in direct contravention to the tendency towards ideal homeostasis characteristic of the pleasure principle. In repeating experiences that did not offer a yield of pleasure neurotic subjects were therefore under the sway of something *beyond* the pleasure principle, and in trying to grasp the nature of this *beyond*, Freud, at least in the 1920s, made the most extraordinary theoretical detours (via both speculative biology and a new formulation of the basic dualism of the drives). Many psychoanalysts have taken the thoroughly speculative nature of much of Freud's rumination on the death drive as being good reason for jettisoning what seems to them a purely mythological construction. But such an aversion to myth is mistaken and to strike out a concept that Freud adhered to so stubbornly one would have to prove that the repetition compulsion was in some way separable from the death drive. Another possible line of reasoning would involve adducing a scientific basis for the residue of nineteenth century psycho-physics that permeates Freud's theoretical work on the nature of the libido: thus Laplanche, with Pontalis, in the *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, asserts that much of the difficulty and confusion surrounding the question would be resolved 'by a preliminary discussion of the ambiguity surrounding terms such as "pleasure principle", "principle of constancy" and "binding"' (1973: 80).

I would not deny that there is need for clarification with respect to Freud's account of the primary process and of the dependence of that account on concepts derived from Fechner. But if one considers the whole range of writings in which reference to the compulsion to repeat is made, it would seem a little forced to suppose that understanding of it would be gained simply by isolating a purely economic factor that the compulsion contravenes. I would put it, rather, that it is neither purely a question of the signifier nor of the economic, but that it is a question of the logic of the signifier in so far as it has an economy irreducible to a formal linguistics. By formulating it thus it is possible to reconcile the fact that in a technical paper like "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through" (*SE* xix: 157–70) the compulsion to repeat is interpreted in terms of the transference (though the order is also inverted: 'the transference is itself only a piece of repetition') whereas in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* it is given a highly elaborate biological infrastructure.

To settle for the second account alone would be to settle for a vulgar materialist account of the human psyche, and 'energy' would become palpable, quantifiable, as it is in Reich's later work. But to settle for the first alone would be to leave the problem unsolved. Both of these positions represent a kind of fascination (or aversion, which is equivalent) with the concept of the death drive. Lacan has, from the very beginning of his work, refused a too simple acceptance of libido theory, and he has therefore tended to argue against purely 'energetic' notions of the death drive and against 'primordial masochism' as a concept. For him, if the order of human desire was implicated in the contravention of the tendency towards an ideal homeostasis, this order should then be identified with the structure of a signifying chain rather than with a death drive of a purely 'biological' kind (*Le Séminaire* II: 79–85). The margin beyond the pleasure principle is therefore the Symbolic order inasmuch as it is organised around a barred signifier that is insistent in its pulsating effect. This latter proviso is critical, for without it the Symbolic order is conceived simply as a structuralist combinatory and what Laplanche and Leclaire call the 'capture' of the drive 'in the nets of the signifier' would thereby lose its fatal sting. There is in fact a 'dissymmetry' between the two loci represented in Lacan's 'elementary cell' (designated locus of the Message and locus of the Code in Schema 1 cf. below) and this dissymmetry is indicative of something less than the total capture of the death drive. This can be more clearly appreciated by discussing the *Fort Da* game, for there Freud witnesses a child compelled to repeat an unpleasurable experience, and this compulsion is clearly tied to the child's assumption of symbolicity.

The Fort Da game

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud gives an account of a game that he had watched his grandson playing. The game involved the flinging of small objects into the corner of the room and uttering the German word *fort* (gone)—articulated as 'o' but recognised by the adult entourage as the complete word. Among the many different things that he threw away there was a wooden reel with a piece of string attached to it and by means of the string the child could make the reel appear and disappear: its reappearance would be greeted by a joyful *da* (here). What did this game represent?

Freud begins by asserting that it represents 'the child's greatest cultural achievement—the instinctual renunciation (that is, the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction) which he made in allowing his mother to go away without protesting' (*SE* xviii: 15). But why does the child repeat an achievement that was so distressing—given that the aspect of reappearance was an fortuitous aspect of the game caused by the presence of the reel among the child's toys?¹³ Does the child tirelessly repeat the game (and the *fort* part of the game too, all on its own) because it is, as Freud stresses, a *cultural* achievement? In such an interpretation the child uses a signifier to represent

presence and absence and therefore, through the use of this signifier, enters the Symbolic domain. This way of interpreting the *Fort Da* game is correct in so far as the phonemic opposition 'o-a' represents the combinatory of differential elements that is the Symbolic order and it is precisely this order into which the child moves. Lacan's supplementation of Freud's account would therefore seem to involve nothing more than pointing out that the vocalisation accompanying the game does indeed correspond to a phonemic opposition. But the critical aspect of the process concerns the manner in which the child, by these Symbolic manipulations, has an altered structure of desire. Many Lacanian interpretations have simply seen the cotton reel as achieving presence through absence, and the game—as is the case with Laplanche's whole approach—would then be divided into two separate stages. Or to put it more exactly, the symbolic operations involved in the game would be preceded by a stage in which a wounded consciousness had taken cognisance of the fact of the absence of the mother and had then—by means of the game—acted to assume a novel form of mastery:

It was probably in relation to his mother's words that the child was attempting to situate himself. The real mother disappeared and he put to the test the magic power of the word (the mother disappeared but the word remained) . . . What was apparent from the 'gone-here' relationship was that the Symbolic dimension had entered into the mother-child relationship. It is owing to the existence of this dimension that mastery can be acquired, the child acting out on himself the abandonment and rejection in a context of childish omnipotence; it is he who is abandoned and who rejects, retaining within himself a sufficiently secure mother figure so as not to have to die at her departure in reality. (Mannoni 1970: 17)

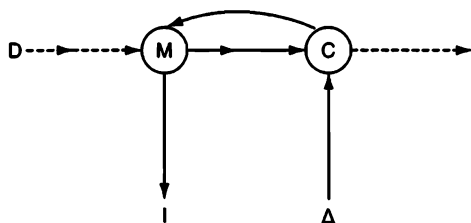
This account of the transformation of a dual Imaginary relationship into a mediated Symbolic one by means of repetitive play would seem to smuggle in too literal a reference to the actual mother and to the child as one who takes it upon himself to represent a person's absence by means of a thrown toy and a word. The child is therefore able to think 'absence' prior to his entrance into the signifying order, which would in fact be the sole means available to him of thinking it. It is moreover assumed that the second part of the game is an integral part of it, whereas (as a recent commentary by Safouan (1979: 76) clearly shows) the presence of the cotton reel among the other toys was quite fortuitous. The child's mastery—as expressed in the above quotation—is not of that order, and the magic of the word cannot be reduced to that instrumental symbolicity so beloved of Malinowski in his discussions of 'primitive' magic . . . a little abreaction and a little symbolic control!

In fact the *Fort* game (and one should perhaps resolve to call it this) represents more than a response to privation and does not have as its aim the

reappearance of the mother. If it is the moment of the child's entrance into the signifying order, it is not the assumption of some cloak that—emblazoned with a combinatory—would fall around the shoulders. It is rather the 'drive' outwards that makes it possible for the drive itself to be represented, by means of the symbol of negation, in the psychic apparatus. The moment of the throwing out of the toy has a double structure: it affirms the presence that it constructs at the moment of constructing it, but this affirmation is itself denegated, such that the affirmation 'it is she' or 'it is my mother' nestles within the denegation 'it isn't she', 'it isn't my mother'. It is the catastrophic moment of entrance into an universal order (that therefore elicits the singularity of a presence, a *face*, against the suddenly unfolded backdrop of absence) that Laplanche's account modifies. The point is that the child's cultural achievement entails the installation of a repetition compulsion in the unconscious (the symbolic debt that the murder of the father in the mythical account in *Totem and Taboo* constructs, a debt that prohibits incest but opens the cycles of exchange and therefore offers promise of an ideal *jouissance* in a future time) (*SE* XIII: 141–43). Much of the difficulty of this moment in the analysis stems from the need to embark on an analysis of Freud's 'Negation' paper (*Die Verneinung*), but even without the new approaches that such an analysis would here open up, one can still locate the basic errors in Laplanche's argument. For, whilst Laplanche accepts that presence and absence are themselves constructed by the signifying action itself—as in the myth, earth and sky are in the same instant separated and named—he still tends to conceive of the two phonemes o—a as representing the child's symbolic *mastery* of the mother's presence and absence (1961: 110–11/1972: 153). This mythological reference which accords with Lévi-Strauss's own remarks as to the suddenness with which universality of signification is constructed (from nothing meaning anything, everything comes to mean something) does however obscure the Freudian account of primal repression and the specific mechanism that allows for the fixation of drive to signifier (Lévi-Strauss 1950). It is therefore at this point that Laplanche cites the Lacanian *points de capiton*, starts to discuss the formula of the metaphor and it is also at this point—and quite logically—that Leclaire announces his theoretical divergence from Laplanche. It is no coincidence that Laplanche's account so closely echoes Lévi-Strauss's own myth as to the signifier's birth and to the subsequent relation between the order of the signifier and the order of the signified. For in his account of that myth Lévi-Strauss rules out psychosis as being of the order of the *idiolect*, and this fact confirms my persistent insinuation that a too 'structuralist' interpretation of Lacanian psychoanalysis renders an explanation of psychosis impossible.

The points de capiton and the formula of the metaphor

The *points de capiton* represent, in Lacan's theory, points of intersection between the order of the signifier and the order of the signified. Introduced in relation to Graph 1 in 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire', the concept is intended to take account of the way in which 'the signifier halts the otherwise indefinite sliding (*glissement*) of signification' (E 805/303). But there is a massive and critical distance between the account that Lacan gives of it in the ensuing paragraphs, and the account that Laplanche gives in the 1961 paper. For Laplanche, perhaps a little dazzled by the diagrammatic representations, gives the impression of considering the points of intersection between the vector SS' and the vector $\$ \Delta$ as being points of anchorage at which, once and for all, a signifier and a signified are bound together. This impression is confirmed in the subsequent moments of his argument, in which the four-tiered formula gives the unconscious chain S/S as *ballast* for language. However, in the very passage from Lacan that Laplanche himself cites, it is asserted that the '*points de capiton*' are mythical and that they do not finally pin down anything (1961: 112/1972: 155). When Lacan uses the concept of the *points de capiton* in an (unpublished) 1959 seminar, entitled 'Le Désir et son interprétation', it is quite apparent that the three different schemae (that reappear in 1960 as Graphs I, II, III) are not chronologically ordered—such a chronology suggesting the kind of temporal division into two stages that Laplanche seeks to establish—but logically ordered (Lacan 1959–60: 264–5). Thus the Schema 1 (comparable to the



Schema 1

Graph 1) is defined as introducing 'the topology of the relation of the subject to the signifier, reduced to what is observable in the linguistic fact'. But this 'reduction' is later corrected by the addition of the further elements: thus the specular ego is written in at the bottom of Schema 3 (whereas, if the sequence was a chronological one, it would have been already in place in Schema 1). Laplanche's 'fiction of language in a reduced state' is therefore a misinterpretation of what is at stake in these formulations, for it drives a wedge between the linguistic fact and narcissistic desire, and this separation allows a too conscious and too masterly infant to be considered as engaged in utilitarian play.

In this diagram the vector DS (cf. the vector SS' in Graph 1 of 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire' (E 805/303)) represents 'an oriented succession of discrete elements' (ie., the signifying chain). But this signifying chain is punctuated by the vector Δ I. This retroactive effect (retroactive in the sense that the vector Δ I runs against the diachronic succession of the signifying chain) means that signification is completed ahead of itself, in the sense that signifiers have a retroactive effect on those that preceded them in the signifying chain. The vector Δ I therefore passes through the locus of the code (C) before it passes through the locus of the message (M), and this primacy of the one locus over the other—which is a necessary effect of the pre-existence of the Symbolic order—is in evidence in any human speech, psychotic or otherwise. Laplanche's 'fiction of language in a reduced state', fiction or no, abstracts the vector Δ I from the short-circuit C.M. M.S. (which is the 'uncontrollable shifting between a couple of differential elements') and therefore splits the narcissistic ego from the Symbolic order, whereas the flaw in the first is intimately connected to the metonymic displacement integral to the second. If one overhears a bloodcurdling drama as narrated on a bus, and if the last words are left unspoken, or are spoken elsewhere, the 'and then he . . .' with which the alerted listener is left is already completed ('. . . cut her up into tiny little pieces'), and not because the 'scene' had a witness, but because the phantasy of the fragmented body has, by means of primal repression, passed like night into language. But herein lies the difference between phantasy and an hallucination, for when Schreber leaves his sentences unfinished they are completed for him by voices in auditory hallucination. A broken chain therefore entails the existence of its complement ahead of it itself in all human speech, and when, in paranoid psychosis, a special language is constructed for 'voices' to speak—as is the case with Schreber's basic language, his *Grundsprache*—it represents the Code in its unpunctuated, retroactive effect on the Message. Lacan notes that Schreber's amputated messages break off just at the point at which the index-terms (e.g. shifters) end, and from then on one has to do with 'the properly lexical part of the sentence, in other words that which comprises the words that the code defines by their use, whether the common code or the delusional code is involved' (E 540/186).

Yet the difference between the 'common' and the 'delusional' code is not exhausted by reference to the Manichean aspect of Schreber's cosmology or to the use of euphemisms that turn a word into its opposite (reward for punishment; poison for food). For one has, first of all, to accept that these hallucinatory impositions of code on to message cleave to what linguists call 'autonyms', and that the retroactive effect of the code on the message is therefore common to all human speech. A brief reference to Martinet's discussion of the concept of the 'moneme', in *Éléments de linguistique générale* (1970), should help to illuminate this. What are monemes, and how does one analyse a statement into its constituent monemes? In Chapter IV, 'Les Unités

significatives', Martinet tries to formulate a theory of the moneme as the elementary signifying unit: in choosing one signifier rather than another, the speaker determines the value to be given to the message (1970: 101-44). Monemes are therefore, in theory, substitutable one for another, and this substitution determines the subject of the enunciation. To identify a moneme, though, it is necessary to correlate a minimal phonetic difference with a minimal semantic difference: thus, whilst in French /ilkur/ (*il court*) and /nukuriō/ (*nous courions*) share the segment /kur/ and also the notion of 'running', there is still a massive difference between the two as to both signifier and signified. Whereas, in the case of /nukuriō/ (*nous courions*), /vukurie/ (*vous couriez*), and nukurō/ (*nous courons*), /vukure/ *vous courez* there is a minimal difference (/i/) for the signifiers and a minimal difference for the signifieds (where the presence or absence of the /i/ denotes *imperfect* or not). This argument is, as Martinet admits, complicated by the fact that, in another context, the signifier /i/ may represent the subjunctive or that in the third person (/ilkurē/ (*il courait*) it is the signifier /ē/ that denotes the imperfect tense, but his basic point is that there are elementary units of signification and that the subject chooses one rather than another in placing himself within an utterance as the subject of the enunciation.

There are, however, a whole range of linguistic facts that resist this concept of the moneme, and in taking account of them Martinet is forced to modify the concept by introducing sub-categories (grammatical monemes, lexical monemes, etc.). He therefore admits that monemes are often linked into 'autonomous syntagms', and these may be compared with what Lacan, in the essay on Judge Schreber and psychosis, calls 'code phenomena'. For Lacan emphasises that the treasury of the signifier depends not on an univocal correspondence of sign to concept but on syntactical imperatives that work backwards. For the simultaneous installation of the repetition compulsion in the human unconscious and the setting in place of the function of negation in human language means that the locus of the Code is necessarily always already the locus of the Other. These two linked moments ensure that the retroactive efficacy of Code on Message assumes the form of autonomous syntagms rather than, say, holophrases. A syntagm is, in Martinet's terms, a combination of monemes, and an autonomous syntagm is one whose elements may not be divided one from another (as is not the case with the syntagm 'with pleasure', since it may, with great pleasure, and sometimes with very great pleasure, be extended). There is usually, Martinet notes, a 'functional' moneme (as *en* in *en voiture*) and this prohibits the choice, the pure substitution which is the guiding principle of Martinet's original concept. These 'functional' monemes are one of the sorts that can be described, within an autonomous syntagm, as 'grammatical monemes', and their operation, in psychosis, shows that the linguistic disruptions are disruptions of a syntax that pre-exists the subject. This pre-existence (which can be a zero-choice, as with the autonomous syntagm *au fur et à mesure* which, for every

French speaker, already exists in a completed form once *au fur et* is uttered) simply assumes a different form in psychosis. The completion of the phrase which might ordinarily be uttered—for it is a fact of human speech that we hear ourselves speaking when we speak—is then attributed to another. What of the *point de capiton*? The *point de capiton*, in its diachronic aspect, is what I have been trying to explain here in the last few pages. Here is how Lacan writes of it:

The diachronic function of this anchoring point [*point de capiton*] is to be found in the sentence, in so far as the sentence completes its signification only with its last term, each term being anticipated in the construction of the others, and, inversely, sealing their meaning by its retroactive effect. (E 805/303)

Thus, the *points de capiton* are the points at which the signifying chain and the vector ΔI (which in Schema 1 represents the subject in an unformed state and in relation to an Ideal) intersect, both diachronically and synchronically. But what is the synchronic aspect of the *points de capiton*?

Once again, the *points de capiton* would seem to be nearer to an 'uncoupling' or an 'unpinning' than to a pinning down, for the synchronic aspect is metaphor. Lacan cites the example (taken from a French children's song) of the dog that goes 'miaow' and the cat that goes 'woof'—for the child, 'by disconnecting the animal from its cry, suddenly [*d'un seul coup*] raises the sign to the function of the signifier and reality to the sophistics of signification' (E 805/303–4). This citation of a child's game should bring to mind the *Fort* game already discussed, and indeed should help to make it clear once again how it is that Laplanche excludes the critical question of the repetition compulsion from formulation. For Laplanche the *Fort Da* would be in some way chronologically separate from the primal repression, yet for Lacan they are linked—and the separation suggested by the different diagrams is meant only to aid comprehension. Once the animal is separated from its cry the child is in the order of representation, but—and this is what Laplanche's formulations obscure—the lost animal still intrudes in the play of the signifier. The totemism that returns in childhood is violent beyond the forms of a totemic classification and is better represented by the North West Coast masks with shutters than by the 'totemic operator' (Lévi-Strauss 1969 and 1972). For the moment of revelation—at which the masks fly open—offers beyond the first figure another that may bring catastrophe with its sudden glance. Yet if the blow is a glancing one it is not less decipherable in the disturbances in the signifying order that result from the return of repressed material. Laplanche's concept of *ballast* disregards the duplicity of primal repression, for *dénégation* allows repressed material to return, whereas, in Laplanche's formulation, the notion of a ballast in the unconscious chain would prohibit this return.

Once Laplanche, in the 1961 paper, has cited the S/s relation and the concept of the *point de capiton*, he turns to Lacan's 'formula of the metaphor' as cited in 'On a Question Preliminary to any Possible Treatment of Psychosis'. But Lacan's presentation of the formula is situated in a very specific context and given a very exact gloss—in abstracting it from this context Laplanche makes of it a quite general formula for linguistic symbolisation rather than one primarily concerned with primal repression. The formula actually makes no sense at all if one does not refer it to the concept of the 'Name of the Father', but by oscillating rather too quickly between 'On a Question Preliminary to any Possible Treatment of Psychosis' and 'The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious' Laplanche obscures the significance of this crucial reference. For Lacan's citation of the paternal metaphor is closely linked to his elaboration of the function of the death of the symbolic father as formative of the law, and this elaboration is pivotal to his conception of what primal repression is. Earlier sections of this second part had been concerned with Laplanche's interpretations of the death drive and the *Fort Da* and my criticisms there are clearly linked to my criticisms of the use of the formula of the metaphor. Laplanche presents this formula simply as an algebraic one, representing linguistic symbolisation in general:

$$\frac{S'}{S} \times \frac{S}{s} \rightarrow S' \times \frac{I}{s}$$

The formula is then re-written by Laplanche, using the following transformation:

$$\frac{A}{B} \times \frac{C}{D} = \frac{\frac{A}{D}}{\frac{B}{C}}$$

to give:

$$\frac{S'}{S} \times \frac{S}{s} \cdot \frac{S'}{S}$$

But this re-writing, which presents us with the unconscious chain S/S, actually achieves the opposite of what Laplanche must have intended. For if he had meant to show how it is that the signifier S that has fallen to the rank of the signified continues to have 'effects', his insistence that the unconscious

chain is what provides ballast for conscious language runs quite counter to this. Laplanche's presentation of the formula of the metaphor is a formalist one and he therefore separates it from the very terms that would lend it any real meaning. The two concepts of metaphor and of the Name of the Father are inseparable in Lacan, yet Laplanche, having cited the formula of the metaphor, considers the paternal metaphor only as an after-thought (as one of a series of 'key-signifiers'). Anyone who turns back to the original presentation of the formula of the metaphor, and the densely written passages that follow it, will be able to see for themselves what a startling misrepresentation of Lacan's position this is. Lacan's original version of the equation in the psychosis paper was as follows:

$$\frac{S}{S'} \cdot \frac{S'}{x} \rightarrow S \left(\frac{I}{s} \right)$$

and he has subsequently pointed out that it was never a question of mathematical formulae here (Lemaire 1970: 16–17/1977: XII). The bar represents not a fraction but the Lacanian modification of the Saussurean bar between signifier and signified. But this misrepresentation, that anyone could in all good faith have made, might have been avoided if more attention had been paid to the manner in which Lacan comments on the formula: 'The capital Ss are signifiers, x the unknown signification and s the signified induced by the metaphor, which consists in the substitution in the signifying chain of S for S' . The elision of S' , represented here by the bar through it, is the condition of the success of the metaphor' (E 557/200). The success of the metaphor therefore demands the elision of S' (the desire of the mother) which, prior to the action of the metaphor, is signified to the Name of the Father (in that the mother's desire is already constructed as the desire that it be the phallus to her) and signifier to the unknown signified x (which represents the child as not yet caught up in the constituent effects of the signifying chain). Thus, in the psychosis article, the formula is written out as follows:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{Name of the Father} & \frac{\text{Desire of the Mother}}{\text{Desire of the Mother-Signified to the subject}} & \cdot \rightarrow \\ & & \text{Name of the Father} \left(\frac{O}{\text{Phallus}} \right) \end{array}$$

As I understand this formulation, the child's capture in the imaginary order, as one who has a specular ego, is inseparable from the action of a primal repression that places him or her within a Symbolic order. It is this interdependence that Laplanche's formulations, both here and in relation to the *points de capiton*, erase, for Laplanche attributes a leaden quality (he calls it *ballast*) to what persists in the unconscious and will not be quieted. For

Lacan, everything happens at once. The double bar in the formula represents the catastrophic action of the metaphor insofar as it separates mother from child and child from mother, and also—in other terms—the double movement of affirmation (*Bejahung*) and denegation (*Verneinung*) by means of which the child's ego is split in relation to the threat of castration and the ideal possibility of assuming a place in the Symbolic order is offered.¹⁴ There is, however, no possibility of understanding these processes simply by reference to such devices as the formula of the metaphor. They are mnemonic instruments whose purpose is didactic. They do not contain a complete account of the processes that they represent, and taken literally they encourage a too simple understanding of what it is that the child's prior subordination to the Symbolic entails. They also favour a kind of collapse between the Real, Symbolic and Imaginary dimensions of the adults already installed there and later split several ways and invested with a 'wealth' of kingly and priestly powers. In spite of Lacan's express warnings (*E* 578/218) this reduction will cause people to look for a psychoticising mother or father, when there is invariably a multiplicity of factors that work together at different points to construct an impossibility whose violence touches more on the impossibility of formulating the thing in a language than of being or having it in some more literal sense. Rather than attributing blame to an adult for failing to impart his or her sense of the libidinal to the child—as Leclaire does in *Psychanalyser*—one should attend to the ratios that link the different dimensions. How are they torn apart, one from another, and how are they stitched together? It is to these further questions that my second article in this collection (pp. 162–187) is addressed.

Notes

- 1 The original versions of this paper were published in *Journal of the Anthropology Society of Oxford* vol. 6, no. 2 (1975) and in *Economy and Society* 5. 434–69. The Laplanche/Leclaire article on which the paper relies so heavily had been translated into English (*Yale French Studies* 48: 118–76) and it was all too easy, given the structuralist framework in which Lacan's work was translated and presented to make the kinds of error that were so rife in the earlier version (and in its concluding passages in particular). This version is shortened and the conclusion is omitted but the major criticisms are reserved for Part II.
- 2 But cf. also his analysis of anagrams used in Greek and Latin poetry—MSS. assembled by Jean Starobinski, *Les Mots sous les mots* (1971).
- 3 It is worth stressing that aphasia represents language in a state of disintegration and that in most human speech the two poles operate in conjunction. Jakobson, and, after him, Barthes (1967: 21), thus reserve the term *idiolect* primarily to describe the language of the aphasic (see Part II of this essay for a warning as to the dangers implicit in the opposition between a normal 'social' use of language and an incommunicable idiolect).
- 4 Cf. Joan Rivière's translation of *Die Verneinung* (*CP* iv: 181–5).
- 5 But cf. E. Benveniste, 'The Nature of the Linguistic Sign'. (1966: 49–55/1971: 43–48).

- 6 The phrase is from Lévi-Strauss (1950: XLIX) but Lacan also refers to the S/s relation as being that of two registers. The word register meaning here two articulations taken in their globality (E 444). He insists that there is no bi-univocal (i.e. term to term) relation involved, but only that of register to register.
- 7 E. Jones in *Psycho-analysis* (1935). Lacan, in his essay 'Sur la théorie du symbolisme d'Ernest Jones', comments as follows: 'These primary ideas indicate the points where the subject disappears under the being of the signifier: whether it is a question, in effect, to be oneself, to be a father, to be born, to be loved or to be dead, how can one not see that subject, insofar as it is a subject who speaks, only supports itself from discourse' (E 709).
- 8 This is particularly apparent in the commentary that Lacan gives to a paper of Melanie Klein, in *Le Séminaire* 1: 81–83; 95–103.
- 9 It has been argued that Lacan's theory of the structure of psychosis has this effect too, and that the concept of *Verwerfung*, in the interpretation that Lacan gives it, casts the psychotic back into the darkness in which Kraepelin had left him or her (cf. Mannoni 1979). This interpretation surely disregards the fact that Lacan's original work on these problems is presented as a preliminary clearing of the ground and was not itself intended as a direct contribution to therapeutic practice. Leclaire's 'A la recherche des principes d'une psychothérapie des psychoses' (1958) is written in the wake of Lacan's original article, and although its therapeutic suggestions are startlingly modest and tentative, there is no question there of abandoning the psychotic to a destiny so flawed as to be beyond redemption.
- 10 Freud writes as follows:

I see no necessity to apologise for the imperfections of this or of any similar imagery. Analogies of this kind are only intended to assist us in our attempt to make the complications of mental functioning intelligible by dissecting the function and assigning its different constituents to different component parts of the apparatus. So far as I know, the experiment has not hitherto been made of using this method of dissection in order to investigate the way in which the mental instrument is put together, and I can see no harm in it. We are justified, in my view, in giving free rein to our speculations so long as we retain the coolness of our judgement and do not mistake the scaffolding for the building. (SE v: 536)

Cf. also his warning as to the use of Figure 2 in 'On Transformations of Instinct as Exemplified in Anal Erotism' (SE xvii: 132).

- 11 The original statement of the formula of the metaphor is to be found in 'On a Question Preliminary to any Possible Treatment of Psychosis' (E 531–83/179–225). The crucial passage on the *points de capiton* is to be found in 'The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire' (E 793–827/292–325).
- 12 In 'A la recherche des principes d'une psychothérapie des psychoses' (1958) Leclaire cites the example of a patient for whom the use of the word *vert* (green) is complicated by the fact that the signifier *ver* also entails a reference to *ver de terre* (earthworm), the letter V, and also to other words within which it may nestle (e.g. *ver/seau*; *vertèbre*; and most critically, in the aphorism *l'introlversion c'est le ver solitaire*). In Section vii of Freud's paper 'The Unconscious' (SE xiv: 200–5) there is a long discussion as to the different linguistic structures in evidence in the transference neuroses and in psychosis, and Freud concludes that (in schizophrenia) word-presentations have absolute autonomy with regard to thing-presentations, and that sometimes one word (e.g. *vert/ver* for Pierre) will monopolise a whole range of different associations. Yet this treatment of a signifier as a

thing in itself—separate from the signified—is not in itself indicative of psychosis, for verbal play is all too often based on this fascination with the inner ‘colouring’ of phonemic clusters, which, loving language, seem to us the very heart of the word. There is a whole poetic tradition (Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Leiris) that works to attribute colour values to vowels and consonants, and this attribution is simply dependent on the priority of the signifier over the signified. It is not merely that the concept of ‘greenness’ is found wherever the signifier ‘green’ decrees it (‘They called it Greenland to encourage settlement’, as the poem has it). For beyond such symbolic effects, primal repression installs a metonymy in relation to the lost object of desire, a verbal play not dissimilar to the form that Pierre’s speech takes. It is not therefore a pinning of the one signifier to the one signified that defines neurosis as distinct from psychosis, it is rather the resolution of the meeting between the body and the signifier that is critical for the form that the intellectual functions will subsequently take.

- 13 Chapter v of M. Safouan’s *L’échec du principe du plaisir* (1979) is, for the most part, devoted to an exegesis of the *Fort Da* game, and in this chapter Safouan clearly shows how it is that in Freud’s account the *Da* is an accidental and secondary aspect of the game.
- 14 The references are to Freud’s paper ‘Negation’ (*Die Verneinung*, *SE* xix: 233–39) and to its crucial importance for the debates hinted at here.

IN PRAISE OF HYSTERIA

Moustapha Safouan

Source: Stuart Schneiderman (ed.) *Returning to Freud*. New Haven: Yale University Press (1980), pp. 55–60.

Psychoanalysis began with hysteria, and psychoanalytic knowledge will always be worth only what our knowledge of this structure is worth.

We can do our work, and well, without knowing what the transference is; and we can obtain appreciable modifications in the cure of an obsessional neurosis without being able to say exactly how we have obtained them; but it is out of the question to introduce significant modifications in a case of hysteria without *knowing*.

Is that too presumptuous? Let us turn our affirmation around: introducing significant modifications in a case of hysteria without ridding oneself of all knowledge is out of the question. This affirmation is nonetheless not believable, as everyone would agree. But then?

We take up this sentence, which we often hear from hysterics, in different forms, depending on style and temperament: "The positive transference, it will never happen!" or else: "It's incredible how you leave me indifferent," to which is sometimes added "It's beginning to worry me" or "It's impossible for me to love you" and so forth.

At first sight, it is a negative sentence. From having heard it repeated with insistence, however, one is obliged to conclude not simply that an intellectual negation is in question but that it derives from a denegation. Thus we have no doubt about its truth, which is easy to find: it is sufficient to deny the negation, which gives: "She loves me." But as—I was going to say: "as it is impossible"; let us rather say: as I did not give her, the analysand, any particular reasons to love me, this can only be an appearance of love. Not even that; for where has the appearance come from? Thus it can only be a reappearance of love, or better, a repetition.

Let us suppose now that we have this little thing called patience—which does not mean that we are going to resign ourselves to routine habits; let us suppose that we know how to suspend entirely a received knowledge, even if

it is well founded. Then we finish by learning, sooner or later, that the issue was a sentence that finally was not particularly negative. I mean to say that its impact is not in the form of the negation. This sentence, like many others, is in fact only a half-sentence: the other half has remained repressed. The restitution of the repressed half would give very different results. For example, this one: "It is impossible to love you . . . because it is impossible to love shit." There one begins to know.

To clarify the oscillation that appeared at the beginning of this communication, let us say this: it is impossible to analyze a hysteric without knowing *what we are doing*. Besides, it is a known fact, but one that we cover with a prudish silence, that some of our colleagues are incontestably competent with all kinds of analyses, but when it comes to displacing a hysterical structure by one inch, for them there is no way: they do not know. Let us enter now into the quick of the subject.

One premise that we are going to pose at the departure, in our attempt to deduce hysteria, is this one: the form of the law, presented as a demand or commandment, is the source of a luring, which consists in *the law's appearing to be born out of the mouth of the one who proffers it* as a law that the will of the other imposes or wants to impose and not as a law to which the other is submitted. Besides, does the other submit himself to it? Here is the *hic*.

While waiting for the subject to find out, we see the possibility of his wishing to be the lawmaker. This wish, if it has no chance of being fulfilled, easily finds the means of being satisfied by believing in its object, which is to say, believing in this lure: that there is an Author of the Law.

What I have just said can be summarized in this formula: there would be no reason to believe in God if it were not for the role that Descartes expressly assigns him as creator of eternal verities.

Let us now suppose a subject who is settled into this belief, in its sacred or profane form: we see, first, that the movement is not without a *reciprocal divinization*: both God's and the subject's. We can in the second place translate this movement into our language by saying that the subject in question demands *the symbolic father* and can be appeased by nothing less. In the third place, we conceive of the possibility that—by an obscure pathway not impossible to trace, which leads to a questioning of the paternity of this divine or symbolic father—something is produced that is worthy of being labeled "knowing too much about maternity."¹ And it is a fact that the hysteric ignores nothing that concerns motherhood.

We will keep present in our minds this constellation or this package of premises, and we ask what consequences it has for the subject we have just defined.

In order to appreciate the response fully, it is essential to recall here Lacan's thesis on the function of beauty. Lacan defined beauty as a brilliance that dazzles us and is interposed between us and the second death. Now, what is this *second death*?

Hegel says that the life of children is the death of parents. This is doubtful; most often we observe the contrary. What is not doubtful—but only analytic experience permits us to affirm this—is that the child (the subject) comes to be a parent only to the extent that he rids himself of the fantasy that Hegel describes, without knowing that it is a fantasy, which is to say, Hegel takes it for reality.

Knowing that it is a fantasy is the second death. It is precisely because all tools fail him, all tools that would permit him to accede to this knowledge, that the one we call the psychotic is sometimes pushed to realize the second death in a real death. And the *first*? If there is a second, there is also a first.

The first is that of narcissistic birth, of the birth of the subject into an image that, far from being able to give him the sense of life, is the model of all corpses.

Now, let us remember the pathetic moment when Dora spent two hours contemplating the Sixtine Madonna of Raphael in the museum of Dresden, a Madonna that is one of the images of beauty before which desire experiences itself in its intimate tenor of nostalgia and regret at the same time that its pain and sickness are veiled. In any case, this is not a reason for us in our turn to remain mute before it.

Let us imagine that the stomach of the Madonna begins to inflate, to round out, advancing into the real space, and imagine the effect that this unusual miracle would produce in the one contemplating it. This helps us arrive at an idea of the strange convulsions that—every time that her discourse, and not her vain curiosity, puts her closer to the *reality* of maternity—transport the body of the hysteric and make of it, not a dispossessed body in the imaginary or the real, as would be the case with a neurotic or psychotic, but—unique condition of the hysteric—a possessed body: a body that spits, vomits, bleeds, grows fat, and symptomatizes. Of all that she understands nothing.

There is nothing surprising in her understanding nothing: since it is this *too much* (she knows too much about maternity) in which resides, not the distance, but the formal hiatus between this knowledge—which, however real it may be, is no less marked by denegation—and truth. But what truth?

Several formulas are usable here, but we are going to propose—as we did with the second death—the one that puts us closest to the thing. Here it is: *only the law* makes jouissance condescend to desire. But the hysteric does not hear it that way. She wants—it would be better to say that she dreams, for this can only be a dream—she dreams, then, of *a desire that would be born of love*: and this in turn can only sharpen the antinomy between love and desire.

Let us be clear. In a sense, such an antinomy does not exist: desire always brings along with it a certain quantum of love; a little or a lot, repressed or not, it is not important. But the inverse is not true: despite all the praise that has been addressed to the little god of love, he has remained completely incapable of engendering the least little bit of desire.

But what is love, if not the fibers of being tending toward an object. Would this lack be a lack of desire? Yes, for there are lacks and there are lacks.

Philosophers have defined the concept of lacking as privation or as a real lack. Analytic experience has brought forth, to the point where it is impossible to misconstrue it, another kind of lack, which is distinguished from the first in that the recovery of the missing object brings no plenitude and no satisfaction; this is frustration. Love is this frustration—I mean pure love, as we say pure oxygen, love as it is almost never isolated in practice, except in some socially institutionalized forms, the most exemplary example of which is courtly love—or else in poetry, specifically, in the English metaphysics or in certain Arab mystics. Love is frustration in this sense, that at the root of love there is annulment and abandonment, to say nothing of destruction by the object. Of this object one retains only a sign, a look or a salutation, its simple presence, its portrait, we might say, or its photo. This affinity between love and object loss or mourning has been noted by many analysts, beginning with Freud;² they have asked themselves questions about it, but without ever dreaming of finding the lost object in the object itself: the object of the erotic aim.³

Desire is of another order, one that recalls our formula and about which we have said that the hysteric consents to it with difficulty. But then what does she do?

Tell a child the story of the stork that nips a mother or future mother on the leg. If the child has strong dispositions toward obsessional neurosis, he will begin to limp. This symptom will have been founded on the following reasoning: "The stork nipped me, thus I have a baby in my belly." The obsessional is a naïf; that is why we can work with him more or less well. But if the child's dispositions bear towards hysteria, he will also limp; there will be the same symptom, but not the same reasoning; he will be saying: "The stork nipped me, but I do not have a baby in my belly, you are lying!" Why does the hysteric hold on to this "you lie!"—what need, what compulsion (to tell the truth, we consider that the hysteric has a compulsion that is as specific as the obsessional neurotic's doubt), then, pushes her to conceive of the Other as a liar? The reason is that it is precisely in her detection of the Other's lie that her faith, or her little faith, in the phallus resides.

"The phallus, I have no idea what it is," a woman analysand said to me one day, adding, "except that it is something that never stays in its place." This sibylline sentence, let out by the analysand in a kind of sacred fright, is one that would have been appropriate for the oracle at Pythos. It only took a

couple of seconds, but that is sufficient for us to know what to expect: the phallus, she wants it to be a wanderer. And this is why, wherever the hysteric goes, she brings war with her, ideological war, war of prestige, which we know has no object, but of which she makes herself the object.

It is only when the hysteric renounces being what men fight over—we will have to precede her there—that she will be ready to conquer the truth. This is to say that she has never demanded anything other than to be loved not for her perfections but for her imperfections, things with which she has always been reproached. It is then that we learn from her, from this mother in suffering, that there is only one pertinent trauma: that of birth.

How can we close this *praise of hysteria* without returning to our point of departure: transference love? But how can we add one iota to what Lacan said, that transference love is not a true love but also not a repetition, because what is in play in this not-true love is *the very truth of love*?

I say this in all knowledge of cause. God knows if I have had to interpret repressed wishes for love, as well turned, as concise, as powerfully poetic (let us not confuse poetic and sublime) as anything we can imagine consciously. Consciousness, we know, is hardly verbose.

Well, these wishes were most often addressed to a third party, called by name. Again, with Freud we find the principal example: the alembic formula that the Rat Man composed with the initials of several prayers [*Glejisamen*], in which the name of his cousin was included without his knowing it. In this formula Freud knew how to mark his patient's wish: to inundate her, Gisella, with his sperm [*Samen*]. All wishes of love are not to be found on the same axis; others are located on the axis of tenderness. To tell the truth, even this wish of the Rat Man was not without tenderness, if we think that Gisella had undergone an ablation of the ovaries.

Sometimes such wishes are addressed to me. Here is the simplest possible example: a woman analysand enters, with her face somber and veiled; she lies down and remains silent for a certain time, then she says, "I left the children at the house." Then she again becomes silent, and in a context that leaves no doubt about the part of the phrase that is repressed, adds, "... for you!" It is good to let such wishes go as they came; to formulate them would be to refuse them.

Why then does this repression strike the declaration of love, a declaration whose being spoken ravishes the purity of love but whose placement in the unconscious calls for an authentication that only a third party can bring? And what is the noun or pronoun to which the declaration is addressed? Here the two questions seem so intimately linked that a response to the one will be a response to the other. The reminder that it is much easier to make oneself loved by an interiorized other than by a real other is sufficient for us to be able to conclude, with this formula in the guise of a response: *love is always the love of a name, even as desire is always the desire of an organ.*

The hysteric knows it; and this is why Lacan's formula is verified in her most particularly: "Anxiety is the sensation of the desire of the Other;" and from there we can see the challenge that she presents for us: to name this desire.

It is not easy to respond to this challenge. If we name it, we lie; but silence, with nothing else, can only be a retreat. There must then be a third way, . . . which we have discussed in "Langage et Satisfaction," in *Etudes sur l'Oedipe*, pp. 183-205.

Notes

- 1 The divinization of the father conceals the mystery of origins. The hysteric is going to be "too" interested, as in enigmas that "do not have solutions."
- 2 See Robert C. Bak, "Being in Love and Object Loss," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 54:1 (1973), pp. 1-8.
- 3 Søren Kierkegaard, whose melancholy dispositions are well known, grasped this truth and gave it its most powerful expression.

The distinction between love and desire is necessary to our understanding of a fundamental trait of the phenomenology of the obsessional—his doubt, which Freud relates to the doubt that everyone has about the extent and durability of his love. In fact, many obsessional symptoms are a "knowing" denunciation of the narcissistic structure of love.

Why does the subject stop himself with this denunciation? Because by stopping he can forget and repress the desire that presides over the enunciation of "I love you."

We are not thinking here of the obsessional's particular difficulty in giving or receiving love, but rather of the paradox inherent in the declaration of love. While it "misses" completely the "second person," at the same time it attains her more profoundly, in the sense that it "tickles" her at the root of her desire.

Let us note, finally, the different structure of this kind of love. The love is not "reciprocal" but knows that a response that is not a refusal can only be favorable; it does not require the idealization of the object.

THE HYSTERIC'S DISCOURSE

Gérard Wajeman

Source: translated by Thelma Sowley. *Hystoria, Lacan Study Notes: Special Issue* (1988): 1–22. [Originally published in *Le Maître et l'Hystérique*, Navarin/Le Seuil (1982).]

Let us talk about hysteria, a field of investigation almost without limitations: throughout history there are writers telling us about hysteria, from the miraculous healing at the temple of Asclepius to the treatment of anorexia in a modern hospital; from the witch and her dealings with the devil to the high society lady and her fainting spells. Over time any concept of hysteria has been outdated by hysteria itself. For some, its diffuse, multiple patterns sprawl over the entire field of pathology. Facing both the practical difficulty of providing treatment for so ubiquitous a disorder and the theoretical problem of forcing it under one category, others, like Charcot, chose to reduce the multiple to one and to declare hysteria a single indivisible entity.

There doesn't seem to be anything medicine has not said about hysteria: it is multiple, it is one, it is nothing; it is an entity, a malfunction, an illusion; it is true and deceptive; organic or perhaps mental; it exists, it does not exist. Before proposing yet another spurious theory on the subject, we must in the existing theories locate the prolific nature of hysteria, its propensity to play in every key; this can be done with little risk of error. The very inconsistency of the disorder has lead many to think of it as a figment of the imagination; and yet, the profusion of literature devoted to it involves the entire range of medical knowledge.

We intended to talk about hysteria and now hysteria makes us talk; we sought a particular medical entry and found libraries of medical knowledge. Out of all objects of medical study, hysteria is the one to which the greatest number of papers have been devoted; it even is the subject of the oldest known medical text.¹

And yet hysteria has remained a riddle. Even today medical writings, when referring to hysteria, bestow on it an air of mystery. This is not simply because hysteria has remained unexplained; other unexplained diseases are entirely unmysterious. Rather, the history of research on hysteria shows that

every author who ventured into this domain inherited from his predecessors the mystery in its entirety. None of the extant theories appears to be connected to, or inspired by, those which preceded it. Thus, the task of accounting for hysteria resembles the work of Sisyphus.² In fact, with hysteria always presenting the same riddle, the authors have sought explanations rather than a true answer. Each appears to have contributed a particular solution while leaving the question unchanged for his follower. Theories arose one after the other, one against the other, different from one another, and yet there seems to be no progress in sight.

What goes by the name of hysteria is a set of opposing and even contradictory statements. This set we will call *knowledge*. The sequence of those statements can be treated as history: they can be arranged in chronological order, their constants can be determined, their patterns and gaps revealed. But, at best, such a history would demonstrate the failure of knowledge to unveil the mystery, as can be seen from certain historicist interpretations.³ Still, this history describes the conditions under which a mystery triggers the production of knowledge. It is not the history of hysteria but the history of medicine, or of hysteria as a body of statements. Some of these statements have been invalidated in time while others have not. Yet each fails to state the whole truth, that is, none can take hold of its object and fully master it.

We'll give the name of *hysteric* to this object which cannot be mastered by knowledge and therefore remains outside of history, even outside its own. This disjunction (//) can be expressed in the following way: if hysteria is a set of statements about the hysteric, then the hysteric is what eludes those statements, escapes this knowledge.

Moreover, beyond the properly scientific attempt to master an object through knowledge and thus to reduce it to a body of statements, the history of hysteria bears witness to something fundamental in the human condition em;being put under pressure to answer a question. The questioning one is the hysteric. Asking a question is so elementary a relation of language that it can be done without words: when the hysteric presents her riddled body to the physician, even though mute, she poses her question.

The hysterical subject questions the physician about the symptom that, unexplainably, riddles her body. She presses him for an answer, impelling him to generate the knowledge needed to cure her.

While knowledge cannot articulate the hysteric, the hysteric ushers the articulation of knowledge.

Intending to talk about hysteria, we found that hysteria made us talk. So far this result had no other support than the body of knowledge produced by physicians over time. But the very history of medical knowledge requires that we examine what it eludes, namely the hysteric's double characteristic of resisting speech and causing it. This ambiguity structures the enunciation of the assertive statements called knowledge.

Behind the history that describes the failure of knowledge to master the object, and beneath the finite body of medical statements produced over time, we will discover the reasons for that failure in the structure from which those statements arise and which determines their production.

It is one of the more puzzling aspects of the history of hysteria that it compels us to interpret its course in terms of a readily discernible structure. History, then, will not serve us as a method but rather as a reservoir of snapshots taken, as it were, of the structure at work. Following Jacques Lacan, we will call this particular structure the *hysteric's discourse*. (Perhaps Lacan's notion of discourse in general is inspired by this structure.)

This structure, whose elements are revealed by the history of hysteria, is fundamental first as *discourse*, and, second, as the *hysteric's discourse*.

Theory of the four discourses

Lacan's concept of discourse is a specific formalization of the basic components of speech and its effects. It accounts for what is at stake when we claim the right to speak. What do we do when we make this claim? First, we assume a place. Before the actual speech act occurs certain stable relations determine its effect, depending on the place from which it is performed. According to Lacan, it is the discourse that gives the speech act its status. Second, we assume language. Speech is addressed to another place in the direction of which it is delivered. Discourse as a signifying articulation establishes the social link that proceeds, from the place of speech as performance, to the place of speech as destination: to speak to an other is to act upon him. Thus discourse institutes power and conditions its exercise.

Lacan's symbolism

agent → other⁴

accounts for these elements. It formalizes the places which come into play with every speech act, namely the *agent* of discourse and the *other* who is acted upon. This formula also suggests the dimension of power in all actions exercised upon an other. The effect of such actions, the product of discourse, requires the introduction of a third place:

agent → other → production

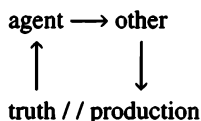
Finally, psychoanalysis necessitates a fourth item to complete this array: the place of *truth*. The analytic experience is based on the fact that, at least ordinarily, we do not know what we say: what we intend to say is not the truth of what we say: the agent of speech conveys a meaning unknown to him. Far from being the master of meaning, he acts, in the words of J.A. Miller, as its appointed 'functionary.' Thus, the agent suffers the truth rather

than delivering it. His place only seems to be one of acting subject, a *semblance* brought in by speech as such. He who claims to speak in the name of truth cannot speak it, precisely because he speaks in its name.

Truth, then, is the driving force in the discursive machine, and the four elements that constitute this machine can be set down as follows:

truth \rightarrow agent \rightarrow other \rightarrow production

This sequence may be ordered in yet another way, the one actually proposed by Lacan.⁵ His arrangement notes a second disjunction, between the places of truth and production. The signifying machine cannot generate the truth that drives it, nor can the effect of speech become the cause of speech. Thus:



There are three *terms* to occupy four places: signifier, subject and object. These terms are heterogeneous; subject and object must be named, they are determined by the signifier (the subject-object relation is structured by language.)

The spatial configuration of these terms is also their definition. Since the signifier functions only differentially, we have to posit two signifiers rather than one. Suppose a single signifier, S_1 . It stands alone. Isolated from the chain, it has no meaning, signifies nothing, is semblance. Thus S_1 is the signifier in whose name one speaks, the apparent agent: the *master-signifier* of discourse.

Suppose a second signifier (S_2) to go with the first, and the signifying chain has been installed. Because it positions S_1 , we speak of S_2 as the *other* signifier. S_2 represents the capital Other, the 'treasure of signifiers' from which, and with which, one speaks. Moreover, it is a network of inter-dependent signifiers, a battery of knowledge, with knowledge defined as linguistic articulation. S_2 is therefore the *knowledge* put into operation by S_1 .

At this point we can match the terms with the places, and substitute for

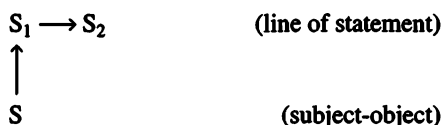
agent \rightarrow other

the relation

$S_1 \rightarrow S_2$.

Lacan's definition of the signifier is that it 'represents the subject for another signifier.' With respect to the relation $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ the subject is

symbolized by S . If S_1 is the signifier in whose name one speaks, S is the subject represented by S_1 for S_2 . We express this result as



Finally, the discursive machine produces something—the object. It is merely a residue, fall-out of the signifying process, a side-benefit of that process. Lacan's symbol for this odd object is $\langle a \rangle$ and he calls it *plus-de-jour* ('added pleasure'). Now the formula is complete:



Note that in this type of discourse the distribution of terms corresponds exactly to the configuration of places:



Thus, the discourse which borrows its name from the place of the agent, or master, provides the matrix of speech in general. Along with the right to speak, it establishes the 'social link' of speech in the form of mastery. Whatever the message it means to convey, speech acts upon an other and thereby constrains him: the *discourse of the master* stands for the commanding dimension of language.

By retaining the four places (the *agent*, the *other*, *truth*, *production*) while rotating the four terms (the *master-signifier* S_1 ; *knowledge* S_2 ; the *subject* S ; and the 'added pleasure' $\langle a \rangle$), we can construct three other types of discourse, permutations of the initial setting. Each type of discourse takes its name from the term which occurs in the place of the agent.

Revolving the discourse of the master by a quarter turn, we obtain Lacan's formula of the *discourse of the University*:



In this discourse knowledge holds the place of agent. The purpose is to master *jouissance*—keep pleasure low. Under the doctoral cap (S_2) we find the master (S_1), the authoritative text, etc.; at the place of production, the aspiring subject, the graduate (S). He aims at professorship, i.e. knowledge as agent.

Another quarter of a turn, and we arrive at the *discourse of the analyst*:



The analyst is the object $\langle a \rangle$ which provokes the speech of S, the analysand. Analysis supposes that knowledge (S_2) occurs at the place of truth. S_2 is the knowledge the patient attributes to the analyst, but it is also the unconscious knowledge of the subject S. The product of the analytic discourse is S_1 , the primal signifier, or cipher, of the subject. The disjunction between production (S_1) and truth (S_2) refers to the impossibility of controlling unconscious knowledge.

The discourse of the hysteric

The formula of the fourth discourse follows from the other three:



At first glance, the notion of a 'discourse' of the hysteric seems incongruent. It is evident that mastery and knowledge determine specific social behaviours, and there can be no doubt that psychoanalysis has established a new kind of speech relation. But hysteria does not seem to fit into this catalogue of institutions. The clinical imagery associated with it more readily evokes unsocial than behaviour. What then shall we make of Lacan's proposition that hysteria is a discourse? The contradiction between hysteria as 'social link' and as clinical image vanishes however as soon as we think of it as a structure accounting not just for pathological, but rather for *normal* hysteria. Normal hysteria has no symptoms and is an essential characteristic of the speaking subject. Rather than a particular speech relation, the discourse of the hysteric exhibits the most elementary mode of speech. Drastically put: the speaking subject is hysterical as such.

As formalized by Lacan, the discourse of the hysteric accounts for historic and clinical hysteria; for the position of the speaking subject as such; and

even for language patterns that seem far removed from hysteria in the strict sense of the term.

The discourse of the hysteric is fundamental, first, because it discloses the structure of speech in general and, second, because it sheds light on dimensions of human discursive practice that no one would have related to clinical hysteria. History bears witness to both aspects, as we have indicted already. But this remains to be shown in more detail.

The hysteric can be said to institute a discourse when we do not cast out her question, a question that runs irrepressibly through history, despite all attempts to set it aside once and for all. What causes this history? If we can answer this question, we will have established the hysteric as agent of discourse. To put it yet in another way: what makes the hysteric so enticing to have induced all that literature about her?

To answer with Lacan, the hysteric is a chimaera, bringing to mind the myth of the sphinx. With the riddle she poses to man, the sphinx not only institutes a certain relation of speech, but specifically the discursive relation of agent to other. The riddle is the hysteric herself; she is the barred subject \bar{S} , whose body is marked by unexplainable symptoms. These symptoms define her discourse as a question addressed to the other. Brandishing her suffering, she acts as the sphinx posing a riddle to man. Having acknowledged her question, he raises to the position of master endowed with limitless power: he is the master of knowledge supposed to have the answer capable of silencing her. For the hysteric's discourse, the relation *agent* \rightarrow *other* thus takes the form $\bar{S} \rightarrow S_1$.

The riddle of the subject supposes the other (priest, physician, analyst) capable of resolving it. The history of hysteria can be seen as many Oedipuses lined up before the sphinx, each answering her riddle in his way, none conquering Thebes (it was his *answer* that made Oedipus into Oedipus, says Lacan.)

The riddle, or enigma, is a basic speech-form—a minimal enunciation [*énonciation*]⁶—which compels the one to whom it is addressed to respond in the form of an assertion [*énoncé*]. The hysteric's enunciation is injunctive: "Tell me!"

This mandate to speak is a fundamental aspect of the *Demand*⁶: only speech is demanded, nothing else. The one who acknowledges this injunction, or mandate to speak, is given the power to satisfy the Demand. This constitutes him as *capital* Other. By posing the riddle, the hysteric commands the Other from her position as agent, and yet in so doing entirely surrenders to him whom she empowers to answer: "Tell me! Answer me! Whatever you say I am!" The demand compels speech, solicits an answer. It requests virtually all of speech, all that can be answered, as if all of language carried the mute question: "Who am I?" Asked by the hysteric, this question, essential for her, appears to arise from the structure itself. She identifies with the structure of speech, the synchrony of which is a question-answer:

Tell me . . . who I am? → I am who you say.

The hysteric reveals the subject's symbolic dependence on the Other. She manifests this dependence by keeping up her 'symbolic debt' and by inverting the direction of the message (the speaker receives the message from the hearer):

| | | |
|----------|---|-------------|
| tell me | ↔ | I am |
| ----- | | ----- |
| who I am | | who you say |

The hysteric demonstrates that all speech proceeds from the place of the Other. The Other is master, letting the as yet inarticulate subject come into being.⁷

I am / who you say ↔ I say / who you are.

The hysteric plays it as though she commanded the Other, yet symbolically she is entirely dependent on him whom she begs to make her a subject. She commands and at once surrenders. Her question, "Who am I?" receives the answer "You are who I say."

On the side of the Other the riddle ends with the gift of speech. But this gift has an essential flaw. By answering the subject's question: "Who am I?" the Other lets the subject come into being; but any given answer, necessarily specific, reduces the subject's quest to a finite object: "Who you are? A saint, a fool, a hospital case . . ." Calling the subject into being, the hysteric's "who?" in response receives a what that objectifies her.

Tell me *who* I am? → You are *what* I say.

The division of subject and object, an irrevocable effect of language, provides the treacherous ground for hysteria to perform its manoeuvres.

The hysteric is a speaking riddle, the symptom that elicits speech from the other. Any answer will do as long as there is one at all. The historical abundance of theories on hysteria demonstrates this profusely. They have said anything and everything about hysteria save the truth.

Like history, clinical data contribute their share to describing the structure made manifest by the riddle—the fact that it wants to be answered. The hysteric herself joins the waggon: for her, too, the symptom is a riddle compelling her to provide answers: hence the hysteric's bend for self-diagnosis.

The Demand describes the passage from posing a riddle [énonciation] to receiving a finite answer [énoncé]; the answer interprets the one who asked

for it. Most generally speaking, the result of this process is talk. Talk activates the battery of signifiers—a network or set of inter-dependent terms describing the structure of knowledge. Its minimal form is the relation $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$. The process of signification arises from this structure; meaning results from the interplay of at least two signifiers.

When the hysteric takes command by posing her riddle, the outcome is knowledge, answering as such. Knowledge in turn answers the question "Who am I?" The history of hysteria bears witness to this. It engenders knowledge, more than enough of it, and not only medical knowledge. Religion had pass hysteria from telluric demonry to celestial sanctity. Science first classified it among the organic diseases with either extremely precise or extremely diffuse localizations, then listed it with the mental diseases. But there again it proved cumbersome on account of its somatic characteristics, and finally the hysteric is held in contempt as a malingerer. But if she *feigns* her illness, she is not ill.

The history of hysteria presents three salient aspects: (i) requesting an answer, hysteria generates knowledge; (ii) responding to the symptom, knowledge states what the hysteric is (a witch, a saint, a patient, a subject); (iii) no answer settles the hysteric's question; all answers fail to master their object, none can silence the hysteric.

The hysteric's role regarding knowledge is precisely ambiguous. She solicits knowledge by offering herself as its precious object, compelling man [the male] to always generate more. But on the other hand, her solicitation pushes knowledge to its limits, demonstrating that knowledge does not coincide with the truth that it supposedly expresses. Disengaged from the truth, knowledge fails to account for hysteria. And yet the two aspects are linked: the failure of knowledge incessantly fuels the riddle, and hence the production of knowledge.

This leads to a question which takes us beyond the framework of clinical studies. What if the conditions by which the hysteric causes the production of knowledge would coincide with the conditions of the production of knowledge in general? In this case the discourse of the hysteric would be related to the discourse of science. In effect, the discourse of science depends on excluding the subject—an exclusion the hysteric and her ongoing riddle reveal.

History throws light on the structure, but the structure shows the reasons of history. The structure of discourse consists in the hysteric's enunciation: "I am what you say." This is the key to the multifaceted nature of hysteria. From a clinical standpoint, this statement could be rejected; but what the clinician may contest remains valid for the historian: hysteria has changed over time.

Often observed, the 'evolution' of hysteria has remained unexplained, because the time in which these changes occur is only the time of discourse. Hysteria's historical guises, its very plasticity, depend on the vicissitudes of

this discourse. The hysteric has no history, and yet her discourse is the driving force behind the history which, as the changing appearance of knowledge, produces her as an object.

As the subject who exhibits the symptom as an enigma for knowledge, the hysteric pushes the one to whom she addresses her question to know [*pousse-à-savoir*]: "Look at my body, there you will find the answer to my question." She offers herself to man as a ravishing enigma—as the object of a knowledge that divides her from herself. Characteristic for the hysteric, the subject-object division now stands revealed as a structural one, arising from the essential function of the enigma in the relation of speech.

The symptom as riddle calls for an answer. "Who am I?" The subject of this utterance [*énonciation*] remains in the air as long as it has not found articulation by means of a statement [*énoncé*]. Articulation answers the riddle, that allows any possible answer because it urges nothing but speech itself. But with any particular answer, something drops out of the signifying relation: articulated by means of this answer, the riddle itself disappears. The subject finds itself constituted by a definite statement, "You are . . .," and the object of this statement, the riddle, is dropped as a lost object, as object <a>. The statement [*énoncé*] falls necessarily short of the utterance [*énonciation*]; in stating *something*, it does *not* state the truth.

It should be evident by now that the notion of hysteria as a riddle has more than descriptive value: hysteria is not today's riddle which might be solved tomorrow. Hysteria is a riddle, and remains a riddle. Nothing truer can be stated of a riddle than: "It is a riddle."

Paradoxically, the only true answer to the question "What is hysteria?" is not answering it. There are two possible positions: (i) answer the question and produce knowledge; or (ii) speak the truth but don't answer the question.

Thus, speaking the truth excludes knowledge. True knowledge is possible nevertheless if we let the riddle speak by itself. Freud did precisely that. Taking his position we leave the discourse of the hysteric and assume another one for whose emergence the hysteric was responsible: the discourse of the analyst.

This new discourse arises with the non-response of the analyst to the hysteric's demand. The statement ($S_1 \rightarrow S_2$), which constitutes the subject (S), leaves a residue, <a>, the deflated riddle. Thus, any answer, simply by being an answer, separates the subject who poses the question from the question it poses. The subject becomes the object of the statement,

$$\begin{array}{c} S \\ \uparrow \\ <a> \end{array}$$

establishing the disjunction between knowledge and the object of this knowledge,

<a> // S₂.

As subject, the hysteric poses the riddle which causes speech; as object she is what knowledge must, but cannot, articulate.

The *discourse of the hysteric* bears a definite relation to Lacan's earlier notion of the *Demand*. That which he previously called the *gap of desire* now appears as the object <a>, or dropout from the signifying relation, inasmuch as the quest for satisfaction necessarily receives an inadequate answer. Regarding the hysteric's desire, we will not here discuss the dialectic unravelled by Freud—desire of an unsatisfied desire —, but the place of this desire in the economy of discourse.

This place is determined by the function of teasing knowledge [*pousse-à-savoir*] we attributed to the hysteric. After all, she tries to seduce the desiring man to learn about the object that causes his desire. This object, which has dropped out of the speech cycle set in motion by the Demand, is the hysteric herself (she is both the object which causes man's desire and the object of this desire.)

The hysteric embodies the division between subject and object in a particular way. As subject she incites desire; but when this desire moves towards the object that causes it, the hysteric cannot condescend to be this object. She incites man to know what causes his desire, inciting him to acknowledge her as the inaccessible object of his desire.

This intrigue of the hysteric is open to everyday observation. Offering her charms, she captivates the man. She provokes his desire, then suddenly disappoints it; she retreats at the very moment when he risks a response to her advances: being the object of his desire is the position she cannot endure. Her game is to present herself as desirable; but when this offer is taken seriously, she withdraws and will not have been what one thought she was. This tenuous and unnegotiable position between subject and object is expressed by:

8
↑
<a>

The hysteric's relationship with her therapist adds another facet to this clinical picture. Making the physician a witness to her suffering, she urges him to give a name to her suffering, commanding him to take action. The physician answers, provides a diagnosis and prescribes a treatment. But the very next day she harshly criticizes him because her illness has not abated; only this time the pain has moved to another part of her body. His diagnosis was wrong, or else the prescription, etc. etc.

Here the clinical data bear witness to another aspect of the structure. The hysteric starts out with her "I am what you say," and ends with her "All of

what I am you cannot say," bringing about $\langle a \rangle // S_2$, the disjunction between knowledge and object.

The structure of language as it operates in the discourse of the hysteric looks as follows. $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ constitutes the chain of signifieds, i.e. the capital Other, O. The object $\langle a \rangle$ is what is lacking in O. The Other is always deficient, which the hysteric will not fail to point out to the physician, who embodies the Other, by putting his competence into question.

Here the castrating dimension of the hysteric's game becomes evident. Pushing man towards knowledge [*pousse-à-savoir*], she also pushes him towards failure [*pousse-au-manque*]: the man involved with her always finds himself stupid [*manque-à-savoir*]. But the erratic quality of the hysteric's discourse derives more from the structure which necessitates hysteria than from the hysteric who asks to be interpreted in terms of the structure.

Hysteria is an elementary effect of language. As an intelligible phenomenon it follows from the structure of the Demand. This structure, in fact, is identical with hysteria. Immersed in language, the subject is hysterical as such. While Freud took hysteria to be the nucleus of all neurotic disorders, Lacan has revealed the speaking subject as fundamentally hysterical: the only subject of psychoanalysis is the barred, unconscious, hysterical subject.

It then appears no longer sufficient to conceive of hysteria as a fact of language among others; it is *the* fact of language if we admit that whoever speaks is hysterical. We can go further and say that the subject demands to be recognized as a fact of language (see the formula "Tell me who I am \rightarrow I am what you say.") The hysteric not only requests that language be used as a means for explaining her; she also insists on being acknowledged as a being of speech. Freud fulfilled this demand, and so did Lacan.

The connection of hysteria and psychoanalysis is structural and not historical: the subject, insofar as it demands to be recognized as an effect of language, lines up with the analyst, whose existence is sustained by the fact that language has effects. This constitutes his knowledge, or rather the knowledge the hysteric attributes to him. The hysteric is not a subject privileged by and for analysis, and yet psychoanalysis could only emerge with the hysteric as subject. This does not explain why analysis was invented by Freud, but provides the structural reason for its emergence. As we said, there are two possible subjective positions regarding the hysteric: (i) The position of medicine; by playing the hysteric's game, this position produces a body of knowledge from which the riddle drops out. (ii) Freud's position which consists in a non-response to the riddle, or rather the silent response: "It's a riddle." This silence is a structural position, and not only an incitement to speak. It *is* a response, and knowledge *is* produced; but adequate to the truth, the response does not answer the Demand. The statement "It's a riddle" stands for a knowledge that functions as truth. (This could be the definition of psychoanalytic interpretation.) As a matter of fact, the analyst's silence might lead to a reverse hysterization, inasmuch as the analyst, by becoming a riddle

himself, commands the subject to produce knowledge about him. As a result, the riddle includes the knowledge of the riddle, and this knowledge cannot be articulated.

It is Freud's historical achievement not to have fabricated new knowledge to more adequately or more elegantly account for hysteria. He came upon a knowledge that does not know itself, the unconscious; his break with the past was recognizing a knowledge that speaks by itself.

The hysteric renders unfeasible any enterprise based on the teleological organization of different kinds of knowledge. She banalizes the bits and pieces of knowledge, challenging not so much their content as the place from which they are pronounced. All medical knowledge is the same for her, whether it be Hippocrates's wandering uterus or Charcot's missing lesion. Between the two, centuries of patient and learned efforts, thousands of pages of theses, of analyses, of conclusions.

We suggest that history's judgment on Charcot's studies of hysteria must not be understood as the failure of a particular theory or approach but, on the contrary, as marking a point of no return. Charcot's paradigmatic failure is that of knowledge as knowledge *about* the hysteric.

What can be seen from her history, then, is not only that the hysteric resists being apprehended as an object of science, but that she cannot serve as such an object because the knowledge she embodies is precisely unknowable. Freud's identification with the hysteric has more than biographical relevance: by putting himself in her place, his knowledge about her was produced like a symptom—a knowledge speaking by itself. Knowledge *about* the hysteric is the knowledge of the hysteric.

Freud closed the discourse of the hysteric, or rather, opened it up, by establishing as irremediable the disjunction between subject and object. The invention of psychoanalysis proceeded from his position on the hysteric: he kept silent and let the symptom speak.

Notes

- 1 Papyrus Kahoun dated 1900 B.C.
- 2 Less speculative and more pragmatic, American psychiatry has solved the problem in eliminating the notion of hysteria from its textbooks.
- 3 Those interpretations describe the history of hysteria as progress from the courts of the Inquisition to the friendly neutrality of science.
- 4 The arrow indicates the direction of the message as well as the synchronic relation between two places.
- 5 Unpublished SEMINAIRE «L'Envers de la psychanalyse» (1969–70); «Radiophonie», SCILICET 2/3 (1970); TELEVISION, Paris: Seuil (1973); engl. transl. in OCTOBER 40 (1987).
- 6 Lacan opposes *Demand* and *desire*; Demand is addressed to the *capital* Other. cf. «Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious», in: Jacques Lacan, ECRITS: A Selection, New York: W. W. Norton (1977), p. 315 and *passim*. Editor's note.
- 7 Lacan puns *maître/m'êtré*. Editor's note.

CONDUCTING THE HYSTERIC'S CURE¹

Michel Silvestre

Source translated by Jonathan Scott Lee, *Hystoria Lacan Study Notes Special Issue* (1988)
23–33

By no means can the recognition of the clinical type of a particular patient be taken for a preliminary to the cure; this is rather a matter of the position proper to each analyst, who manages his practice in solitude, with the experience he has forged for himself. However, note the solidity of the threefold division hysteria, obsession, and phobia—all attempts to reshape or to modify this division have been unable to shatter it. From this, we suggest that each of these three general clinical types regroups specific modes of the subject's response and that these responses are found from one subject to another within the same clinical type.

The finality of the cure is not at issue, since it does not depend upon the clinical type. At the horizon of every cure, there is a coming to terms with desire beyond the unfolding of the phantasm. This horizon renders the clinical type obsolete. Thus we are only concerned with the means of achieving this end. Now, it is a fact that the responses of the subject—i.e. his/her neurosis—oppose to these means difficulties which can be clarified by being put into relation with the clinical type under which the patient is classified.

The responses put forward by hysterical neurosis concern essentially the dialectic of desire, that is, the flow of this desire, articulated by the signifier, between the subject and the Other. Let us agree for the moment that the figure of hysteria is incarnated by those speaking beings who bear a uterus. This remains, for psychoanalytic theory, only a statistical coincidence, a coincidence that permits us however to invoke under the name of *hysteric* those exemplary patients, those muses of desire, who have quickened to analysts the words of their interpretations since Anna O. The hysteric was in a good position to inspire analysis and to encounter the analyst, since the

analytic offer—free association—brings to a deadlock the dialectic of desire that expresses itself in symptoms.

Analysts do not always respond felicitously to such solicitations. The hysteric can indeed be led to muffle her demand by diversifying her symptoms; this can carry her to excesses of suffering in response to which the cure takes on unexpected disguises of its own. We will take up these avatars which so divert analysts that they come to doubt they are still dealing with hysteria and in response drag out of the closet a hypothetical psychotic nucleus. But the difficulty remains, even if their comfort is in part preserved by this expedient, which only diagnoses their counter-transference.

Nevertheless, before coming to these reefs that threaten the cure and to the beacons that one can oppose to them, we must agree that hysterical neurosis lends itself obligingly to the Freudian method.

Idyll

The offer of the psychoanalyst is summed up in the fundamental rule, which also states the sole technical prescription to which the psychoanalyst is bound. This rule suffices, Lacan indicates, to produce the supposed subject of knowing, which issues from the analysand herself, thus establishing the bases for the transference.

Nothing is more equivocal than the fundamental rule. As the hysteric understands it, her speech sustains the Other listening to her and thus is the cause of that which she may receive from him in return. From this, the idyll can begin. The speech of the hysteric becomes a pastoral by means of which the subject dedicates her complaint to the Other, whom she certainly does not confuse, at first, with the person of the analyst. On the contrary, the analyst fulfills his function only by keeping quiet: his very silence guarantees the good understanding that the hysteric contracts with the Other. This setting is in every way propitious for the effective deployment of the process of the cure and the development of the transference.

The hysteric's interpretation of the fundamental rule is correct insofar as it assigns to the analyst the status of being present in the Other's place, and, as such, establishes him in the position of returning to the subject that which she represses. Yet having assigned this place to him, the hysteric understands that he will stay there. Thus, the material of interpretation is invaded by the return of the past to which memory gives an overriding emotional content. The cure comes to resemble a process of repetition or a rehearsal, and the transference indulges in false recognition, preventing the advent of the new. In this way, the hysteric is responsible for the confusion between transference and repetition, which analysts have maintained until Lacan dissociated the two.

For the hysteric, the analyst has only to follow up on those meanings implicitly revealed through repetition. The analyst has only to complete her

sentence, for the allotment of roles in the play of desire to induce its pacifying effect.

If desire springs from dissatisfaction, the hysteric makes of dissatisfaction an absolute condition, but with the corollary that this be the Other's condition. The hysteric aims at making the Other always desire more. This is fine for the analyst who is supposed only to await the next signifier: a perfect accord, one could say, since it rests upon the infinite variations of signifying metonymy. The hysteric exalts the division from which she suffers by providing the Other with signifiers to direct his desire. This sacrifice, she believes, settles her accounts with castration, since castration is what those signifiers suppose.

It follows that the position of the hysteric is quite able to sustain a social bond, since it can rally several subjects, a group, even a crowd. The other is allowed to accede to desire, by offering him signifiers to guide it. But more often than not a fiasco comes to ratify the imposture of this position, for example when it claims to regulate the sexuality of the couple. Desire not only causes obedience to the signifier, it also involves a truth the revelation of which requires a certain kind of knowledge. It is this knowledge that the hysteric cuts out by claiming to reign over desire. The task of the analyst is to reveal this omission.

However, it often happens that, from the response he is getting, the analyst realizes either that what he can tell her is only a proxy of this knowledge or else that she knew it already. What's the purpose, indeed, of telling to someone who is complaining that the cause of her complaint is her suffering? The hysteric sustains her desire by exalting the phallic lack ($-\phi$); thus, interpretations which rest upon the sole signification of the phallus are bound to encounter abutments. These interpretations are purely tautological. Constructed as formations of the unconscious, they reveal only the dominion of the master signifier, while leaving in the shadow that which sustains the subject beyond her division—the object of her phantasm.

Note that such an interpretation is consistent with the above-mentioned place that repetition assigns to the analyst. It can induce a certain appeasement because the analyst relies upon suggestion. Which is to say that in certain circumstances the master discourse can play a trick on the hysterical discourse. The hysteric agrees to withdraw her complaint if she reckons that the transference can only be maintained at this price. The analyst heals the hysteric on the condition that their relation is prolonged as long as metonymy can go, that is, indefinitely.

Mis/take

It is the transference, however, that leads the direction of the cure of the hysteric to a quandary which forces the analyst to be more than the silent understudy of signifying repetition; here he has to sustain a real presence.

When Freud had to acknowledge that the transference involves a slope of resistance, he discovered the fact that beyond repetition—which lends to the analyst the traits of the infantile imago—the analyst himself counts as a presence. For if the transference does not totally resolve into signifying repetition, in this transference the analyst must be also real. This presence of the analyst as real is the question underlying Freud's reflections from 1910 to 1919 on the "technique" of psychoanalysis. Freud discovers that the hysteric produces love in the transference in order to obstruct the real of the analyst. Reread the admirable text on transference-love, where Freud stages the astonishing duo of the hysteric who loves and the analyst who desires.²

To be sure, Freud does not ignore the fact that love is perfectly contented with letting the coitus wait: there would be no poetry without this avoidance. Freud claims nonetheless that the aim of transference-love is the sexual act, first, because the phallic meaning of this love, which is sexual, will have to be revealed; second, because this meaning can be worded nowhere else than in the place of the analyst. It is for the analyst to keep the place of desire, regardless of the maneuvers of the subject to make him lose his course.

Transference-love troubles Freud all the more because it resists interpretation, at least the notion of interpretation then available to him. Transference-love cannot be interpreted like a formation of the unconscious. The mis/take of transference-love consists not in taking the analyst for an other, but on the contrary, in loving him for what he is. Thence the Freudian reflection on acting-out. Love in the transference is what repetition is in the supposed subject of knowing—an obstacle and a revealer at the same time.

Freud is so bothered about his discovery that he does not know what to say when Ferenczi, in 1924, proposes to modernize the technique of psychoanalysis by introducing into the handling of transference the notion of acting-out. Ferenczi calls this the "active technique." He had the right hunch, realizing that in order for the analyst to take the place of subject's Other, he cannot be a simple reflection of the subject. However, Ferenczi got it wrong when he confused the omnipotence of the maternal Other and/or analyst with the absolute of the cause of desire, the object <a>. Ferenczi agrees with the neurotic in effacing the Other of desire behind the Other of the demand.

This confusion is most agreeable to the loving hysteric herself because she devotes her love to the analyst/Other in order to lead his desire astray. The hysteric wishes that the Other desire, but only on the condition that she be the cause of this desire. At this point, the direction of the cure ought to take a turn corresponding to the position Lacan has designed for the analyst. That he is in the place of the Other curbs, in fact, every outcome of transference-love. The impasse thus reached leaves the subject with only two options: running off or the *passage à l'acte*.

Only by reversing the cards can the analyst now return the hysteric to her desire, allowing her to forsake the object that she made it her duty to love. He can shatter the subject in the place from which she stirs up in the Other the

signifiers of her desire, on the condition that the analyst incarnates himself that which causes this desire. The object of the hysteric's amorous *élan* is found outside the transference—not in the past, but in the here-and-now.

By unveiling this gap too quickly, Freud had Dora slam the door in his face and run away. Refusing anxiety, Dora preferred to keep her symptom rather than to spell out her phantasm (in which her ideal of Woman took the place of the object.) Anxiety is the price the hysteric must pay in order to accept as truth that if the Other desires her, this desire remains opaque for her. Dora stopped mid-way between symptom and phantasm, between rejecting phallic signification and bearing the anxiety which unveils the object of *jouissance*. For the hysteric such an out-come can be upsetting, but this is not necessarily a failure.

Separation

The cause of desire can be made palatable to the subject only by means of the phallic device. This is an habitual compromise which makes *jouissance* possible under conditions of near-Oedipal identifications and of using the paternal metaphor well. Neither these identifications nor this metaphor are for the hysteric a matter of course. These first identifications—identifications with the man—are contrary to her anatomical sexuality; choosing them, she is led to protect the father as love object, refusing to hand him over to the signifying mill. Hence her contempt for semblance, which derives its efficacy only from a well-implanted paternal metaphor.

Instilled in the right way by the analyst, the signifier of the Name-of-the-Father can nevertheless offer happiness to the hysteric, if she can be brought to accept the phallic solution. It suffices for this that an other comply with castration and dedicate his desire to her. A husband, or the recognition of the husband's adequacy if marriage preceded the cure, comes in the nick of time to detach the hysteric from her analyst. We can consider this outcome a real therapeutic conclusion without fearing the echoes of a tradition which has always offered the suffering hysteric phallic pharmacopoeia. Knowing the potion does not always mean that one can make the patient swallow it.

If he can do it, the analyst need not blush because of his art, even if the hysteria has not been cured. Analysis can also obstruct the above solution by reinforcing the subject's scepticism on behalf of the phallic function. In this case rejecting castration serves less the purpose of fending off anxiety than that of defeating the semblance it compels the subject to bear.

This reef of the cure leads the hysteric to condone the alienations of analytic experience in order not to be duped by phallic deceit: the cure seems to have returned to the starting point. In fact, the suffering no longer depends upon a desire intent on finding a conciliatory Other, allowing the subject to play the game of desire. The new suffering springs from a *jouissance* which refuses phallic finitude and which constrains the subject to read the Other for

signs that the signifier is not all. To this exhausting quest anatomy predisposes women more than men, justifying our speaking of the hysteric in the feminine gender.

Thus is revealed to the hysteric the essential elasticity of desire: that which she took for its cause and its reason, the phallus, is only the disguise whose tinsel turns to farce. The true cause is elsewhere, not in the signifier ruled by the phallus, but in the object that does not fall wholly under phallic rule. The hysteric accepts this cause, but only to pledge it to the *jouissance* of the Other: she offers herself, as object, to this immoderate *jouissance*.

The impasse that the hysteric encounters in the dialectic of desire tunes her to *aphanisis*, the subjective fading by which she recovers her *jouissance*. Desire seems to go away, as the sea seems to retreat, so as to leave her in the lurch, a poor thing betrayed by the Other who desires without her. This is the state of rejection and abandonment which psychiatrists do not hesitate to call, with their customary doggedness, melancholy, but which is simply the end of desire showing what desire is in the end—desire for death. This is what Freud called the negative therapeutic reaction or again primary masochism. However, there is no need for analysis for this picture to come to life, and the list would be long with the everyday figures of women for whom destiny is unhappiness. Such figures run counter to the customary evocation of the 'beautiful hysteric', vindicator of phallic glory, but they too speak the truth about hysteria.

The truth is that in refusing castration as normalizing desire, the hysteric has no choice but to realize herself in the object of her phantasm, sacrificing herself to the Other's *jouissance*. At this point that the analyst is summoned to be present, for the *passage à l'acte*, here looming, is different from the sexual act evoked above which finally aimed only at revealing the ridicule of male phallic strut. In the world of the hysteric, thus devastated by the desire for death, the analyst must start the cure all over again. This second start stakes the desire of the analyst at the point where the demand is gone.

This substitution rests upon what might be called a maneuver of the transference, rather than an interpretation. It is from the real laid bare that the analyst must lead the affair in this second round, and not from the signifiers whose repetition had designed his places in the first. We are suggesting that such a prosthesis of desire makes it possible for the analyst to function as the object of the hysteric's phantasm, cause of her desire, putting him in a position to break up the trap where her paradoxical *jouissance* confines her.

The trap is the phantasm, the ultimate defense against the desire which it nurtures. This is why this moment of the cure, where the end threatens, can reveal and put into question the foundations of hysteria's structure. This poses for the subject a new choice.

Either she decides to pursue the quest that her phantasm outlines for her, strengthened in her endeavor by the therapeutic effacement of the symptom. This pursuit may proceed without the support of the analyst, who *in absentia*

can continue to incarnate the vainly desiring Other. But the proclaimed vanity of desire shows that the structure has remained untouched; it continues to work outside analysis.

Or else she agrees to pitch phantasm against desire, here separable. Two configurations, referred to above, illustrate this possibility: either she accepts a partner whom she no longer confines to impotence, obliging to incarnate $(-\phi)$, the imaginary castration; or she admits that the Other desires, but for that does not ask her to embody the lost primal cause of his desire. Disengaged from a phantasm henceforth reduced to the meaning of familial history—circumstantial and soon obsolete—the subject can find in her desire the reason for her actions for the rest of her life.

Notes

- 1 A translation of a revised version of «*La direction de la cure de l'hystérique*», ORNICAR? No. 29 (Summer 1984), pp. 58–65. The revisions are by Michel Silvestre, who kindly accepted to amplify certain passages we found too dense. We express our heartfelt regret over his premature death in 1985.
- 2 Sigmund Freud, «Observations on Transference-Love», in STANDARD EDITION, XII, pp. 159–171.

EXTRACT FROM *WHY DO WOMEN WRITE MORE LETTERS THAN THEY POST*

Darian Leader

Source: Darian Leader, *Why do women write more letters than they post*. London: Faber & Faber (1996), pp. 123–159.

Is to receive a love letter to be recognized? If the field of love is structured by misrecognitions and misunderstandings, can the simple and direct expression of a love letter succeed in going beyond them? And if a woman's sexuality does not speak to a man, is there not a contradiction in the very idea of a love letter? Is this why women in love write more letters than they post? Remember the scene in *Love in the Afternoon* of Audrey Hepburn burning her letter to Frank Flanagan or Kim Novak destroying the letter she has just written to James Stewart in *Vertigo* revealing her true identity. Does it suggest that love in fact actively prevents the transmission of a letter? This might explain why when lovers do send their letters, they so often make a mistake with the address: 12-rue de Tournon instead of 2.

We could start by contrasting the letter as a message and the letter as an object. In Middleton's *The Widow*, a married woman receives a love letter. She shows it, outraged, to her husband, who then makes it known to the author that he is aware of what's going on. But in fact, the woman had written the letter to herself. By showing it to her husband, she proves her own good intentions, and via the husband's response to the other man, she sends him the message of her own bad intentions. This is a well-crafted schema, one which we find also in a tale of Boccaccio. The letter here is sending a message at several levels, but although its consequences may be sexual, there is no eroticization of the document itself. What matters is the signification, the meaning, of the letter.

Valentine Dale had the same idea. This diplomat from the court of Elizabeth I needed cash, so he wrote to his Queen detailing his financial

position, enclosing with the same packet an affectionate letter to his wife which included reference to the monetary difficulty. The letter to the Queen was addressed to his wife and vice versa, so that Elizabeth was both surprised and amused to find herself reading a text replete with 'sweetheart' and 'dear love'. Touched, she sent the cash to her Valentine, unsuspecting that the 'blunder' had been carefully and deliberately engineered by the diplomat. The vignette shows that Rodin was wrong to identify his famous statue of the headless man with a diplomat: someone who, lacking a head, does not think. The canny ambassador was both flexible and fertile in intrigue, appealing to the letter as signification, as the purveyor of a message.

Joyce's famous Trieste letters are in striking contrast to such a transmission of information. He writes obscene prose to his wife Nora, suggesting that she do unspeakable things with the actual letters themselves, such as inserting them into the orifices of her body. The letter here is less a vehicle of meaning than an object as such. Sewing one into the lining of one's garment, as was once common, has the same effect: it matters for what it is and where it is rather than for what it says. Like Lady Caroline Lamb's letter to Byron, which was made up of the precious fabric of her pubic hair. There are thus at least two functions of a letter: as a message and as an object. Does this tell us anything about the different relations a man and a woman may have to letters sent and unsent? Would a letter remain unsent if it functioned as an object and become sent if it were the vehicle of a message?

This answer is too simple. After all, a letter may sometimes function as both message and object. We might turn to the register of industry for a clue, but again the criterion doesn't seem to be the right one. If women write more letters than they post, does this mean that they write more letters anyway? Madame de Sévigné's endless letters to her daughter or Emily Dickinson's continuum of poetic fragments find their reflections in the field of male writing. If a Juvenal could write less than four thousand lines in a period of thirty years, a Petrarch could not go anywhere without his writing materials being within easy reach. If quantity does not constitute a compass here, perhaps the *relation* to quantity does. We are all familiar with long literary descriptions and perhaps we might put forward the hypothesis that one of the functions of male writing, in contrast to that of a woman, is to send the reader to sleep. This is quite serious. It evokes a sort of generalized version of Caryl's project to write a commentary on Job: running to more than 1,200 folio pages, its design was to inculcate the very virtue of patience of which the commentary treated. Or, the early novels of the French author Robbe-Grillet, where a simple household object may be detailed for page upon page. The ways of art, of course, are various, but one suspects that such activity aims at mortifying not simply the object described but also the readers. People sometimes speak of a written work as a monument, something to commemorate the life of the author, a tomb. But since a characteristic of many tombs is to remain empty, it becomes clear that a text may be written

with the real intention of becoming equally abandoned: to become a volume deserted by every reader. And just as a tomb aims at an addressee situated beyond its explorer, many of those writers who mortify themselves in their activity have no other addressee than that which lies beyond their mortified readers: death. Perhaps Voltaire had understood this, if it is indeed true that he dictated part of his *Henriade* to his secretary while asleep. Schoolkids are sensitive to this factor when they ask their parents why the writer they are studying used up ten pages to describe a house instead of one. To answer this with the reply that the longer the description, the clearer the image of the abode, is clearly unacceptable: witness the fact that no one agrees on what exactly Pliny's villa looked like although it is lovingly described for page upon page.

Such attempts at mortifying the other are well known in psychoanalysis. Lacan pointed out the way in which many obsessional patients speak continuously, even supplying interpretations of their own material, in order to block the analyst from saying anything. This sort of dialogue with oneself reminds one of Cato's effort in the Roman Senate to prevent the key moment of a vote by discoursing for as long as possible. After all, wasn't it the right of a senator to speak on any subject for as long as he wished before a motion was put to the house? And likewise, is it not the patient's right to say anything that comes into his head? Such tactics have the effect of putting the analyst in the place of a corpse, someone who might as well not be there. One of Lacan's patients wrote of his scandalous treatment by the psychoanalyst: while he was in the midst of his 'free associations', Lacan left the room to take a phone call or to get a cup of tea, remarking as he left the office, 'Don't hesitate to continue the session during my absence.' Rather than seeing this with the patient as a gross breach of professional dignity, we can understand it as a response, an interpretation, to precisely the sort of situation we have been discussing: the patient speaks so as to put the analyst to sleep, to maintain him in the place of a corpse. Lacan's unusual manoeuvre had the effect of countering this by sending the message back to the patient that he might as well not be there.

Although there are female obsessional neurotics, this sort of speech relation is rarer in women. It is interesting that there are many books about women and writing and a woman's sexualization of the creative process, but very little is said in psychoanalytic literature about the relation of a woman to speech. Why is this? In a certain patriarchal tradition, a little girl must keep silent: it is for the boy to speak. We could evoke the image of Charlotte Brontë's timidity and tonguetiedness when she met the writer Thackeray at a London dinner. But if this is the case, surely stuttering would be more common among girls than among boys?

If to stutter is to experience a difficulty in entering the world of speech, wouldn't the place assigned to the girl in the family structure entail that she would be the one to flounder? But, as all speech therapists know, this is far

from the case. Boy stutterers are far more common, and various half-baked explanations have been given as to the girl's agility at avoiding this problem. One way of understanding the phenomenon of stammering would be to link it to the boy's passage through the Oedipal structure and the problem of situating himself in relation to his father, the moment of assuming the mantle of speech. Speech would belong to the field of what one *has*, and hence any difficulty in assuming it would be indicative of a reticence to grasp something which belongs, symbolically, to someone else, to the father. Boys frequently admit their discomfort with the image of going on stage in front of their class or school, that is, going into a place where they have to assume something. This shows that what matters is not the message, the dimension of what one is saying, but rather the place of speaking itself. The key here is to distinguish speaking and being called upon to speak. Stammering is not a difficulty in speaking but a difficulty *in assuming a place from which to speak*, a position in a symbolic network. We could say that in fact stammering is not the only barrier into the world of speech. There is another alternative, which functions as the mirror image of stammering, even though it is not treated as a speech disorder: ventriloquism. This is another way, after all, of not having something. It is the other who speaks, not the subject. We could say that stammering and ventriloquism constitute the two thresholds of the speaking world, both indicating a troubled relation to one's symbolic place there.

It is no accident that professional illusionists, people who are interested in producing fictive images for the mother, of pretending to supply her with the image she is searching for, so often relate their early interest in ventriloquism. Failing to enter the Oedipal register of having, it is a question rather of being, of being something for the mother. An example from the psychoanalytic literature illustrates this problem of having and not having for a man. A young man plagued with the most serious of stutters contracts a venereal disease and, rather than chastising him, his family show delight and, for the first time ever, the father walks him arm in arm to the movies. From this moment on, the stammer disappears. Why? In terms of the Oedipal model, it is because the young man has finally really lost something: the venereal disease evokes the presence of castration. The father now treats him as a man, in other words, as someone whose having is based on a not-having. He couldn't speak because to speak meant to be called to his place as a man. It is no accident, then, that he reports a dream that he is visiting a prostitute after a 'very fine gentleman' had just left her. He is fixed to the spot and can move neither limb nor tongue. His presence in the dream is thus that of someone who is always preceded by another man, a man from a different register, as is indicated by his fineness: this is no doubt the paternal register. And this shadow is what blocks him from moving forward, it is what paralyzes him completely. The speech trouble is thus rooted in the problem of transmission from father to son, from stepping into the place of the very fine

gentleman. It is exactly the difficulty of a Dr Johnson, a man who refused on one famous occasion to step into his father's place in a bookstall. That this problem in situating symbolically the relation of father to son was posed through the register of speech for Dr Johnson is clear from the isolated narrative of his dream. Out of the paucity of dream material of this acerbic and brilliant speaker, there is the one recorded image involving a vicious contest between two orators, which he lost.

If this perspective on stammering explains its frequency among boys, it is still not enough to account for the lack of female stammerers or, indeed, for their occasional presence. Remember the children's games we evoked earlier: if a little boy wants an object currently possessed by another child, he may well use force to snatch it away. But a little girl is more likely to appeal to someone else. Whereas what matters for the boy may be possessing the object as such, for the girl what matters may be the desire of the other party. There is a sensitivity to the desire of the other, and since this desire is routed through speech, perhaps the female escape from the stutter makes more sense. The desire of the other is engaged with more dexterity than for the boy. His problem is less productive: he wants the object possessed by the other child and to get it entails the destruction of this rival. But to destroy the rival would be to destroy one's own desire, since the only reason the object is valued in the first place is due to the fact that it belongs to someone else. This always determines the passage of the tea trolley on British Rail: whereas female travellers frequently request a refreshment when the trolley is passing, men tend to wait until the person in front of them has ordered something before deciding that they too require refreshment. The object becomes necessary only once the other person has shown their interest, in exactly the same way that a man may ignore a female colleague for years at work until the day when someone else shows his interest in her: then it's unrequited love. This structure should not be confused with its female version: if a woman is more sensitive to the desire of the other, that doesn't mean she'll want to *possess* the same object. Rather than ordering the refreshment on the train, she might decide to deprive herself of it, and thus to maintain her desire. The man's rush to possess what he assumes is an object of desire only generates the impossible: if you possess too quickly, you've got rid of desire.

Hence the boy's desire is in an impossible situation: to get what he wants would mean no longer wanting. This is one of the reasons why men spend most of their lives oscillating between the love and hate of their friends and partners: they have to maintain their rivals in order to preserve their desire and yet they have to destroy them at the same time. They have to have a boss in order to desire the boss's wife, but to desire the boss's wife implies destroying the boss. Anyone who has been close to a man understands this. It's why when men make slips of the tongue, so much hostility is at play. Where they make slips like 'You disappear', a woman is more likely to say something like

'I disappear', in other words, 'I want to let the desire of the Other speak through me, to make my desire the desire of the Other.'

This also gives us a clue to another curiosity: if a boy is paralysed at the level of the syllable, many women complain of not being able to finish not words but *sentences*. Men often take advantage of this to finish their sentences for them, but to do that is to miss the point. Not to finish a sentence may often indicate a hesitancy to be pinned down by words, to show that one is not equivalent or identical with a particular linguistic representation, to be something more than what one says. Men and women know that their existence cannot be reduced to words, but men do their best precisely to reduce it to this: hence the many rituals they may introduce into their lives. The dimension of 'life' is literally extinguished by the tyranny of their habits or the verbal formulae which can return to torment them in obsessional neurosis. A woman, on the contrary, may make it the most urgent of tasks to show that this absorption of everything into language can never be achieved: that there is a gap between language and existence, that one cannot be reduced to a word, a description or a meaning. Now, to finish a sentence pins down its meaning. The writers of the seventeenth century exploited this feature of language, new clauses continuously functioning to change the sense of the preceding ones. Leaving one's sentences, and perhaps, one's letters, unfinished may thus indicate a refusal to be made identical with a meaning. We saw earlier on how a current of female sexuality was concerned with questions of meaning, and we may link this with the motif of the unfinished. If a man's absence is made to mean something, a woman's presence may sometimes aim at not being identical with one particular meaning. The letter is not posted for the simple reason that it remains eternally unfinished.

A woman writes a letter to a man she loves. She carries it around with her for several weeks, and each time she reflects on it she decides to rewrite it since so many new things have happened, so much in her life has been changing. The letter continues to hibernate: there is never a right time to post it, since whenever the 'right time' is reached, time has passed and there is more to write. The letter may not be posted, as we just said, for the simple reason that it remains unfinished, but this simple reason suggests another one: the letter is unfinished because *the person who wrote it is unfinished*. As new things happen, she is continually becoming distinct from what she had originally described. Her life is always a little bit ahead of the description, and perhaps the respect for this gap is dearer to a woman than to a man – who, as we saw, aims to make the gap vanish, to absorb his changing life in language. Men and women are both unfinished, but by posting his letter a man may aim to obscure this; a woman's unposted letter, on the contrary, highlights the unfinished nature of the sender.

Not finishing may also indicate an appeal to the desire of the Other, something that becomes clear in moments of prayer. As one nun says, 'I understand prayer to be a state of mind in which one allows God to be God and

doesn't constantly interrupt, saying "Here I am." In other words, 'I leave myself and my ego out, and become aware of God's activity.' Prayer would thus be 'the activity of God within one': one speaks but it is the Other who is speaking. The subject vanishes and the question of the prayer becomes identical with its response: speaking to God is no different for this nun from God's activity itself. Both prayer and song may characterize one aspect of a woman's relation to the Other to which she addresses herself, something which cannot be touched and which is maintained, precisely via prayer or song, in the dimension of the beyond. The difference between men and women here is simple: if a woman often wants to be *a part of* God, a man, on the contrary, frequently wants nothing less than to be a God. This shows the different relation to what is beyond one. If one's addressee is not tangible in this way, what sense would it make to post a letter?

This question of the addressee introduces the problem of the perspective point, crucial for the study of men and women. Listening to a traveller praising the orange groves of Genoa, Stendhal thinks of being able to share their coolness with his lady, *with her*. The firework display in the *Elective Affinities* must go ahead even if all the other spectators have left: as Eduard says, they are for Ottilie alone. It is the addressee who becomes crucial, the perspective point from which the lover's focus is assured. Such modes of presence are often more explicit for a woman. Looking at herself in a mirror, she may say 'Doesn't Jennifer look good today.' In other words, the spectator is manifestly a component of the subject's own view of herself. And even if she doesn't want to, a woman is often quite aware of the fact that she is behaving exactly like her mother, an awareness that often produces an acute feeling of self-hatred. This function is much more repressed with men. A man who drives a fast car in a reckless way might well be putting on a display for his father, even if the latter is nowhere in sight. He is incorporated into the subject's relation with himself, but the driver will not be particularly alert to this. Hence the difficulty in the analysis of many male subjects of indicating to them the place of this third party who is the real addressee of their actions. That is why a man's neurosis is like a map: to understand what is going on, you need to find out from where the perspective is fixed.

The idea of the perspective point is a crucial one. If you want your daughter to be discouraged from her identification with Madonna, it's no good telling her that she doesn't look like Madonna or that she can't sing in the same way. The key is to find the perspective point, that is, less the question of with whom she is identifying than that of *for whom* she is identifying. Perhaps during a domestic quarrel she notices that her father's eyes keep straying to the television screen where Madonna is performing. There is a difference between the image you assume and the problem of who you assume it for. When Boswell wrote himself a memo 'Be like Johnson!', he might have paused to ask himself who he wanted to be like Johnson for.

This distinction can offer a new perspective as to how Shakespeare's shrew got tamed. The standard interpretation is that Katharina stops acting like a shrew after Petruchio shows her the folly of her ways by behaving badly himself. He makes her realize what it is like to live with someone whose conduct is unbearable and she is brought to reason. But this is like saying that the girl will renounce her identification with Madonna if you show her a mirror, which is false. Petruchio's strategy is, after all, nothing but a cure by mirrors as he supposedly shows her what she is like. The key, then, must be situated elsewhere, in the register of the point of perspective.

The first question to ask is, For whom does Katharina assume the image of the shrew? It is clear that she misbehaves the most when the gaze of her father is close at hand. Thus prior to the question of curing her of her shrewishness, one has to situate her identification in relation to its addressee. And she has every reason to be a shrew for him: it is the father, after all, who decrees that the other sister Bianca can only be married once Katharina has been married off herself. This is a raw deal. Katharina is supposed to accept her position as, literally, an object of exchange. She refuses this and becomes, as a message to the father, a shrew. But if the Madonna identification cannot be undermined by pointing out real discrepancies between teenager and star, how are we to explain the taming of the title?

An identification can only be modified by affecting the place itself of the perspective point. If Katharina is a shrew for the father, this implies that any taming will be less a consequence of Petruchio's antics than a change in the status of the father. This is exactly what happens in the play: Katharina's metamorphosis follows the scene in which the figure of the father is unmasked. A pedant made to impersonate Bianca's lover's father confronts the real father, and all the imaginary attributes of paternity are put in question. Thus, the problem of what it means to be a father is posed in all its disturbing clarity. And it is only now that Petruchio and Katharina can kiss . . . It is by having an effect not on the relation of someone to the image they assume but rather on the point from which they are looked at that change can be introduced.

If the taming is made possible by affecting the perspective point, what does it actually consist of? It is nothing less than a linguistic torsion, a modified position in relation to language. Katharina starts the play by refusing to be an object of exchange. When she opens her mouth, it is not so words can be substituted for each other, but so that words can hit people. Hence the bite of her tongue and her appeal to material objects with which to thump people. Words for Katharina are there to strike their objects. But what has happened by the end of the play? Words now are not made to strike but to be exchanged: in the famous taming scene, she accepts the interchangeability of the words 'sun' and 'moon' regardless of the situation of the sky. She will call the sun the moon and the moon the sun. She has thus moved from a classical to a contemporary theory of language. Words no longer have a

direct relation to their objects but from part of a network of differences. The word does not have an intrinsic relation to its referent but may find a substitute in another term. This linguistic turn is exactly what is introduced and made possible by the paternal unmasking that precedes it.

How does this emphasis on the perspective point help us to understand the problem of the letter? It seems to be addressed to one person, and yet it can only be understood with reference to the place from which it is being read by someone else. When Madame de Sévigné says that she doesn't like writing except if it is writing for her daughter, we may still assume the presence of a third party. It is the crucial question of *Whom for?* When Charlotte Brontë sent off the manuscript of the first book of poems by her and her sisters, she informed the publishers that there would be no need to return the original manuscript together with the page proofs: they would be able to do the corrections with just the proofs as they had the poems by heart. If letters and poems are remembered for someone else, we could ask the question, Who had the Brontës remembered their poems for? They had no flesh and blood sweethearts at the time. What were the poems aimed at? We have seen that the addressee of a letter may be distinguished from the perspective point, the place from which the writing is surveyed, what Milton called his 'stern taskmaster'. And often it is true that a love letter just does not aim at the real person it is sent to. What matters is who reads it, not who it is sent to. When Stanley Spencer continued his correspondence with Hilda for nine years after her death, the physical existence of the addressee was clearly not required. The letter functions here as an index of the void left by the loss of something precious. It would thus not be addressed to a woman, but to an empty place which the woman is made to occupy. We saw in the stories by Calvino and Cazotte how the man's love is constructed out of an empty space which is marked by a lack of words or signs. The production of love letters would thus be a way of elaborating this space, of framing an emptiness.

Madame de Sévigné's correspondence with her daughter illustrates this attempt to put something, a letter, in an empty space. When the daughter leaves her mother to live with her new husband, de Sévigné writes more letters in the eighteen months after the separation than in her first forty-five years. 'My letter', she says, 'is infinite, like the love I have for you,' a sentiment which is embodied in the physical form of the letters themselves, many of them running to more than twenty pages of her enormous scrawl. From the moment of separation, she tried, for twenty-five years, to find new ways of saying how she loved her daughter. The letter is infinite because this cannot be said, a fact which was both the torment and the test of her existence. She describes the agony of separation as 'that thing . . . susceptible to no comparison', and thus as something which cannot be represented in language, the characteristic of which is precisely to permit analogies and substitutions of words. The chain of letters aims to demarcate and to fill, in a certain way, the void left by the absence of the partner. As all her

contemporaries noted, when her daughter left, she was transformed into a changed creature: her correspondence is the authentic diary of a lover.

A woman's love letter, if such a thing exists, does not, of course, have to follow this particular logic. It does not have to aim at filling out a void or an empty space. Rather, it may have precisely the function of *making* a void, of literally creating a hole. Let us take the example of Emily Dickinson. She characterized her poetry, in a famous phrase, as her 'letter to the world', and yet what does this letter do if not, via its elliptical grammar, make a hole in the world?

Soft as the massacre of Suns
By Evening's Sabres slain

This letter confronts us with a dazzling opacity of reference. What is 'soft as the massacre of suns'? The poem does not fill in a void, it creates one, the void of the subject of the poem itself. As the critic Cristanne Miller has pointed out, the compressed and disjunctive grammar of Dickinson's poetry makes almost every poem into a sort of abyss. And if we take her identification of her poems with letters seriously, it ceases to be evident whether a letter ought to have a meaning. One might write precisely in order not to mean something.

The problem is that for the man, the meaning of a love letter is so important. On receiving a love letter from a woman, he may strive to understand it, to read into it, to find metaphors and hidden references. But there is no reason to suppose that the letter means anything. A man will try to put meaning into this empty space: to try to make the woman's body speak. But a woman's body will not, ultimately, speak *to him*, even in love. If a man's love letter speaks, but not necessarily to the woman he loves, a woman's love letter does not have to speak, in this sense, at all. When the man receives a letter that says 'The window of my bedroom is banging although there's no wind outside,' he'll spend ages trying to work out what it is saying. Is the reference to the bedroom an invitation? Is the banging window the same as the beating heart? Does the fact that there is no wind outside mean that the force is coming from the inside? But the letter might not mean any of this. All it might mean is that when the writer sat down to write, that was what was going on around her. The only thing for sure is that her letter is more of a love letter than anything which says 'I love you.' Maybe that is what a woman's love ultimately involves: the possibility of sacrificing meaning, of not having to mean anything. The problem, as we've seen, is that what a man's love ultimately involves is exactly the opposite: the resolute search for meaning and the refusal to let anything not mean something.

Language, unfortunately, works against this. Meanings are not so easy to pin down. Even the most personal intention, the most intimate message, the feeling closest to your heart, cannot be transmitted without problems. To say

'I love you' is the most difficult thing in this sense, as it has at least three canonical and disparate meanings:

- a) I'm tired.
- b) I want to engage in coitus.
- c) I'm having an affair.

But of course, it can mean something else.

So why not post a letter? If its relation to meaning may vary, this would not seem to affect its delivery, yet it is certain that many letters remain unposted. A letter which stays at home may be a letter which is unfinished and it may also be a letter to oneself. Violet writes to Vita, 'I love in you something which is not you but me.' A part of 'ourselves' may remain, as she implies, outside us. Lacan elaborated on St Augustine's notion of that which is 'closer to us than we are to ourselves', the idea that we search for a part of ourselves that has somehow been lost outside us. In this sense, the limits of the body are not the limits of our biology. A part of us is somewhere else. Thus, the meaning of *writing to oneself* changes.

To reformulate the problem, we find a clue in an odd phrase of Lacan's. A woman's love, he says, aims at the 'universal man'. Now, by definition, this will be situated beyond the real male partner. How, then, can one send something to him, and is it even necessary that he *knows* that something is being sent? If Freud's considerations on the condition of forbiddenness are taken seriously, it is not certain that the love object should even be aware of his value. The continuity of love is preserved so long as the latter does not reply. There is thus less risk of a perturbation and the misunderstandings which are both constitutive and disruptive of a lover's dream. After all, if he knows, he'll try to understand and to extract meaning from the letter. It is written to someone beyond the real man, yet is uses him as a relay, in exactly the way that a real man may be used in a sexual relation as a relay for a woman to get somewhere else, to a different space. In their first moment of real physical proximity, Daphnis and Chloe are bathing in a grotto. Chloe touches Daphnis' body and then immediately moves her hand to touch herself. Her relation to herself, to her own body, follows a circuit which includes but goes beyond the body of the man. If the man is still around when this circuit is completed, he may complain of his exclusion and his alienation from the woman's enjoyment. He is no longer necessary.

Space seems to be the important concept here. It is clear that a woman's body extends beyond its biological limits in a way different from that of a man: witness the difficulty with which women move house in contrast to the relative facility for the man. Men are able to live in conditions of extreme disorder, often to the utter consternation of the opposite sex. This is interesting. Does it not disprove the popular notion that women are more

narcissistic than men? Men can live in squalor because all their narcissism has been focused on themselves, on their own ego: hence they can be oblivious to the state of their apartment. This may be tested empirically: see if the most narcissistic men tend to have the most untidy apartments. In contrast, women are so often minutely attentive to the details of their space, indicating that if narcissism there be, it is of a different nature to that of the man. It is more spread out, encompassing the body and the surrounding space. As Reik pointed out, the space is less the substitute of the body than the *continuation* of it. This importance of the living space has its effects on the sexual relations of men and women. Indeed, it is perfectly possible for a woman to decide not to make love with a man once she has seen his apartment, whereas the reverse situation of a man changing his mind for this same reason is rather unlikely.

The more focused quality of male narcissism is seen clearly in the relative speed with which men will become involved with a new partner shortly after the end of a love relation. In a sense, they can do this because their unconscious narcissistic link to the mother is so strong – the unconscious position of being the satisfying, darling object for the mother – that what actually happens from one female partner to another is diminished in consequence. The link to the mother may be so deeply entrenched that hardly anything in the real relation with the partner can touch it. Perhaps the reason a woman's narcissism is often more elastic, more spread out, as we said, is due to an initial difficulty in investing the ego as such: hence it will divide itself between the body and its image and the surrounding space. The limits of the body itself become enlarged.

The fact that a woman might store her letters with her clothes rather than with her files and books might be related to this thesis: they are closer to the body. This is not enough, however, to explain the proximity to the wardrobe. Another condition has to be added: the fact that a letter incarnates the dimension of that which has been *given*. Anything which evokes this register is going to be put in a relation with the body (stored near clothes) since what the body tries to envelop is what can be given, particularly from a man. When Lady Caroline Lamb decided to burn Byron's letters to her in her outrage, she had to burn special copies of them instead of the originals. What had been given by the dangerous poet was still cherished beyond her immediate suffering since it incarnated the dimension of what he gave.

The childhood memories of a woman converge on one scene: it is Christmas and a humpty-dumpty waits at the foot of her bed. Her mother tells her it is the father's gift and she runs to his bedroom to thank him. As he wakes up, she sees from his bewildered expression that he had no knowledge of what he was supposed to have given her. So many years later, she remembers this scene and her feeling of joy despite her realization that the toy had no doubt been chosen by the mother. What mattered was the fact that, in her words, he accepted, at that moment, 'the role of the one who gave'. There is

thus a separation between the real father and his function or role: he was allocated the role of giver, and this dissolved the particular bitterness that might have followed from the discovery of his ignorance as to the choice of gift. The childhood memory thus shows the priority of the function of giving over the specificity of what is given.

Giving for the man is different. The more a man gives the more he aims at the destruction of his object. To give, after all, is a demand. Divorced couples know this: some husbands insist on giving so much to their exes as a way of remaining in touch or, more precisely, of suffocating them even more with their demand. It's simply not true that husbands always want to keep all their belongings to themselves. The irony is that the more generous they are, the more selfish their love is, with only obliteration at its horizon. In the same way, a woman is right to be suspicious if a man showers her with presents. The more a man gives in the register of material goods, the less he has to give at the symbolic level: the more presents he bestows, the less he can give at the level of the phallus, the more desperate his love is. This may be tested empirically. The troubled relation to the assumption of masculinity will so often have this effect: the man gives too much. Which might even take the form of premature ejaculation. Perhaps this is not unrelated to the fact that he may end up posting more letters than he should. He may lack the internal limit which will guarantee that some things are not given. Contrary to a popular misconception, men often want to give *everything*. That's why they are so bad at keeping secrets from their wives.

And even the simplest gift has its malignancy. What reason can there be for a man to give a woman perfume out of the blue? There are only two possibilities: it is the same perfume used by his previous love or he is captivated by an advertisement which manages to strike a chord with his unconscious fantasy. And in both cases, he does it out of the blue because he is guilty about something. This is why civilization maintains the festivals of the birthday and of Christmas. They are occasions sanctioned by society when we are supposed to give presents and we don't have to show our guilt. Neither a birthday nor Christmas come out of the blue. But take a moment to think about why the man brings you flowers today rather than any other day and they may start to wilt.

It is a fact worthy of attention that in the work of many of Freud's early followers, guilt was seen as a central, perhaps *the* central, problem of psychoanalysis, and yet today it is more or less neglected. Why did this happen? Does it mean that we have already understood what guilt is all about or rather that guilt is just not a particularly important concept? In everyday life, it is without doubt a ubiquitous sentiment. Many people feel guilty simply when they walk past a policeman. The Freudian explanation here supposes that even if we have not carried out a real crime, our unconscious desire is enough to generate guilt feelings when we are confronted with someone or something which represents the law. We are guilty in thought, not in deed.

This argument led some of Freud's students to the belief that real crime is often carried out precisely in order to pin down this guilt as a sort of alibi: 'Look, I've committed a crime, this is what I am guilty of, not anything else.' We thus break the law to escape from the responsibility for our unconscious desire. Although there is certainly some truth in this perspective, things can't be quite so simple: witness the fact that at the airport many people have a momentary feeling of *satisfaction* when the bleeper beeps going through the security check when they *know* that they are not carrying anything in the nature of contraband, and yet walking past a policeman they do not have the same feeling of satisfaction. This indicates a more subtle relation between innocence and guilt.

A conman, the 'Duke', dreams up a magnificent plan. He installs himself in a smallish town in the States and opens an account at the local bank. Various minor transactions go through. Then on the Friday night he goes to the car showroom, points to the most expensive sportscar and says he'll buy it immediately, with a cheque. Now, in a town like this one, sports cars don't get sold every day. The customer is saying, furthermore, that he'll take it as it is, no changes, added accessories or modifications. In other words, it is the sale of a lifetime for the showroom employee. But, there's the question of his cheque . . . it's too late to call the bank and it's a Friday. The salesman trembles and hesitates. And then he takes the cheque. Now, what does the Duke do next? He takes the car and drives it to a used car dealer close by and asks to sell it, for cash, immediately. It's a small town, the dealer makes a couple of phone calls, the police arrive and the Duke is arrested. And then, on Monday morning, the cheque clears. The Duke sues the police for false arrest and negotiates compensation with the dealer. It really is the perfect scam to crown the achievements of a professional.

But what exactly is the Duke's plan about? There is first of all the problem of what he is stealing and then the question of the production of guilt. He engineers a situation in which all the signs designate him as a conman. The immediate resale of the car is the obvious indication that the cheque will bounce. Everything points to a criminal action. And yet the Duke is showing that he can escape from the significations generated by this context in which anyone else would be a thief. He is relying, after all, on social conventions and codes to make the plan work: in this system, someone who buys a new car with a cheque and sells it five minutes later is up to something. We could say that he is cheating less the police or the car dealership than language itself, as embodied in the codes and conventions of society. He is cheating a code and thereby displaying his *difference*: he has the right, after all, to sell the new car to whoever he pleases. The idea is that if social codes, conventions and language are what deprive us of our difference – since if we act in a certain way, that will imply a particular signification – the Duke is claiming his difference back: this is the real object of his theft. He is showing that he can slip away from the meanings normally generated by a particular set of

actions. He is thus trying to cheat the grandest opponent that exists, the symbolic order that makes the whole plan possible in the first place. What he is trying to cheat is language itself.

Now, what does this tell us about the relation of innocence to guilt? The lesson is a logical one: it is precisely by his innocence that the Duke is truly guilty. Although the whole scenario is designed to generate for the car dealers and the police the signification 'conman', it is only by being innocent, by having signed a valid cheque, that he really does become a 'conman'. He becomes this at the very moment that the police and car dealers recognize him as innocent. If it seems as if the Duke's innocence is what makes him guilty, we can still be more precise. Two senses of 'guilty' should be distinguished here: the standard social meaning and the deeper psychoanalytic one. The Duke would be determined as guilty by society only on condition that he *included himself* in his 'innocence' from the start, if he gave himself a place within the whole scenario as it was originally conceived. The problem, however, with the Duke is that, being a conman, his job is precisely not to include himself in things, not to be responsible for what he says or, on other occasions, for the cheques he signs. His son became a writer, and so took the opposite path. In signing his name to his work, he assumed the mantle of responsibility for what he said and wrote, and accepted that he would ultimately be judged by the effects of signification which this work generated.

This introduces the second sense of the term 'guilty'. Being guilty now consists in something very simple: not taking responsibility for what one says. The more the Duke tries to slip away, the more he is constituted as guilty. The key is that he *fails* to include himself in his own scenario from the start, and this failure to include oneself is identical with what guilt consists of. Thus analysis can have an effect on feelings of guilt, for example by making someone work through their own inclusion in some unconscious scenario. The child who helplessly watches the parents making love must ask himself why he stayed at the bedroom door for so long, or what unconscious identification or assumption he made at that moment. It is a question of realizing that one's innocence becomes identical with one's guilt the moment one really assumes it. This is, as Hegel saw, the basic structure of the story of Oedipus.

The Freudian argument has another implication here as well. One way of theorizing guilt is to see it as the gap between the ego and the ideal, the point which you always aim at and always fall short of. Psychic life, from this perspective, involves a striving towards some ideal. If, by some unhappy chance, this ideal is attained, the most terrible forms of depression may ensue. The worker who is suddenly transformed into the boss or the athlete who breaks a record will have a significant price to pay for their closing the distance with the ideal point. This is the key difference between the advertising campaign for the various pools companies and the National Lottery. The pools companies present images of someone enjoying the fruits of wealth,

but the Lottery reduces its advertising formula to the simple phrase 'It could be you'. The pools thus assert the implicit proposition 'It could be your neighbour', the other man who is living in luxury. It is an advertising campaign which appeals, in part, to envy. But the minimalist formula of the Lottery does something different. It does away with images, reducing its effect to a pure linguistic phrase (plus pointing finger), one which, furthermore, has a sinister echo. 'It could be you' reminds us of the other huge advertising awareness campaign of the 1980s about HIV, with its own implicit and explicit message 'It could be you'. There is certainly something very menacing about the National Lottery campaign (which ensures its success), something which involves an appeal to our guilt. 'It could be you' is a perfect example of a superego imperative. It is like an order, a command. We buy the tickets to pay back the agency represented by the Lottery for our sins, thus making the Lottery as such exist. As Sextus Empiricus said a long time ago, the gods must exist because if they didn't we couldn't serve them. We have to pay a price for our own existence and in paying it, we construct and feed the very body that demands something. This guilt factor means that there is no such thing as winning the Lottery since to play, one must have already lost. Winners win only in their daydreams and if, by some terrible chance, they win in reality, the problems really start.

And the alternative? Preserving the distance between you and the ideal point only generates the guilt of not getting to where you ought to be. You are reminded of this distance by the superego which holds the ideal up to you as a mocking testimony of your failure. Now, what is going to happen to this picture if we introduce the presence of a love relation? According to one Freudian model, the loved object will take the place of the ideal: one will behave to this person as if they were exempt from criticism and truly ideal. The consequence, however, is that if the loved object is put into the place of ideal and guilt is a relation between ego and ideal, being in love will generate a profound feeling of guilt. This argument, in a somewhat more complicated form, was modified by Freud's students Jekels and Bergler many years ago. They claimed that love in fact releases one from guilt as it deprives the superego of a means of demonstrating to you that there is a gap between the ego and the ideal: if the loved object also loves you back and overestimates you, the ideal can no longer be used to remind you of your inadequacy. Thus, they claim, the enthusiasm and ecstasy of a lover comes less from any link to the real love object than from the brilliant idea of cheating the superego.

This sort of argument may be tested by asking the question: Have you ever loved anyone who did not make you feel guilty? If the answer is negative, the fact that gift-giving is so common in love relations will become easier to understand. And also, perhaps, the fact that men sometimes post more letters than they ought, dispatches which they afterwards regret. When Lord Monmouth sent secret missives to France written in lemon juice and was

subsequently discovered, his guilt is demonstrated in this refusal to find a more prudential form of secrecy.

A man who had been married for many years showed that this guilt had a very particular condition. Whenever he sat down at table with his wife and turned to the plate in front of him, he was immediately overwhelmed with a feeling of having perpetrated a crime. When he ate alone, this never occurred. At one level, the guilt was linked to the presence of a traditional lover's triangle: the husband was divided between his love for his wife and his real passion, which was focused on the oral object. The true object of his libidinal life was linked to the plate of food, something equally reflected in the choice of sexual technique adopted with his partner. Such a preference might seem rather far-fetched but it is common knowledge in psychoanalysis. The real question which one might ask here is rather, why was it necessary for this man to get married at all, given the nature of his priorities?

This is exactly the question posed by a young woman, in love and engaged, who takes her fiancé home to a dinner with her parents. Before the latter have sat down at table, the fiancé starts to serve himself from an enormous bowl of stew. And the young woman knows at once that this is not the man she will marry. She breaks the engagement almost instantly. We have discussed already the importance of the detail in love life, but here it is less the detail which fixes or generates the sentiment than the sign which closes it. This gesture of the fiancé was all it took to disclose the priority for him of his oral drive, showing the woman the abyss between the field of love and the field of sexuality. It is exactly this tension which is discussed by the psychoanalyst Ludwig Eidelberg in an amazingly eccentric investigation of slips of the tongue. A man goes into a restaurant with his date and asks the head waiter for a room for two. Now, one might well imagine that he meant to ask for a table but because what he really had in mind was a sexual adventure with his date, the stronger motive declared itself: a room instead of a table please. Eidelberg refuses to be fooled. He thinks that the slip shows that what the man was desperately trying to avoid was the focus on his orality, and that the slip, the reference to the room, was a sort of alibi to throw his conscience off the track. What he really wanted was a big table of food. Thus, the whole theory of slips of the tongue is put in question. When you make a lapsus, is the 'new' word that emerges the repressed element itself or, on the contrary, is it that the 'intended' word, the one which did not emerge, is the real clue to the repressed complex?

Given this implicit tension between the key place of the oral drive (or indeed, any other) and the partner, what on earth can a couple do? Was the young woman right to abandon her fiancé so swiftly? Should the guilty husband always have to go through an ordeal when he eats in the presence of his wife? We have highlighted many negative things about the relations between the sexes in this book. Some readers might even find its outlook pessimistic. The only solution to the question 'How do men and women live together?'

would seem to be: they get jobs. But now here's something positive, a recipe, no less, for more successful relations between partners. Freud, we remember, had recommended an acceptance of the idea of incest with parent or sibling. Why not add to this the following modest condition: to live the priority of the drive with some humour. The scenes we have described in the last paragraphs are not without a comic aspect. Perhaps this aspect would emerge with more clarity once it is accepted that although drives may be tempered in some ways, they have both a singularity and a selfishness which can never be eliminated.

We have seen throughout our discussion how the gift has a very different place in the fields of masculine and feminine sexuality. The importance of form, of the container, which we evoked on the female side can give us a clue to several related questions. For example, why is it relatively rare to find female pyromaniacs? Why is it boys who play with matches? The classical psychoanalytic explanation for pyromania links matches and fire with the phallus, but this would imply that girls ought to be equally interested. Perhaps the answer involves a shift in perspective: if, for the boy, what matters are the matches and the flames, perhaps for the girl the key variable is not the agent of fire but its *object*. A girl expressed her revulsion towards flames with the remark that the burnt object might contain babies. In other words, what mattered to her was not the flames which would engulf the house, but rather the house itself and what was inside. Small girls often situate their imaginary babies not in their tummies but 'at home' or in a dolls' house, as if the house were the first envelope of the infant. The house is too close to the body, and to the baby, to get burnt. There is thus a sensitivity to the relation of form to content, to jewel boxes as well as jewels. Envelopes have real value, something rare in little boys. How many men, indeed, keep the wrapping paper from their presents?

This relation to form also serves to explain why women are rarely claustrophobic, contrary to popular mythology. The 'disaster movie' shows us time and time again a group of people trapped in a small space. Time is running out and some of the assembled party become hysterical: in general, the women. But this is strictly a cinematic fiction: in such situations, it is invariably the *men* who become claustrophobic. Department store owners are well aware of this fact. Women are perfectly happy to browse through labyrinthine displays for hours on end whereas men need space. Thus men's sections are often housed on the ground floor of the department store in conditions of relative openness. A more authentic Hollywood project would be to film the drama of the team of male warriors waiting inside the Trojan Horse. And if the inhabitants of Troy were exclusively female, the Greek team would probably not have had to worry about the risk of fire.

It is amazing how popular conceptions of female panic fail to register these differences. The object of panic is so often distinct here. Women who go scuba diving may well be terrified of the occurrence of a particular

underwater situation or the arrival of an unfriendly fish but male divers repeat again and again the same formulation of their unease: it is not that they fear a specific situation or fish but that they fear being afraid. They panic about the very possibility of getting into a panic, in other words, about losing their self-control, about disappearing as masters of themselves. Indeed, as we saw in earlier chapters, while a woman may organize her fantasy life so as to stress her own disappearing, a man does his best to avoid precisely this disappearance: it is the one thing he must devote his whole life to guarding against. To use Lacan's analogy, he constructs for himself an immense fortress to protect against this. The price to be paid is the tedium and discomfort of living in a town under siege. The better the defences, the worse this will be. He will always be imagining what this fortification looks like *from the outside*, without recognizing what it means to be living on the inside. Perhaps this explains why a man might spend all his free time in gardening or attending to the front of the house yet be completely oblivious to anything that needs doing inside it.

These examples show ways in which the relation of men and women to form is fundamentally different. For a woman it may be something involving both inside and outside. But for a man it involves, more often than not, one side only: and what he does with this is to bang his head against it. If a woman uses her antennae to pick up desires around her, a man uses his to get stuck in other people's antennae. It is unlikely that he will understand that it is an insult when one woman says to another 'I always admire you in that dress.' Or that it is sometimes best not to do the same thing as someone else. Look at all the problems caused by the conflict of Richelieu and Buckingham over the Cardinal's refusal to insert a line change between his 'Sir' and the start of his letter as decorum required. Buckingham's reply, which repeated the gesture, shows two men locked in the battle of forms. They were only capable of doing the same thing as the other. Richelieu's manservant was canny enough to grasp the nature of this dynamic. When the Cardinal engaged him in a favourite pastime, a jumping competition to see who could reach the highest point on the wall, the manservant took care not to win.

All this should not be taken in the apologetic sense. Men, it's true, often glorify the 'antennae' of women, but only in order to avoid confronting something else: as a way of articulating the unconscious assumption that if they, the men, don't have something, the woman does. This can create neuroses and also traffic problems. Some male drivers assume that they don't need to use their indicators since female drivers will somehow just guess what they are going to do. Or, in love relations, that the woman ought to give them something, even if they themselves can never be exactly sure about what this *something* is.

The sensitivity of women to the desires around them in this domain does not need to be a mystery. To respond to the glorification of the so-called 'mystery' of femininity, one may evoke a little detail about childhood. Whose reactions can we generally predict? The mother. And whose reactions will be

basically unpredictable, whose fondness or anger can rarely be forecast in advance, the one who will represent the real mystery for both sexes? The father. Who knows when he's going to lose his temper? We could say that when a woman seems mysterious, the mystery has a very precise formula, that of the question: How much can she live without a man and how much does she depend on one? The balance between these positions is an infinitely delicate one. Indeed, we could say that, for a man, this balance just *is* what is so often called the mystery of women. Men either adore this – a defence – or they are terrified. But it is a fact that those men who spend their lives professing their terror or contempt of women always end up getting married, whereas those who continually discourse on their love of the opposite sex are quite likely to end up single.

What is interesting here is that admitting to being afraid of a woman is so much more humiliating for a man than admitting to being her slave. Hence the badge of subjection assumed by many men, a way of indicating the false knowledge that one knows what one's partner wants. In other words, every time she says anything which could be construed as expressing a concrete desire or want, the man jumps, so eager is he to be able to give a name to the desire of his wife. But his wife, on the contrary, may not be so keen. Perhaps her letters will remain unposted. And perhaps men keep love letters with their files and other letters for the simple reason that *they are letters*. Women don't because for them these objects are not always letters. A letter can be a letter or it can be something else. If it is something else, it doesn't need to be posted. What matters is that *one wrote it* and perhaps it was written to no one but oneself. This reverses the wisdom that we converse with the absent by letters and with ourselves by diaries and it shows us how writing, perhaps, is ultimately not meant to be read. When the *Iliad* of Homer was transcribed within the space of a nutshell and the Bible in that of an English walnut, the scribe had really understood something of what writing is about.

The letters of Audrey Hepburn in *Love in the Afternoon* and Kim Novak in *Vertigo* remain unread and unsent. The first was intended to warn the playboy Frank Flanagan of the imminent attempt on his life, the second to reveal to James Stewart the fact that the woman he has just met, Judy, is in fact one and the same as the woman he believes dead and whom he loves so much. But both women chose not to send their letters. And they both did the same thing instead: they put themselves in its place. Audrey Hepburn shows up at the Ritz in Flanagan's suite, and Kim Novak decides to see if she can make Stewart love her for what she really is, not simply as the copy of another woman. If a letter is there to name you, to describe you and to represent you, and if words can never say everything, a letter will always remain unfinished. Both women, aware that writing wasn't enough, put themselves in the place of the letters they did not send. Which raises the question, if not posting a letter can be a sign of love, is receiving one the sign that love is undone?

ON OBSESSIONAL NEUROSIS

Charles Melman

Source: Stuart Schneiderman (ed.) *Returning to Freud*. New Haven: Yale University Press (1980), pp. 130–138.

With obsessional neurosis we are first confronted by a problem of method. If a clinical study had to present a clinical picture, that of obsessional neurosis would pose a singular difficulty, because it presents a confused collection of traits each of which when taken alone is nevertheless perfectly clear. This picture has in common with others the fact that the most minute dividing and subdividing of its space—in the most obsessional fashion—would not permit us to discover the cause of the neurosis. Even if we stopped to ponder the elements that suggest an inexhaustible quest for a return or an impossible desire to see something again, we would still not have the cause.

In other words, we will not allow ourselves to be fascinated by the picture, and thus we have only one recourse—to refer to structure, that is, to the structure of language. We will put this course of action to the test here, and ourselves with it.

If we set the picture aside and take hold of the neurosis as we would a ball of string, our first test is to choose the strand that will guide us in the unraveling. For that purpose, we will make use of the question that the Rat Man poses at the beginning of his observations, when he tells of the genesis of his obsession, of his infantile neurosis. And this question can be articulated as follows: what could he have seen one special evening under his governess's skirt for him to refer to that date as the origin of his obsessive compulsion to see the feminine sex? Freud will say that this compulsion and two other characteristics assure the signature, the constitution of the neurosis. These are: the fear that something horrible will happen—for example, that his father will die—and his delusional impression that his parents know his thoughts. This latter is connected to an eminently clinical note—psychoanalytically clinical, at least—that his parents knew his thoughts, as though he had spoken them out loud, but without having heard them himself.

The enigma does not merely concern the way in which these three traits are associated with each other. Even more it concerns the seeing of the feminine sex. Before he became obsessed with the idea of seeing this sex again, he had seen as much and more: according to family custom, children of both sexes and their governess all took their baths together, and there was no reason to stop this domestic ritual.

Let us propose, then, that what he saw on this fateful evening when he sneaked a look under Miss Robert's skirt was, in a lightning instant, the lack of the object as such, the lack itself, its want. It is perhaps disturbing that this experience does have consequences. From it the young boy gains a concept of the lack or want of an object, and this, the lack, is transformed into an object that designates the lack as such: this is to say that the lack is transformed into a signifier. The patient will now be tormented by the task of refinding it, and this torment will increase each time he approaches the discovery that what he saw clearly for an instant is now dead or destroyed or has disappeared forever. The feeling of an immanent irremediable catastrophe represented by the death of his father appears to be the just perception of the disaster that occurs in structure when the real is found to be obscured or blocked by the signifier. The obsessional's banal fear of having committed some ultimate crime, unbeknown to himself or while asleep, can be related to this effect of the signifier. We will hardly be surprised when we later discover that the obsessional is convinced of the omnipotence of his thoughts.

Another effect of this adventure is that a signifier thus understood is transformed into a sign, a sign of the missing object. That this missing object is found to be marked, tattooed, or imprinted with a sign has a decisive bearing on the construction of the obsessional fantasy. But I think that here we ought to be a little more precise. It is clear that no surface can receive such a tattooing; therefore nothing other than the letter itself will be embodied or incorporated through the fantasy.

From then on, desire will be sustained in relation to an object that can only be maintained when placed at a distance from the subject. And in addition, there is a mortal risk for the subject when the fantasy concerns the raising of a simple veil rather than a screen. When the veil is raised, there is a jouissance in horror, a jouissance in the committing of a crime. But also, whether or not it is fantasized as a veil, the object will come to make itself known in another way, strongly and insistently, without the subject's hearing a thing through either ear.

We propose to enter into what will be—why not?—a phenomenology of obsessions. This aspect of the neurosis has not aroused any particular interest, and I will not attempt to explain this lack. The only thing I will remark is that the English word "obsession" is not a very good translation of the German term *Zwang*. Where "obsession" means "to lay siege to," *zwängen* means "to penetrate by force into the interior of." The difference is not irrelevant.

Back to our phenomenology of obsessions. The first characteristic, which does not appear to me to be entirely banal, is this: for a long time the patient does not consider his obsession to be a symptom. For years it was easily tolerated, like a familiar and natural object with which the patient was able to accommodate himself. Often enough he comes to a consultation because the obsession has imposed limitations on his activities or because his friends have become concerned or worried. Otherwise it does not seem to be experienced by him as a symptom.

The second characteristic is that the patient does not question the origin of an obsessive idea that comes to him, nor does he suppose that a subject exists who is the support of this idea. Even if it is addressed to him in the form of an imperative "thou," there is no speculation about the nature of the "I" who is supposed to be sending this idea.

The third characteristic is that he tells us that he becomes cognizant of the obsession as of an idea. There is nothing in it that touches the senses or that resembles a hallucinatory phenomenon. Here again, it is not easy to differentiate, because we know that there are authentic hallucinations that classical clinical studies have called *aperceptive*, which do not touch the senses and which the affected patient can distinguish perfectly from those that do.

In any case we can say that this obsessive idea is imposed on the subject as an idea, and we can add that ideas do not come to us very frequently or very easily. In general, I would say that most of the time we do not have ideas. We do have them when we take pen in hand and try to write. Then something akin to the idea is produced.

It would be necessary, if I were to pursue this narrow path, to conceive of something like a typography in the unconscious, working unbeknown to the subject, producing his ideas. We may note one elementary point here without risk, that the unity of these ideational phenomena is assuredly the letter. In the obsessional we see that the unconscious writes its messages letter by letter, exactly as a typographer would. At the least, this is troubling, but it permits us to characterize the obsessional idea by saying that it does not impose itself on the subject as a spoken word. If it did, there would be a time for its enunciation, a punctuation, which would generate ambiguity. On the contrary, the obsessional idea imposes itself like a statement [*énoncé*], being grasped all at once; its sense is impeccably clear, definite, whole. It is on the order of what is "said" rather than of the "saying."

Another characteristic is that this "said" always bears the sign of the imperative. Of course, it may well appear to be enigmatic. For the moment we will not address the question of the functioning of the signifier as master-signifier.

If we had to keep to the sense of this obsession, we could easily schematize it by saying that it is always—or almost always—the manifestation of something that functions simultaneously as a prohibition and a command. A prohibition is expressed as a "don't" applied to just about anything. We know

that in certain cases this can extend to "don't get up," "don't eat," and so forth.

The command manifests itself as ferociously as the prohibition. It imposes on the subject, as our patients tell us, often the most cruel and obscene acts, and this despite the fact that the subject rebels. The least we can say is that the subject is split in relation to his obsessional ideas.

Presenting things in terms of the contradiction between a ferocious prohibition and a no less ferocious command permits us to refer to something we know only too well. This is the fact that desire and its prohibition originate with the same movement, which we call castration. The ferociousness and the excess with which the imperative of desire is exercised are particular to the obsessional. Nothing seems to control it, and nothing seems to say no to it.

It happens in some cases that these obsessions finish by becoming senseless. Concerning this loss of sense, there is an interesting compulsion in the case of the Rat Man that Freud did well to name a *Verstehzwang*, a compulsion to understand. There came a time when the patient could no longer understand anything people were saying to him, and he was constantly asking them to repeat themselves: "What are you telling me, what are you saying?" Evidently this was very annoying to the people around him, understandably so.

But this compulsion ought to put us on the right track for grasping the obsessional's relation with sense. If we were to ask ourselves, "What did he hear that he did not understand?" we would say that he heard music and that it did not make any sense. In certain cases the patient will eventually hear a pure play of letters. One of these in the case of the Rat Man is particularly remarkable. The patient's unconscious had succeeded in forging the neologism "Glejisamen," in which he coupled the holiness of the woman Gisela, whom he called his lady, with his semen, in German *Samen*. And as we know, this enabled him to screw her all the same. This is certainly a good example of psychic equilibrium.

Freud does not hesitate to give a brilliant interpretation of this Glejisamen. We note, however, that this word seems to contain vowels that serve only to permit the word to be pronounced. Even in Freud's analysis of the neologisms, there is a hesitation concerning the way the word is written, and then there are vowels that don't make sense.

After Freud has brilliantly interpreted this Glejisamen, the patient returns and says, "I had a terrific dream; there was a map on which I was able to read *WLK*." Let us imagine that at this moment he is waiting for Freud to interpret *WLK*. Freud does not hesitate to do so. His interpretation is mistaken, however, because he has taken these letters as standing for *Wielks*, a Polish name that he translates as meaning "grand," I think, or "old." It appears that this is not the word's meaning, but that is not very important. What is more interesting in *WLK* is the fact that it is unpronounceable. It is a pure

play of letters, a pure play of the symbolic, without any voice, without any link to the imaginary.

In this attempt to write a phenomenology of the obsessional idea, I am also bothered that no matter what sense the idea has or can take on, it seems always to conserve the same form, and this form, even when it prohibits all sense, can be noted as follows:

First, propositions are placed one after the other and are linked by the copula of conjunction ("and"). We can observe this most particularly in the obsessive ritual.

Second, another particularly common predicate is that of disjunction, the "either . . . or." This is also designated by the suggestive name "the excluded third" or "the excluded middle." I can marry either this one or that one, but if I marry this one, I lose that one. Either . . . or. And I must limit myself to the two terms of the "either . . . or," thus excluding any third party.

Third, a predicate connected with disjunction is that of implication. In the Rat Man we find it everywhere, and Freud analyzed it particularly well. His theory states that obsessional ideas are presented in the hypothetical mode. The obsessional hears: "If you do this, then that will happen."

The last of these logical signs is evidently that of negation, and we know that it can go as far as to be the negation of the negation of the negation. With this the obsessional may end up in a slightly confused state, especially since he does not always keep a count of the negations.

In proposing this presentation of the obsessional idea, we are borrowing, as you no doubt noticed, something that has been isolated in another field as propositional logic. Propositional logic is a closed system containing essentially two elements and two values; the elements are habitually called p and q , and the values, true and false.

If, as we have said, in obsessional neurosis the sign has become the sign of a lack or want, we can imagine that we will be faced with something presenting itself as a system with two elements and two values based on the exclusion of a third.

This much said, does such a proposal have any interest? Is it a coincidence, what is specifically called an analogy, or can it significantly clarify the mechanism of the obsessional idea?

If we apply the rules of this propositional logic, we note the following: at the level of conjunction, we find something that may be useful, namely, the fact that a proposition is true only if each of its elements is itself true.

Certainly we know that the obsessional may be constrained to go back over something he has written to verify that he has not made a mistake about one of the elements. For him any one mistake can destroy everything.

This necessity felt by the obsessional to backtrack, to check and double-check his work, has been noted in the literature. But when we ask why this is so, the analytic authors can do no better than to answer that this is because "shit comes out the back." Evidently, this is not very satisfactory, any more

than it would be to say that because we have lateral ears, we are always slightly tilted to the side.

In any case, we see the usefulness of our reference in terms of conjunction.

With disjunction we are interested in a way of functioning in terms of the principle of the excluded middle or excluded third. In this case the obsessional cannot decide between one or another opposing choices. Thus he hesitates and vacillates. The Rat Man's solution suggests that for him the third is not really excluded. After all, as he says, because he is undecided, he will let God decide for him, and he waits for a sign that will come to him and make him decide one way or the other.

As for implication, the possibilities are even more rich, because implication, besides being a transformation of disjunction, has the property that a proposition is true if its second term is true and that in this case it does not matter whether the first is true or false. It is slightly troubling to notice that for the obsessional this is exactly how matters stand. In the case of the Rat Man, there is the command of the Cruel Captain: Pay back the money to Lieutenant A. This presents itself as an obsessive idea: If you don't pay back the money, something will happen to your father and the lady. And then another idea: If you do pay back the money, something will happen to your father and the lady. It seems to me that this contradiction is particularly striking.

Evidently it is very troubling to see in the unconscious a pure play of writings. But here we are talking about this kind of logic. It is troubling that all the possibilities are conditioned only by the way they are written.

If we go back to the case of the Rat Man, we see that the obsession retains the sense of a propitiatory act, an act that would commemorate an event resembling an original crime or disaster. The act reminds the patient ceaselessly of his debt in regard to being.

The annoying consequence of looking at things in this way is that some aspect of the crime that contracted the debt renders the debt unpayable, regardless of detours and intermediaries, regardless of the number of monthly payments. No absolution is possible. It seems that the obsessional does not know if the other essential to his equilibrium is characterized by a fullness that would testify to the effectiveness of his integrity or, on the contrary, by a lack that is supposed to exist and is then taken to be no longer supportable in reality, except as a deprivation essential to the survival of the other. The two contradictory imperatives—If you do or if you don't pay back the money to Lieutenant A, something will happen to your father and the lady—seem to owe their violent and turbulent effect to the fact of their relation to the Cruel Captain. This fact encounters in Freud's patient (who has come into the army prepared to pay his debt with his blood) a knowledge that reimbursing Lieutenant A is impossible because it was not Lieutenant A who paid the debt. As the entire story points out, the patient knew it from the beginning.

Assuredly the debt has not been paid for him, and that is why the Rat Man, like a good neurotic, has his future behind him. I am tempted to say that it is here that the figure of his father emerges. This father is explicitly present in the history and is always a good guy for having been able to sell out his obligations cleverly, in regard to his own father and a religion that he camouflages and abjures as well as in regard to a marriage that he contracted to get hold of his wife's dowry (called in German *Mitgift*, which also means "poison included") and in regard to his children, whom he considers to be deficits and charges and to whom he feels that he owes nothing. On top of that he is a bad gambler, avid for the number that will break the bank on a small wager, cheating and stealing when fate goes against him.

Thus the origin of the infantile neurosis, the scene that introduced our report and posed the question of what the patient could have seen under his governess's skirt, is not to be conceived as the fortuitous product of bad guidance nor as an unfortunate accident occurring because the senses were overheated one evening, but rather as an effect of structure inscribed for him, for this neurotic—as we see in every case—well before his birth.

If the other is maintained in a state of completeness by the inheritance money that the patient lets his mother manage, this other is also maintained by a real deprivation. In this case the Rat Man imposes a deprivation upon himself in regard to the lady who is the object and support of his only love. In another context deprivation will be imposed on him by destiny when his father dies. It is not so much that the lady and the dead father come to occupy the same place, but rather that the patient behaves toward the lady with all the veneration one ought to have for the dead, and at the same time he celebrates his dead father as though he were alive. Nothing here is delusional; this is just the way his world is organized.

The impossibility of reimbursing a debt will find a solution that is obsessional in its style. In place of the alternative—to pay or not to pay, prodigality or avarice, enema or anal retention—something of accountancy and law will be established. Thanks to his neurosis, the Rat Man learned to count. In response to an obsessional idea that comes to him when he is with his girl friend ("for every coitus, a rat for the lady"), Freud makes this remark in his journal: "*Dies zeigt dass eine Ratte etwas Zählbares ist.*" ("This shows that a rat is something countable.") The meaning must have caused some problems for the translators of the *Standard Edition*, where the word *Zählbares* was rendered as though there were no umlaut on the *a*, which made it mean "payable."

I would say off the top of my head, without having read too many authors, that what we see here is the genesis of One, of a unity whose counting begins with the lost object. From this moment on, the Rat Man behaves according to the most strict legality and respect in regard to the other. We will call this "one for me, one for you."

It happens that in his dreams we can interpret in a similar way the obscene fantasy of an object hanging from his anus, with which he copulated with a girl lying on her back.

When the Rat Man prepares for his exams, he is controlled by this imperative, so frequent in the obsessional, not to study everything and to take the exams before he is ready. We can see there, among other things, what it is to renounce the possession of the other's knowledge, which Lacan has called S_2 . The patient's own defect functions as a witness to and guarantor of the completeness of the other.

This is why we find that the obsessional wants to collect all knowledge. His idea is that it is all valuable, since it all serves the same function. But, after doing the work that he feels he must effectuate for the post mortem jouissance of his father, when the hour that marks this death comes, there is a masturbatory celebration of the right he has gained to phallic jouissance, and this jouissance, as we know, is sustained by a renouncing of the lady who tolerates his love.

If something prevents him from having any sexual relations, this something will assuredly function in the mode of the imperative.

The distancing permits the Rat Man during his analysis to enjoy a more proximate object, seamstresses. In German "seamstress" is written *Näherin*, which we can translate, by barely forcing the phonetics (forcing the phonetics would read the word without the umlaut), as someone who, to exercise his profession, has to be close by, in French, *proxénète*, in English, "a pimp."

During his analysis the Rat Man gets better, and as Freud notes, he even becomes more and more joyous. The more Freud insists on interpreting his neurosis according to the Oedipus myth, giving a sense to the irritating senselessness of the obsessions, the more the Rat Man insists that for him none of that is true, that his father was a good friend and that in his opinion everything was played out with his mother. And the more Freud sticks to his guns, forcing his interpretations of the obsessions to make them fit his theory, doing what he describes as "filling in the blanks of the ellipses," the more the patient is joyous. Freud says that the obsession must be interpreted, that it is produced in the same way as the dream and the joke, and that finally its most essential rhetorical play is the ellipsis. In any case Freud twists this ellipsis to agree with his Oedipal interpretation. And the more he does so, the more the Rat Man says that that poses some questions for him, that he asks himself now, and so on, . . . and at the same time he is getting better and he is joyous.

We will note in conclusion that this amelioration seems to have been due to the Rat Man's ability to see and put to the test the fact that the famous Professor Freud (with all that it meant to be a famous professor) was finding his knowledge particularly ineffectual in this case.

Octave Mannoni, "Je sais bien, mais quand meme . . ."

The expression I know very well, but nonetheless . . . renders perfectly the split of the fetishist disavowal – say, in its racist version: "I know very well that Jews/Arabs or Blacks . . . are people like me, but nonetheless . . . I continue to believe that there is something in them which makes them weird, foreign to our universel." While the fetishist knows perfectly how things really are, he suspends the symbolic efficiency of this knowledge and acts as if he does NOT know it. However, there are three different modi of this disavowal. The first one is co-substantial with the symbolic order, as such, in which the mask has more weight than the true face behind it: I follow a symbolic ritual and, whatever I think, the truth is in the ritual. When I greet someone with "How are you? So nice to see you!", it works even if we both know that "I don't really mean it." This split attitude defines the subject's most elementary attitude towards figures of authority and belief: although I know well that my father is a corrupted weakling, I nonetheless treat him with respect . . . The second one is that of a cynical-manipulative distance: I do not believe, but I transpose my belief into a naïve other; say, although I know there is no God, I nonetheless pretend to believe for the sake of my children who really believe and would be disappointed . . . Mannoni here implicitly introduces the notion of the "subject supposed to believe", correlative to Lacan's classic notion of the "subject supposed to know". It is only in the third, final, mode that we encounter fetishism proper: a fetishist needs no "but nonetheless", he simply knows how things really stand, and the disavowal of this knowledge is directly materialized in the fetish. I know how to make love properly, and (but) I stick to my fetish which really arouses me.

SLAVOJ ŽIŽEK

JE SAIS BIEN, MAIS QUAND MÊME . . .

Octave Mannoni

Source: Octave Mannoni, *Clefs pour l'imaginaire ou l'Autre Scène*. Paris: Editions du Seuil (1968), pp. 9-33

Dès que l'on s'inquiète des problèmes psychologiques que posent les croyances, on découvre qu'ils ont une très grande extension et se retrouvent assez comparables dans les domaines les plus différents. Non seulement, faute de les avoir résolus, il nous est impossible de déterminer sûrement ce que pouvait être la croyance ou l'incroyance d'un humaniste du XVI^e siècle—de Rabelais, par exemple—mais nous ne le pouvons guère mieux s'il s'agit de l'adhésion ambiguë que nos contemporains peuvent donner à des superstitions. Les ethnographes nous rapportent les paroles étonnantes de leurs informants qui assurent qu'on croyait aux masques *autrefois*, et les ethnographes ne nous disent pas toujours clairement en quoi a bien pu consister le changement, comme si on pouvait l'attribuer à une sorte de progrès des lumières, alors que, s'il est probable que cette croyance a *toujours* été renvoyée à un autrefois, encore faut-il savoir pourquoi. Le spectateur se pose en parfait incrédule devant les tours des illusionnistes, mais il exige que « l'illusion » soit parfaite, sans qu'on puisse savoir qui doit être trompé; au théâtre il se passe quelque chose du même genre—au point qu'on a inventé des scènes d'*induction*, comme dans *la Mégère apprivoisée*, ou imaginé la fable du spectateur crédule et naïf qui prend pour réalité ce qui se passe sur la scène. On va voir que ce ne sont là que les exemples les plus banals; il en est d'autres plus surprenants.

La psychanalyse, qui rencontre journellement des problèmes de croyance, ne s'est pas attachée à les élucider. Cependant, c'est Freud qui nous a indiqué par quel biais on pouvait le faire, mais cela d'une façon détournée et inattendue, ce qui explique sans doute que le chemin ouvert par lui soit resté pratiquement désert et non frayé. On remarquera que le mot croyance, ni

aucun des termes qui peuvent le traduire, ne figurent dans les index d'aucune édition de ses œuvres.

Ce problème s'est inévitablement posé très tôt pour lui, et il ne l'a jamais perdu de vue; un de ses derniers articles, inachevé, en 1938, y est consacré, comme à quelque chose à la fois de déjà familier, et en même temps de tout neuf... Mais c'est dans un article de 1927, quelques pages seulement consacrées au problème du fétichisme, qu'il a ouvert cette problématique de la croyance en donnant toute la précision nécessaire à la notion de *Verleugnung*. On peut traduire ce terme allemand par le français *désaveu*, ou *répudiation*. Ce mot est apparu dans ses écrits dès 1923, toujours dans des passages où il est explicitement ou implicitement question de croyance. Au point que pour remédier à l'insuffisance des index on peut se reporter au mot *Verleugnung* quand on cherche les références de ces passages.

On sait comment la *Verleugnung* intervient dans la constitution du fétichisme, d'après l'article de 1927. L'enfant, prenant pour la première fois connaissance de l'anatomie féminine, découvre l'absence de pénis dans la réalité—mais il désavoue ou répudie le démenti que lui inflige la réalité afin de conserver sa croyance à l'existence du phallus maternel. Seulement il ne pourra la conserver qu'au prix d'une transformation radicale (dont Freud a tendance à faire surtout une modification du Moi). « Ce n'est pas vrai, dit-il, que l'enfant, après avoir pris connaissance de l'anatomie féminine, conserve intacte sa croyance dans l'existence du phallus maternel. Sans doute il la conserve, mais aussi il l'abandonne. Quelque chose a joué qui n'est possible que selon la loi du processus primaire. Il a maintenant à l'égard de cette croyance une attitude divisée. » C'est cette attitude divisée qui, dans l'article de 1938, deviendra le *clivage* du Moi.

La croyance se transforme sous les effets des processus primaires; c'est dire qu'en dernière analyse elle subit les effets du refoulé et en particulier du désir inconscient. En cela elle obéit aux lois fondamentales. Mais la *Verleugnung* elle-même n'a rien de commun avec le refoulement, comme cela est dit expressément et comme on le verra. On peut la comprendre comme étant simplement la répudiation de la réalité (bien qu'il faille également la distinguer de la scotomisation). C'est ainsi que Laplanche et Pontalis, dans le *Vocabulaire de psychanalyse* (inédit) qu'ils élaborent sous la direction de Lagache,¹ lui ont donné pour équivalent français: « déni de la réalité ». Certainement, c'est le sens premier et ce qui est répudié d'abord, c'est le démenti qu'une réalité inflige à une croyance. Mais, on l'a vu, le phénomène est plus complexe et la réalité constatée n'est pas sans effet. Le fétichiste a répudié l'expérience qui lui prouve que les femmes n'ont pas de phallus, mais il ne conserve pas la croyance qu'elles en ont un, il conserve un fétiche *parce qu'elles n'en ont pas*. Non seulement l'expérience n'est pas effacée, mais elle devient à jamais ineffaçable, elle laisse un *stigma indelebile* dont le fétichiste est marqué à jamais. C'est le souvenir qui est effacé.

On verra que cet article de 1927 est loin de nous apporter une élucidation de la perversion fétichiste, bien qu'on ne l'invoque généralement qu'à l'occasion de cette perversion. En fait, il traite d'un préalable à cette élucidation, en nous montrant comment une croyance peut être abandonnée et conservée à la fois. Les obstacles qu'on rencontre à suivre ce chemin ainsi indiqué, et qui expliquent probablement qu'on ne s'y soit en fait jamais engagé, après Freud, sont d'une nature assez particulière, comme le lecteur ne va pas tarder à s'en apercevoir: on se trouve partagé entre une impression d'extrême banalité et un sentiment de grande étrangeté. Les portes à enfoncer se donnent pour ouvertes. Freud en fit l'expérience en 1938 et son article commence par la phrase: « Je me trouve dans l'intéressante position de ne pas savoir si ce que j'ai à dire doit être regardé comme quelque chose de familier depuis longtemps et évident, ou comme quelque chose d'entièrement nouveau et ahurissant. » Cette impression tient à la nature même du sujet. Il s'agit en tout cas de faits que nous rencontrons partout, dans la vie quotidienne comme dans nos analyses. Dans les analyses, ils se présentent sous une forme typique, presque stéréotypée, quand le patient, quelquefois dans l'embarras, quelquefois très à l'aise, emploie la formule: « Je sais bien que . . . mais quand même . . . ». Une telle formule, bien entendu, le fétichiste ne l'emploie pas en ce qui concerne sa perversion: *il sait bien* que les femmes n'ont pas de phallus, mais il ne peut y ajouter aucun « mais quand même », parce que, pour lui, le « mais quand même » c'est le fétiche. Le névrosé passe son temps à l'articuler, mais lui non plus, sur la question de l'existence du phallus, il ne peut pas énoncer que les femmes en ont un quand même: il passe son temps à le dire autrement. Mais comme tout le monde, par une sorte de déplacement, il utilisera le mécanisme de la *Verleugnung* à propos d'autres croyances, comme si la *Verleugnung* du phallus maternel dessinait le premier modèle de toutes les répudiations de la réalité, et constituait l'origine de toutes les croyances qui survivent au démenti de l'expérience. Ainsi le fétichisme nous aurait obligés à considérer sous une forme « ahurissante » un ordre de faits qui nous échappent facilement sous des formes familières et banales.

Il y a, on le sait, un patient de Freud à qui une devineresse avait prédit que son beau-frère mourrait pendant l'été, empoisonné par des crustacés. L'été fini, le patient déclare à Freud à peu près ceci: « Je sais bien que mon beau-frère n'est pas mort, mais quand même cette prédiction était formidable. » Freud a été profondément étonné par ces paroles; mais à ce moment-là il s'intéressait à un problème tout différent et il ne s'est pas interrogé sur la forme de croyance que cette phrase implique. Il faut bien en effet que quelque chose de la croyance, supportée par la devineresse, subsiste et se reconnaisse, transformé, dans ce sentiment absurde de satisfaction. Mais ce n'est ni plus ni moins absurde que l'instauration d'un fétiche, bien que d'une tout autre nature.

Cette formule « Je sais bien, mais quand même » ne nous paraît pas toujours aussi surprenante, tant nous y sommes habitués; en un sens elle est

constituante de la situation analytique, on pourrait dire qu'avant l'analyse, la psychologie n'avait voulu s'accrocher qu'au « je sais bien » s'efforçant de se débarrasser du « mais quand même ». Une certaine duplicité, préfiguration vague du clivage du Moi, était bien connue, au moins depuis saint Paul, mais on n'avait jamais su en faire qu'un scandale devant les conceptions unitaires et moralisantes du Moi. Même les psychanalystes qui (un peu comme saint Paul) ont pensé qu'il fallait s'appuyer sur la meilleure moitié, ne se sont jamais imaginé qu'en privilégiant le « je sais bien », on viendrait à bout du « quand même », cela parce qu'une fois la situation analytique constituée ce n'est plus possible. On s'aperçoit qu'il n'y a de *mais quand même* qu'à cause du *je sais bien*. Par exemple, il n'y a de fétiche que parce que le fétichiste *sait bien* que les femmes n'ont pas de phallus. Cette liaison même pourrait servir à caractériser la *Verleugnung*. C'est par là qu'il est évident qu'elle ne peut pas se confondre avec la négation. Le « je suis sûr que ce n'est pas ma mère » n'a aucun besoin d'un « mais quand même ». Car le « c'est ma mère » reste refoulé—de la façon, précisément, dont le refoulement subsiste après la négation. Et, dans un tel cas, on parle de *savoir* et non pas de croyance. Ou si l'on veut, il n'y a pas de réalité plus ou moins directement en jeu.

Quand l'analyste ne reconnaît pas l'action de la *Verleugnung* dans la situation analytique, ce qui arrive, car elle est souvent obscure et déguisée, il y est immédiatement et heureusement ramené par la réponse du patient: « Mais cela je le sais, dit ce dernier, mais quand même . . . ». Il peut arriver alors qu'on croie qu'il s'agit d'un refoulement; on se contente de l'idée, par exemple, que l'interprétation a atteint le conscient et n'est pas allée jusqu'à l'inconscient; cette explication topologique un peu simple a un défaut, c'est qu'elle ne nous aide pas à entrevoir ce qu'il faut faire. L'inconscient est trop loin, le patient est pour ainsi dire trop épais: il y a trop d'épaisseur entre sa conscience et son inconscient. Or le « *mais quand même* » n'est pas inconscient. Il s'explique par le désir ou le fantasme qui agissent comme à distance, et c'est bien là enfin qu'il faudra en arriver. Mais non directement, et cela n'autorise pas à simplifier. Après tout, à quelqu'un qui nous interrogerait sur la marée, on ne pourrait pas répondre: voyez la lune. On serait responsable de trop de noyades. Autrement dit, bien que l'explication dernière, comme toujours, soit du côté du refoulement, il nous faut bien d'abord étudier la *Verleugnung* comme telle.

Il n'y a pas de refoulement en ce qui concerne les croyances. C'est un des axiomes constitutifs (il date du 25 mai 1897). Peu importe ici que toute représentation se donne d'abord pour une réalité: c'est une question d'un autre ordre, qui regarde l'hallucination, et non la croyance. C'est un autre versant, c'est même *l'autre* versant. Et Freud lui-même remarque combien on serait loin du fétichisme si le sujet adoptait comme solution *d'halluciner* le phallus.

Il faut écarter les problèmes relatifs à la foi religieuse, ils sont d'une autre nature bien que, en fait, la foi soit toujours mêlée de croyance. Pour éviter d'avoir l'air de m'en tenir à un paradoxe, j'en dirai un mot.

La vraie nature de la foi religieuse nous a sans doute été masquée par des emprunts faits à l'ontologie grecque. La foi s'est mise à concerner *l'existence* de Dieu, du moins en apparence. Il suffit de lire la Bible pour voir que les Juifs croyaient en l'existence de tous les dieux—they leur faisaient même la guerre. Mais ils ne gardaient leur foi qu'à un seul. La foi, c'était leur engagement inconditionnel. Le sujet de la présente étude, c'est la croyance: par exemple celle qui permettait aux Juifs de croire à l'existence de Baal en qui ils n'avaient pas foi. A la limite, là encore, une réduction est possible, et la foi et la croyance sont toutes deux faites de la parole d'autrui. Mais cela n'autorise pas à les confondre au niveau où je me suis placé.

Pour y voir un peu plus clair, des exemples sont nécessaires, et il les faut assez gros, car la question par elle-même est fuyante. J'emprunterai le premier à l'ethnographie. On n'a que l'embarras du choix, de tels exemples se retrouvent partout dans les documents ethnographiques. J'ai déjà cité cette phrase qui revient sans cesse chez les informateurs: « Autrefois on croyait aux masques. » Elle pose un problème caché, qui touche à la croyance des informateurs—et aussi, de façon plus subtile, à celle des ethnographes. Pourtant il est facile de mettre en lumière ce dont il s'agit, et même de le transformer en une apparente banalité.

Le livre de Talayesva, *Soleil Hopi*, est bien connu des lecteurs français.² On y voit assez clairement en quoi consiste la croyance aux masques et comment elle se transforme. Les masques de Hopi s'appellent *Katcina*. A un certain moment de l'année, ils se manifestent dans les pueblos comme chez nous le Père Noël, et comme le Père Noël, ils s'intéressent beaucoup aux enfants. Autre ressemblance, ils sont d'intelligence avec les parents pour mystifier les enfants. La mystification est imposée de façon très rigoureuse et personne ne se risquerait à la dénoncer. A la différence du Père Noël, ambigu mais débonnaire, les *Katcina* sont des figures terrifiantes puisqu'ils s'intéressent aux enfants pour les manger. Les mères, bien entendu, rachètent leurs enfants terrorisés en donnant aux *Katcina* des morceaux de viande; en échange, les *Katcina* donnent aux enfants des boulettes de maïs, du *piki*, qui à cette occasion est exceptionnellement teint en rouge. L'erreur d'une psychanalyse trop simple serait de croire que ces rites seraient à interpréter en termes de stades, de fantasmes ou de symboles. L'intérêt, comme on va le voir, est ailleurs.

« Une fois, raconte Talayesva, il devait y avoir une danse de *Katcina* et j'ai surpris ma mère qui cuisait du *piki*. Quand j'ai vu que c'était du *piki* rouge, j'ai été bouleversé. Le soir, je n'ai pas pu manger, et quand les *Katcina* ont distribué leurs cadeaux, je ne voulais pas de leur *piki*. Mais ce n'était pas du *piki* rouge qu'ils m'ont donné, c'était du jaune. Là, je me suis senti heureux. »

Talayesva, pour cette fois-là, a donc échappé à l'obligation d'abandonner sa croyance, grâce à la ruse d'une mère avisée. L'autre jugement, « maman me trompe », nous ne savons pas très bien ce qu'il devient. Il doit être quelque part. On remarque le caractère anxiogène et presque traumatique

que représente ce qu'on peut appeler une première épreuve de répudiation; notre jeune Hopi a pu y échapper avec soulagement. On peut rapprocher cette crise de celle que Freud postule et reconstruit—car elle est inaccessible em;chez le futur fétichiste: il y a un moment *unheimlich* et traumatisant qui est celui de la découverte de la réalité. Sans aucun doute possible, la crise de la croyance aux Katcina reproduit, comme son modèle, la structure de la crise relative à la croyance au phallus. Freud, de la même façon, voyait dans cette crise relative à la castration le modèle de paniques ultérieures, quand surgit le sentiment que « le trône et l'autel sont en danger ». Nous pourrions reconnaître la castration déjà dans l'émotion qui s'empare du jeune Hopi devant le piki rouge . . . Cette alerte est vite passée, ce n'est qu'un avant-goût de ce qui va arriver vers dix ans, à l'âge de l'initiation. Mais je ne crois pas indifférent que les choses se passent en deux fois. Un « c'était donc vrai » est ainsi rendu possible, et cette répétition joue certainement un rôle important.

Au moment de l'initiation, au cours de cérémonies aussi impressionnantes que possible et qui, elles, évoquent directement la castration—les adultes, ceux que dans la parenté hopi on appelle pères et oncles, révèlent, en ôtant leurs masques, que c'étaient eux qui faisaient les Katcina. Comment les initiés réagissent-ils à cette découverte de la réalité?

« Quand les Katcina sont entrés [dans la kiva] sans masques, écrit Talayesva, j'ai eu un grand choc: ce n'étaient pas des esprits. Je les reconnais-sais tous, et je me sentais bien malheureux puisque toute ma vie on m'avait dit que les Katcina étaient des dieux. J'étais surtout choqué et furieux de voir tous mes pères et oncles de clan danser en Katcina. Mais c'était encore pire de voir mon propre père. »

En effet, que croire, si l'autorité est mystification?

Mais ce qui sera à bon droit ahurissant, c'est que cette cérémonie de démystification, et le démenti infligé à la croyance aux Katcina, vont être le fondement institutionnel de la nouvelle croyance aux Katcina, qui constitue la partie essentielle de la religion hopi. La réalité—les Katcina sont les pères et les oncles—doit être répudiée grâce à une transformation de la croyance. Est-ce vraiment ahurissant? Est-ce que nous n'avons pas tendance à trouver cela tout naturel? Maintenant, dit-on aux enfants, vous savez que les *vrais* Katcina ne viennent plus danser *comme autrefois* dans les pueblos. Ils ne viennent plus que de façon invisible, et ils habitent les masques les jours de danse de façon mystique. Un Voltaire hopi aurait sans doute dit que puisqu'on l'a trompé une fois, on ne le trompera pas deux fois! Mais les Hopi distinguent, pour les opposer, la mystification par laquelle on trompe les enfants, de la vérité mystique à laquelle on les initie. Et le Hopi peut dire de bonne foi, et d'une façon qui n'est pas tout à fait celle, on le voit, qu'on rencontre en analyse: « *Je sais bien* que les Katcina ne sont pas des esprits, ce sont mes pères et oncles, *mais quand même* les Katcina sont là quand mes pères et oncles dansent masqués.³ » « Autrefois, on croyait aux masques »

n'est pas une formule si simple. Je reviendrai plus loin sur les rapports de la croyance avec l'imposture.

Après cette épreuve pénible où la croyance infantile a été démentie, elle peut donc continuer son existence sous une forme adulte: quelque chose a pour ainsi dire passé de l'autre côté (c'est la définition de l'initiation). Quand, au cours d'une maladie, Talayesva sera sauvé par son esprit tutélaire, il le verra sous forme de Katcina. A un autre moment, il se réjouit à l'idée de revenir, après sa mort, danser en Katcina dans son pueblo. Mais il dit aussi autre chose: que tout cela lui a servi de leçon, et que dorénavant, il prendra soin de faire ce qui est bien. On voit là une réaction qui rappelle l'institution du *Surmoi*, mais en même temps, et presque de façon indiscernable, le moment où la croyance, abandonnant sa forme imaginaire, se symbolise assez pour ouvrir sur la foi c'est-à-dire sur un engagement.

Puisqu'on pourrait se le demander, et bien que la réponse soit évidente, il faut préciser que la question de la castration, en apparence, et ouvertement, mais ailleurs, s'est posée pour Talayesva de façon particulièrement claire, sans jamais se rencontrer avec la question de la croyance aux Katcina, ni même avec les rites de castration symbolique de l'initiation. C'est là un fait général et qui ne nous étonne pas. Le fétichiste non plus ne met pas en rapport sa religion du fétiche avec des fantasmes de castration. Nous verrons, en avançant, se confirmer ce que nous avons entrevu, à savoir que la croyance à la présence du phallus chez la mère est la première croyance répudiée, et le modèle de toutes les autres répudiations. Remarquons aussi combien il serait difficile de traduire l'histoire de Talayesva en termes de refoulement ou de fantasme. La notion de clivage du Moi ne paraît pas pouvoir être bien utile, en tout cas elle n'est pas indispensable, probablement parce que nous ne concevons plus le Moi comme un appareil de synthèse.

L'histoire de Talayesva, c'est l'histoire de tout le monde, normal ou névrosé, Hopi ou non. Après tout, nous voyons nous-mêmes comment, ne trouvant aucune trace de Dieu dans le ciel, nous l'avons installé dans les cieus, par une transformation analogue à celle des Hopi. Mais, évidemment, cette histoire ne peut pas être telle que celle du fétichiste. Et en y regardant de plus près, nous verrons que dans les effets reconnus ou méconnus de la répudiation, il y a des différences importantes, difficiles à bien définir et qui nous obligeront à esquisser tant bien que mal une classification. Talayesva serait un bon modèle pour la plus simple et la plus claire de ces classes.

Il y a un point très important que j'ai laissé de côté: c'est qu'il reste toujours des enfants non initiés et mystifiés. Une pièce capitale de toute initiation, c'est qu'on s'engage solennellement à garder le secret. Les initiés participeront à leur tour à la mystification, et on peut dire que les enfants sont comme le support de la croyance des adultes. Dans certaines sociétés, les femmes aussi font partie des crédules; mais dans toutes, les croyances reposent d'abord sur la crédulité des enfants.

Je reprends là une idée qui m'était apparue avec évidence dans une autre recherche, où je m'interrogeais sur ce qui pouvait soutenir la croyance des spectateurs au théâtre;⁴ je me demandais où était le crédule imaginaire. Je crois d'autre part qu'on ne s'est pas encore suffisamment interrogé sur ce qui se passe exactement quand un adulte, chez nous, éprouve le besoin de mystifier un enfant—au sujet du père Noël, ou de la cigogne, etc.—au point, dans certains cas, de craindre que le trône et l'autel, ce sont les mots de Freud, ne soient en danger si on propose de démystifier la victime. A cause de nos préconceptions génétistes, nous faisons de l'enfance un moyen d'explication diachronique. Mais, dans une perspective synchronique, l'enfant, comme figure extérieure et présente, peut jouer un rôle non négligeable pour se charger, après répudiation, de nos croyances, comme chez les Hopi. Il ne connaît pas les secrets des adultes, ce qui a l'air d'aller de soi, mais nous savons bien que, chez certains pervers, c'est l'adulte normal qui devient le crédule et ne connaît pas les secrets de l'enfant. Autrement dit, la situation n'est pas si naturelle, et si la psychanalyse nous a débarrassés du mythe de la pureté et de l'innocence enfantines, elle n'a pas poussé bien loin l'analyse de la fonction de ce mythe. Ébloui par la résistance à laquelle s'est heurtée au début la révélation de la sexualité infantile, on a cru que tout devenait clair en invoquant le refoulement (l'amnésie) des adultes. Mais si nous admettions qu'invoquer cette innocence des enfants n'est qu'une façon de présenter leur crédulité, le tableau changerait considérablement. Comme chez les Hopi, mais de façon plus confuse, la crédulité enfantine nous aide dans la répudiation de nos croyances—même si nous n'avons pas affaire directement aux enfants, bien sûr, leur image en nous suffit. Beaucoup d'adultes seraient prêts à avouer—l'absurdité de la chose les retient quelquefois—qu'ils ne sont pas religieux pour eux-mêmes, mais pour les enfants. Et la grande place que tiennent les enfants dans l'organisation des croyances ne s'explique pas uniquement par le souci rationnel de leur formation spirituelle. C'est par ce souci qu'on rend compte pourtant de l'intérêt que les spécialistes de la croyance, de toute sorte, portent aux enfants, d'une façon qui rappelle un peu celle des Kacina, bien que l'institution sociale qui règle la *Verleugnung* soit beaucoup moins bien organisée chez nous.

Cet exemple si clair est plutôt un modèle: on y voit comment une croyance peut se maintenir malgré le démenti de la réalité, en se transformant, et cela apparaît en pleine lumière. On peut admettre que la structure est conforme à ce modèle dans les cas où ce qui se passe est mieux caché à la conscience du sujet—nous verrons tout à l'heure qu'il faudra admettre différentes sortes de structures et que toutes ne sont pas sur ce modèle. Remarquons seulement pour le moment qu'une croyance peut se conserver à l'insu du sujet. Nous voyons souvent, en analyse, des réactions ou des effets inattendus révéler des croyances irrationnelles, des « superstitions », dont le sujet n'a pas conscience, mais elles ne sont pas refoulées, nous ne pouvons pas les rendre manifestes en triomphant d'une résistance, elles sont plutôt fuyantes,

inconsistantes, insaisissables, et cela tient à la façon dont on les met au compte d'autrui; on peut en trouver des exemples partout: ainsi récemment, dans son livre sur Dien-Bien-Phu, Jules Roy remarque que le groupe-opérationnel du Nord-Ouest, cela donnait en code l'abréviation « GONO ». Un nom, dit-il, de mauvais présage, dont le général aurait dû tenir compte. Certes. Mais ce genre de mauvais présage, qui donc y croit? Jules Roy prendrait-il à son compte une croyance à l'onomatomancie? Sûrement pas. Personne n'y croit—et tout le monde. Comme si nous vivions dans un milieu où flottent ainsi des croyances qu'en apparence personne n'assume. *On* y croit. Rien de plus banal que ce genre de remarques—et cependant si on s'y arrête assez, rien de plus ahurissant.

Laissons donc de côté ce que croient les autres, voyons comment une croyance peut se présenter pour le sujet lui-même, de quelle façon elle lui reste plus ou moins insaisissable. Pour des raisons sans doute suspectes, mais cachées, il m'est arrivé de lire les horoscopes, d'ailleurs rudimentaires, que publient certains journaux. Il me semble que je n'y apporte pas grande curiosité. Je me demande comment on peut y croire. Je me plais à imaginer le genre de drames que ces prédictions pourraient provoquer, dans certains cas. Or une fois, l'année dernière, la prédiction m'annonçait pour le lendemain « une journée faste pour les travaux de rangement dans la maison ». Ce n'était pas une prédiction impressionnante, mais le lendemain était le jour fixé depuis longtemps pour mon déménagement. Une coïncidence aussi cocasse me fit éclater de rire—un rire incontestablement joyeux. A la réflexion, si la prédiction avait été « date néfaste pour les déménagements », la coïncidence aurait été tout aussi cocasse, mais elle m'aurait fait rire autrement. Je peux dire que je ne suis pas superstitieux, puisque je n'en tiens pas compte. Toutefois, pour parler correctement, il faut que je dise: je sais bien que ces coïncidences n'ont aucun sens, mais quand même elles me font plus ou moins plaisir. La banalité de cette remarque ne doit pas nous dispenser d'y prêter attention.

Descartes avait déjà remarqué—usant d'une topique bien différente—que l'opération par laquelle on croit une chose est différente de celle par laquelle on connaît qu'on la croit, et cela dans un passage où il s'interroge justement sur ce que croient les autres. Et naturellement, lui, il ne doute pas de savoir ce qu'il croit, ni même de pouvoir croire ce qu'il veut. Il nous révèle ainsi l'essentiel de la nature de la croyance et surtout des obstacles que son étude nous oppose, obstacles qui ne sont pas exactement de la nature des résistances.

Étendu ainsi à des croyances insaisissables pour le sujet, le « je sais bien . . . mais quand même . . . » se présente continuellement dans les séances d'analyse; sa fréquence, sa banalité ne nous aident pas à en apprécier le sens, mais il y a des cas plus éclairants que d'autres, et je voudrais en apporter un particulièrement typique.

C'est un exemple qui n'est pas entièrement agréable à évoquer, parce que tout commence par une erreur de ma part. Mais rien ne nous instruit mieux

que nos erreurs, comme on sait, et particulièrement en psychanalyse. J'ai déjà raconté cet exemple à des analystes, mais ils n'en ont pas aperçu la portée, sans doute parce que ces questions sont fuyantes, ils n'ont retenu que mon erreur, ce qui est vexant. Aujourd'hui la portée très sérieuse de cet incident sera saisie, après tout ce qui précède.

Je suis bien obligé de commencer par raconter l'erreur, c'était une erreur téléphonique. La personne qui avait reçu une communication pour moi avait déformé le nom du correspondant, et il ressemblait à celui d'un poète noir dont j'attendais la visite amicale. J'étais occupé, et je lui ai fait dire de venir aussi vite que possible, nous aurions le temps de causer en prenant un apéritif. J'ai prévenu la personne qui devait ouvrir la porte. On sonne, et, tout de même un peu surprise, elle vient me dire: « Ce n'est pas un nègre, c'est un client à Monsieur. »

On comprend facilement que la situation n'avait rien d'embarrassant, puisqu'il n'y avait pas à hésiter sur ce qu'il fallait faire. Il fallait conduire le patient sur le divan comme d'habitude, ne rien manifester comme d'habitude, et attendre, comme d'habitude, quelles seraient ses premières paroles. Tout de même, ses premières paroles, je les attendais avec plus d'intérêt que d'habitude—et l'on verra plus loin que c'est là précisément que j'avais tort.

Ces premières paroles, naturellement je me les suis rappelées tout à fait littéralement et je ne risque pas d'y changer un mot. Après un petit silence, il déclara d'un ton assez satisfait: « Je savais bien que c'était de la blague, l'apéritif. Mais quand même, je suis rudement content. » Et puis, presque aussitôt: « surtout que ma femme, elle, elle y croit ». De telles paroles peuvent passer pour ahurissantes. Sur le moment, elles me surprenaient beaucoup, mais malheureusement moi aussi pour d'autres raisons, j'étais bien content. Mes préoccupations, de façon assez naturelle, étaient plutôt d'ordre technique, elles me faisaient enregistrer avec satisfaction le fait que le patient était retombé très exactement dans la situation analytique correcte, comme la formule: « Je sais bien . . . mais quand même . . . » suffisait à le garantir. L'extrême facilité avec laquelle tout cela s'était arrangé était, je m'en rendais compte, due à l'état de la relation transférentielle du moment. Je ne me rendais pas compte que l'effet de mon erreur était plus grand sur moi que sur lui; un reste de prudence, la curiosité d'entendre la suite, la satisfaction technique firent que la séance reprit sa suite, qui était facile et satisfaisante, et il ne fut plus jamais question de cet incident.

Mais c'était une heure tardive, après les heures habituelles, et j'avais du temps pour réfléchir. La phrase me parut plus étrange, et aussi elle me rappelait quelque chose: celle du patient de Freud dont le beau-frère n'avait pas été empoisonné par des coquillages. Le passage est assez difficile à trouver. Il est dans un petit article consacré à la télépathie. (Je ne crois pas que ce soit par hasard, la télépathie pose une question de croyance.) Je vis que ce que Freud avait retenu, c'est que la diseuse de bonne aventure avait deviné le souhait inconscient—ou plutôt conscient, dans ce cas—de son client. En

effet, on va chez les devins pour être deviné. Cela toutefois ne pouvait pas s'appliquer à mon exemple: tout se passait bien comme si j'avais deviné le souhait de mon patient, mais ce n'était certainement pas par télépathie. Seulement, on ne peut pas rendre compte ainsi de la satisfaction qu'éprouvait mon patient, ni de celle du patient de Freud, à moins que ce soit si agréable d'être deviné pour ne pas être satisfait. Non, la devineresse n'avait pas agi en évoquant le désir, mais en devenant le support d'une croyance, de la même façon que la femme de mon patient. Sans doute, en fin de compte, la croyance s'explique par le désir, cela c'est une banalité qui est déjà dans les Fables de La Fontaine, ouvrage charmant mais qui n'a jamais passé pour original en matière de psychologie. La découverte de Freud, c'est que le désir agit à distance sur le matériel conscient et y fait se manifester les lois du processus primaire: la *Verleugnung* (par laquelle la croyance se continue après répudiation) s'explique par la persistance du désir et les lois du processus primaire. On pourrait en déduire que mon patient, par exemple, continuait à désirer que je l'invite; seulement il s'agit d'autre chose: il continuait du même coup à croire que, d'une certaine façon, il était invité, il m'en montrait de la reconnaissance.

En continuant à interroger le texte de Freud, je suis tombé sur une phrase qui m'a arrêté. La voici: « Quant à moi, dit-il, je fus tellement frappé—pour tout dire si désagréablement affecté—que j'en oubliai de faire aucun usage analytique de cette histoire. » Moi, qui n'avais pas été désagréablement affecté, je n'en avais fait aucun usage non plus. D'ailleurs je n'en ressentais pas, à tort ou à raison, grand regret. Je croyais voir ce qui avait frappé Freud: il s'agissait de croyances relatives à des sciences occultes et à des prédictions sur la mort. Dans mon cas, il n'était question que d'apéritif, ce qui n'a rien d'inquiétant. Mais je compris que j'étais trop d'accord avec le « je savais bien » de mon patient; il me comblait, je ne voulais rien savoir du « mais quand même ». Je suppose qu'il en était de même pour Freud, d'après ce que nous savons de son attitude un peu superstitieuse relative à la date prévisible de sa mort. Je trouvais, moi, que le contentement de mon patient était trop absurde du moment qu'il « savait bien ». Ainsi je retombais dans la position qui était celle des psychologues et des psychiatres avant l'institution de l'analyse. Mon erreur avait bien laissé mon patient dans sa position d'analysé, c'est moi qu'elle ôtait de ma position d'analyste! Lui, il abandonnait la croyance qu'il venait en invité; mais il avait une femme crédule qui lui facilitait la chose, et il lui restait sous une autre forme assez de croyance pour en être rudement content. Moi, à côté de ma vraie place, j'aurais voulu qu'il n'en restât rien, car je n'avais jamais cru l'inviter. Cela m'a appris beaucoup sur l'attitude intérieure à avoir après une erreur ou après un incident imprévu, c'est du côté de l'analyste et non de l'analysé qu'il faut veiller aux conséquences. En présentant les choses de façon superficielle, on pourrait dire que le patient avait vraiment été invité, du moins aux yeux de sa femme. Mais il faut ajouter qu'il savait bien, comme il dit, que c'était de la blague: de sorte que

cette explication superficielle ne sert à rien. Il faut en somme que la croyance survive au démenti, bien qu'elle devienne insaisissable, et qu'on n'en voie que les effets tout à fait paradoxaux.

Cet exemple ouvrirait sur toutes sortes de chemins: l'utilisation de fausses nouvelles dans un but de propagande, même quand elles doivent être démenties, les offres de gascon, la psychologie du canular, et celle des imposteurs. Il n'y a pas de raison qu'un illusionniste, quelque raisonnable et lucide qu'il soit, ne vive pas sur la croyance transformée qu'il est un magicien, et que cela n'ajoute beaucoup au plaisir qu'il tire de l'exercice de son métier. Comme le Hopi qui admet qu'il n'y a plus aujourd'hui de vrais Katcina, il réserve un « quand même », beaucoup plus difficile à saisir que celui du Hopi, et même tout à fait insaisissable en dehors de petits détails qui demandent à être interprétés. Mais quelquefois la conservation de la croyance qu'on croirait abandonnée est manifeste. J'en donnerai des exemples; mais en voici un bien connu, apporté par Claude Lévi-Strauss. Il s'agit du chaman qui est parfaitement au fait des tours de passe-passe et supercheries qu'il emploie, comme tous ses confrères en chamanisme, et pourtant il se trouve un jour attiré par un autre chaman qui emploie les mêmes trucs, et il devient capable de croire de nouveau, avec toute sa naïveté. Je résume mal, mais tout le monde a lu cet article et a été plus ou moins surpris par ce paradoxe; Lévi-Strauss en le rapportant voulait y voir la preuve qu'un imposteur peut se duper lui-même et se fabriquer un alibi de bonne foi. Après ce qu'on a vu, l'explication est différente, et, comme il fallait s'y attendre, à la fois plus banale et plus ahurissante. La façon dont Voltaire traite l'imposture, qui revient à répéter que deux chamans ou deux Katcina ne devraient pas pouvoir se regarder sans rire ne correspond pas à ce qui se passe en fait.

Mais nous voyons déjà qu'il y a plusieurs manières de croire et de ne pas croire. Le chaman et le Hopi se ressemblent un peu: le chaman a dû, lui aussi, croire naïvement avant de répudier sa croyance et nous ignorons tout de la crise éventuelle par laquelle il a pu passer quand on l'a initié aux truquages. Mais la position résultante n'est pas la même: il retrouve sa naïveté, il ne se confirme pas dans sa foi. De plus il est guérisseur, au nom de ses pouvoirs personnels, et non officiant, comme le Katcina, au nom de ce qui transcende le groupe, si bien que les cas ne sont pas réductibles l'un à l'autre. Chacun a déjà pensé au cas du fabulateur, à celui de l'escroc qui n'a besoin que d'un crédule pour croire d'une certaine façon à ses inventions: il sait bien, par exemple, que tout finira par être découvert, mais quand même, etc. Il y a encore beaucoup à explorer.

Mais ce qui manque surtout, ce qui reste à faire, c'est de trouver un moyen soit de classer les cas différents, soit, mieux, de mettre sur pied une sorte de syntaxe, ou un système de permutation qui permettrait de passer d'un cas à l'autre, et d'arriver à la fin à formuler exactement le jeu de la *Verleugnung* pour le fétichiste, chez qui évidemment il est différent de ce que nous avons vu jusqu'ici. Un nouvel exemple nous permettra d'avancer.

Je l'emprunte aux *Mémoires* de Casanova. C'est un très bel épisode qui couvre la fin du livre II et le commencement du livre III, et on craint de l'abîmer un peu quand on le réduit, comme il le faut bien, à ce qu'il a d'essentiel. Casanova a quelque peu embarrassé les analystes. Son comportement sexuel se présente comme « normal », mais avec un aspect, pour ainsi dire, d'activisme contrephobique et Casanova se présente comme le champion de l'anticastration. On ne sait guère le situer avec certitude: est-il surtout un phobique, avec une surcompensation? Est-il un pervers, d'une nature particulière? Illustre-t-il une transition entre la phobie et la perversion? Ici, il va nous intéresser comme imposteur.

En 1748, à l'âge de vingt-trois ans, il se trouve à Mantoue où il est abordé par un inconnu qui tient à lui faire visiter son cabinet d'histoire naturelle. C'est un bric-à-brac ridicule, sans rien d'authentique. Il contient entre autres un vieux couteau, donné pour celui-là même avec lequel saint Pierre a coupé l'oreille de Malchus. On trouvait ce couteau partout et Casanova en avait vu un à Venise. La réaction de Casanova est immédiate, sans une hésitation, il entre dans le jeu. Il a du premier coup reconnu son homme, imposteur ou crédule, c'est tout un, ou mieux imposteur et crédule. Le jeu consistera à être lui tout imposteur et à rendre l'autre tout crédule. Mais en fin de compte, comme on va voir, c'est Casanova qui tombera à la place du crédule, parce que ce qui le pousse à ce jeu, ce sont ses croyances répudiées.

Ses premières paroles sont un gambit: ce couteau ne vaut rien, parce que vous n'avez pas la gaine. Les paroles du Christ, c'est: remets ton glaive au fourreau, *gladium in vaginam*. Ne nous arrêtons pas à interpréter, l'intérêt n'est pas là. Quels sont les projets de Casanova? Rien qu'on puisse encore préciser. Il a joué ce coup comme on avance un pion, les combinaisons viendront après. Simplement, puisqu'il a trouvé un sot—c'est ainsi qu'il s'exprime—il faut en profiter. Il passe la nuit à fabriquer une gaine avec une vieille semelle de botte et à lui donner l'air antique. Il se présente cela à lui-même et il le présente au lecteur comme « une énorme bouffonnerie ».

Le développement suivant c'est qu'il y a à Césène (près de Rimini, à plus de 150 km de Mantoue) un paysan, un autre crédule, qui s'imaginerait avoir un trésor sous sa cave. Je passe sur les impostures et les manœuvres: Casanova a persuadé sa dupe qu'avec l'aide magique du couteau (et de la gaine) on obtiendra que les gnomes fassent remonter le trésor à la surface. Pas d'autre bénéfice pour Casanova que le plaisir, comme il dit, d'aller, aux frais d'un sot, déterrer un trésor inexistant chez l'autre sot qui croyait l'avoir dans sa cave. Ce serait peu de bénéfice, s'il n'ajoutait: il me tardait de jouer le rôle de magicien que j'aimais à la folie. Ce n'est pas déformer beaucoup les choses que de traduire ainsi: je sais bien qu'il n'y a pas de trésor, mais quand même c'est formidable.

A Césène intervient une autre personne, une autre crédule: c'est Javotte, la fille du paysan. Casanova voit là, naturellement, une conquête à faire, mais non pas par l'amour; il veut se la soumettre, d'une soumission absolue, par

son seul prestige de magicien. Les raisons qu'il se donne sont intéressantes par leur absurdité: Javotte est une paysanne, il faudrait trop de temps pour la former et la rendre sensible à l'amour! En réalité la possession de Javotte doit faire partie de son triomphe de magicien, le parachever. Cela jette déjà un peu de jour sur ce rôle de magicien que notre héros aimait à la folie. Javotte est pucelle, Casanova déclare sa virginité essentielle à la réussite du sortilège. (Il y aurait une étude à faire sur Casanova et le tabou de la virginité, mais je ne peux que le signaler au passage.)

Les préparatifs sont très soignés. Casanova se fait confectionner des vêtements spéciaux et il fait fabriquer un énorme cercle de papier qu'il orne de caractères cabalistiques. Il a lu quantité de livres d'occultisme, et, d'après les annotateurs, il n'invente rien, il suit les recettes. Il pousse aussi ses projects avec Javotte: pour des raisons magiques ils se baignent ensemble et se lavent réciproquement. Bonne précaution, avec une paysanne de Césène, et en même temps séduction assurée pour plus tard. D'autant que la pucelle couche dans son lit, où provisoirement il la respecte. La bouffonnerie continue.

Le moment venu, de nuit, Casanova s'installe en plein air dans son cercle de papier, vêtu de robes magiques. A ce moment, un orage éclate et cela suffira, comme on va le voir, à le faire entrer en panique. Juste avant de raconter comment il est entré dans le cercle, il a une phrase qui rend un son curieux à des oreilles d'analyste, la voici: Je savais, dit-il, que l'opération manquerait. Pas possible, il le savait! Une telle phrase implique un « mais quand même », qui reste sous-entendu. Je crois qu'on aurait tort ici de recourir, sous quelque forme que ce soit, à la notion de doute et de dire que Casanova n'en était pas si sûr que ça. Il ne doute pas de l'échec d'une opération magique qu'il appelle lui-même bouffonnerie. Il est aussi sûr de l'échec que nous le sommes. La *Verleugnung* n'a rien à voir avec le doute. La croyance à la magie est répudiée et logée fort à l'aise chez les crédules. Mais nous allons voir ce qui arrive à notre magicien, quand le crédule va faire défaut, au plus mauvais moment.

En effet, au moment où l'orage éclate, la première pensée de notre magicien a la forme d'un regret éloquent: « Que j'eusse été admirable, dit-il, si j'avais osé le prévoir! » Il apprécie parfaitement la situation: si l'orage avait été prédit par lui, la bouffonnerie aurait pu continuer, au milieu des éclairs et de la foudre. On pourrait dire superficiellement qu'il aurait eu l'orage de son côté et serait resté le maître du jeu, dans une position avantageuse. Mais cette explication ne vaut rien: personne ne lui dispute cette maîtrise, il sera toujours en position de mener le jeu comme il voudra. C'est en lui-même que l'absence de la figure du crédule va provoquer un renversement. Il faut bien que la crédulité retombe sur quelqu'un. Nous aurons à examiner cette idée quand il sera question de la position du fétichiste.

« *Je savais bien* (évidemment), dit-il, que cet orage étant fort naturel, je n'avais pas la moindre raison d'en être surpris. Mais malgré cela (*mais quand*

même) un commencement de frayeur me faisait désirer d'être dans ma chambre. » Nous voyons ainsi la dernière défense avant la panique, et la plus vaine, celle du bon sens. Et nous sommes en mesure d'en expliquer la vanité: c'est que le bon sens est toujours du côté du « je sais bien », jamais du « mais quand même ». Le « je savais bien » est emporté comme un fétu dans une panique totale, la magie se venge: « Dans l'épouvante qui m'accablait, je me suis persuadé que si les foudres que je voyais ne venaient pas m'écraser c'était parce qu'elles ne pouvaient pas entrer dans le cercle. Sans cette fausse croyance, je n'y serais pas resté une minute. » Ainsi le cercle était magique—quand même.

Donc, à cause de cette fausse croyance, il subit tout l'orage sans bouger et rentre dans sa chambre en un triste état. Javotte l'y attendait, mais *elle lui fait peur*. Il n'a qu'une envie, dormir, et il dort huit heures. Le lendemain, dit-il, « Javotte me parut une autre », et il s'en explique ainsi: « Elle ne me paraissait plus d'un sexe différent du mien, *puisque je ne trouvais plus le mien différent du sien*. Une puissante idée superstitieuse me fit croire dans ce moment-là que l'état d'innocence de cette fille était protégé et que je me trouverais frappé de mort si j'osais l'attaquer. » On ne saurait mieux décrire la déconfiture—la débandade—de notre héros de l'anti-castration, comme je l'appelais tout à l'heure.

D'un exemple si riche, il y aurait beaucoup à dire. Je laisse de côté le rôle non négligeable, mais secondaire, qu'a pu jouer le tabou de la virginité. Celui qui voudrait étudier Casanova à la lumière de la psychanalyse ferait bien cependant de commencer par cette puissante idée superstitieuse et d'utiliser la notion de *Verleugnung* qui est toujours à sa place là où il y a superstition... Mais il faut surtout souligner ce qui se produit dès que le crédule fait défaut et que la crédulité retombe sur Casanova, ou que Casanova tombe à la place laissée vide par le terme défaillant. A ce moment-là, l'orage joue le rôle de l'Autre (avec un grand A pour utiliser la notation de Lacan). Casanova le sait bien qui s'écrie: « J'ai reconnu un Dieu vengeur qui m'avait attendu là pour me punir de toutes mes scélératesses et pour mettre fin à mon incrédulité par la mort. » Il le dit mal, mais assez bien tout de même, c'est l'image du grand Autre qui se montre au milieu des éclairs, comme il se doit. Mais on comprend que Casanova avait voulu usurper cette place en magicien, non pas à ses propres yeux, il n'y croyait pas, dit-il (autrement dit, il n'était pas fou!), mais à ceux du crédule, de l'autre avec un petit *a*. Il ajoute: « Mon système que je croyais à l'épreuve de tout s'en était allé. » Malheureusement, tout comme le fétichiste, il est bien incapable de nous dire en quoi consistait exactement ce système.

On sait qu'il n'y a pas lieu de s'inquiéter de l'avenir de ce jeune homme de vingt-trois ans après cette cruelle épreuve: il fit réparation à tous, avec quelques cérémonies qu'on pourrait appeler d'expiation, renonça à Javotte et se retrouva gaillard comme devant, plus magicien que jamais. Cela n'a rien de surprenant. Mais on rencontre assez souvent chez des pervers en analyse

des moments de panique de même style—sans qu'il en résulte nécessairement un effet thérapeutique. Une fois la panique passée, on retrouve le statu quo. Mais on a vu d'abord que la *Verleugnung*, ici comme chez le fétichiste, fait partie d'un système de protection (je ne dirais pas de défense) contre la castration. On voit aussi que la magie a un certain rapport avec ce problème de la castration. La notion de pensée magique a été admise chez les analystes de façon trop simple. On a admis que l'animisme des primitifs était la projection de leurs propres tendances d'une part, et d'autre part, qu'il était le modèle de la pensée magique. On a plus ou moins sous-entendu une idée suspecte de développement, par exemple que les hommes d'autrefois croyaient à la magie, que l'ontogenèse reproduirait la phylogenèse, donc que les enfants, etc. Mais rien ne permet de considérer la pensée magique comme infantile, et les enfants, dans leur « ignorance », pouvant être le support des croyances répudiées des adultes, il faut être plus prudent quand on en parle. Le jeune Hopi qui croit encore que les Katsina sont des dieux n'a pas une pensée de type magique, pas plus que quand un enfant rencontre le père Noël dans la rue, par exemple, parce que cela lui est garanti par des gens à qui il fait confiance. Que le jeune Hopi soit mystifié, c'est l'affaire des adultes, non la sienne, il est mystifié objectivement, sa subjectivité n'y a pas encore part. Il est évident que la magie ne peut commencer que quand sa croyance aux Katsina aura subi une transformation après la *Verleugnung*, qu'elle aura pris la forme de la présence mystique et invisible des vrais Katsina, la présence *quand même* en dépit du témoignage de la réalité. Il n'y a pas de doute, on le voit, que la *Verleugnung* suffit pour créer le magique. Après tout, qu'y a-t-il qui paraisse plus profondément magique que le fétiche? On l'a bien admis, quand on l'a appelé ainsi. Pour donner une formule frappante, peut-être trop, je dirais qu'il n'y a pas d'abord une croyance à la magie, mais d'abord une magie de la croyance. Cette correction faite peut seule nous expliquer les rapports si évidents entre la présence ou l'absence du phallus d'une part (la castration), et la magie, car c'est la première croyance magique, celle de l'existence quand même du phallus maternel, qui reste le modèle de toutes les transformations successives des croyances.

Maintenant reste le plus difficile, et le plus risqué. Ces exemples ont été choisis pour représenter différents types de structures qu'il faudrait pouvoir énoncer de façon cohérente. Le jeune Hopi, assuré de l'existence (non magique) des Katsina, entre en panique à l'idée que cette existence puisse être démentie par la réalité. Il se rétablit en conservant sa croyance au prix d'une transformation qui la rend « magique » et il est aidé sur ce point par les institutions mêmes de son peuple. Cette crise répète de façon indéniable pour un analyste une autre crise, celle de la castration. Il s'agit de la perte de quelque chose qui sera cependant recouvré après transformation, et sous la garantie des autorités. Le rôle de la crédulité des enfants est également manifeste, la mystification est institutionnalisée. Mais Talayesva peut tout nous raconter dans sa biographie, aucun moment n'a été emporté par l'amnésie.

La *Verleugnung* conserve son caractère irrationnel, mais tout se passe en pleine lumière.

Ce schéma particulièrement simple, ce modèle, n'est pas applicable à Casanova. La crédulité infantile ne l'intéresse plus, mais le monde est plein de crédules, de « sots » qui lui permettraient d'échapper à la puissante idée superstitieuse où nous reconnaissons le retus de la castration. A cause de ce refus, la croyance magique par elle-même ne le protège pas, au contraire, s'il s'y trouve livré par suite de la défaillance des crédules; si sa croyance à la magie retombe pour ainsi dire sur lui-même, il est saisi d'angoisse, son système, comme il dit, « s'en va » et le laisse sans défense. Les structures de la croyance chez lui et celles du Hopi ne se recouvrent pas, elles ne sont pas superposables, elles apparaissent comme décalées. Tout nous indique que ce que nous avons pu décrire chez le Hopi, à savoir la formation même de la pensée magique, a dû avoir son temps correspondant chez Casanova, mais chez lui ce temps est oublié, comme d'ailleurs chez le fétichiste. C'est le temps de la première *Verleugnung*, de la répudiation de la réalité anatomique, de la constitution du phallus comme magique. Je parle des structures, car bien entendu chez le Hopi aussi ce qui s'est passé au moment de la découverte anatomique, la première *Verleugnung*, reste dans l'obscurité; mais la crise de l'initiation reproduit fidèlement cette même structure et nous l'y reconnaissons sans peine. Tandis que, chez Casanova, il faut supposer un second temps dont il n'y a pas trace dans le modèle hopi; c'est que la croyance magique elle-même est renvoyée aux crédules, si bien que ce n'est plus par magie, mais, à la lettre, par imposture que Casanova possède le phallus. Cependant, tout comme le chaman, cet imposteur est magicien *quand même*, c'est la magie elle-même qui reste ce « mémorial de la castration » dont parle Freud. Il reste ainsi sous la menace de ce qu'on peut bien appeler la castration magique. L'imposteur n'a pas véritablement accès à la réalité: Casanova sait bien, il le répète deux fois, que l'opération manquera, et cela lui est indifférent; ce qui ne lui est pas indifférent, c'est que le « mais quand même » ait l'air de se réaliser: qu'il soit rejeté non pas de l'imposture à la vérité—ce qui serait sans doute le salut s'il en était capable—mais de l'imposture à la crédulité. Du « système » à la « puissante idée superstitieuse ».

Des constructions de ce genre ne pourraient paraître que très aventureuses si on se proposait pour but de reconstituer une évolution réelle. Elles sont indispensables pour aller au-delà de la simple description et permettre de préciser des différences de structure. On n'a pas très bien réussi, jusqu'ici, à parler autrement de la magie que de façon globale, on en est réduit à opposer descriptivement les aspects les plus marqués, sans pouvoir dire précisément en quoi les rites d'un obsessionnel se séparent et se rapprochent, par exemple, de ceux d'une peuplade « primitive ». En essayant de suivre les divers effets de la *Verleugnung* originelle et la façon dont ils sont repris et organisés, on se trouve amené à envisager des distinctions plus délicates.

La suite logique de ces recherches, ce serait d'essayer de voir en quoi consiste la magie du fétiche. Mais ici nous nous heurtons à une profonde obscurité, et le chemin suivi ne nous conduit pas à plus de savoir. Si la *Verleugnung* et les transformations de la croyance expliquent le point de départ, elles ne parviennent pas à nous éclairer sur le point d'arrivée.

Freud, en décrivant le temps constitutif de la magie, a rendu compte de l'origine du fétiche: il représente la dernière chose perçue avant le choc de la découverte anatomique, découverte dont le souvenir est emporté dans un oubli que Freud compare tout simplement à l'amnésie traumatique. Mais ce qui se constitue ainsi, c'est un souvenir-écran, et non encore un fétiche. Or, la croyance au phallus, conservée sous sa forme magique d'une part, et d'autre part un souvenir-écran relatif à la découverte anatomique, et lié à elle de diverses manières, peuvent très bien se retrouver côte à côte, et cela est extrêmement banal, chez des sujets qui ne sont pas fétichistes.

Si le futur fétichiste a nécessairement passé par cette première épreuve, nous ignorons comment les choses se sont arrangées dans la suite. A-t-il un moment, même un court moment, passé comme Casanova par une attitude de défi et d'imposture, sans pouvoir la tenir, alors que Casanova, non sans nous étonner, l'a tenue toute sa vie? En tout cas, ce qu'il faut en retenir, c'est que l'instauration du fétiche évacue le problème de la croyance, magique ou non, du moins dans les termes où nous avons pu le poser: le fétichiste ne cherche aucun crédule; pour lui, les autres sont dans l'ignorance et il les y laisse. Il ne s'agit plus de faire croire, et du même coup il ne s'agit plus de croire . . .

On voit bien que la place du crédule, celle de l'autre, est maintenant occupée par le fétiche lui-même. S'il est manquant, se produisent des troubles qu'on peut comparer à ceux qui s'emparent de Casanova quand le crédule fait défaut. Mais Casanova s' imagine savoir qui croit et qui ne croit pas. Même si en fait il se trompe, la question peut rester posée en termes de croyance. Après l'institution d'un fétiche, le domaine de la croyance est perdu de vue, nous ne savons plus ce que la question est devenue et on dirait que le but du fétichiste est d'y échapper. Si avec la *Verleugnung* tout le monde entre dans le champ de la croyance, ceux qui deviennent fétichistes sortent de ce champ en ce qui concerne leur perversion.

Ce genre de recherches ne peut pas avoir de conclusion. Peut-être faudrait-il retrouver ce qu'est devenue la croyance chez le fétichiste, peut-être faut-il renoncer à l'idée de croyance quand on étudie son cas. Et puis il reste d'autres domaines où peut-être, à suivre les avatars de la croyance, on ferait d'autres remarques. Freud, par exemple, nous a invités à chercher comment se comportent les croyances quand il s'agit de la mort et du deuil. Et puis nous savons que nous rencontrons des cas où le sujet nous présente de sérieuses difficultés par sa peur de perdre ce que pourtant « il sait bien » qu'il n'a pas . . .

On devrait ajouter un mot sur la méthode que cette recherche a suivie, car elle n'a pas été l'objet d'un choix délibéré: il semblait que la nature du sujet

l'imposait. On disposait au départ de quelques idées: Freud avait fourni la *Verleugnung*. On disposait de la topologie que Lacan a élaborée. Cela donnait deux axiomes: il n'y a pas de croyance inconsciente; la croyance suppose le support de l'autre.

Cependant cela n'orientait pas vers un travail théorique, destiné à développer ou à mettre à l'épreuve cet appareil abstrait et cohérent que constitue une théorie. La part clinique est ici aussi à peu près inexistante, rien n'y ressemble à l'étude du déroulement d'un cas.

Mais il existe ce qu'on peut appeler une *phénoménologie* freudienne, différente de celle des philosophes, et qui conserverait plutôt un peu du sens que ce terme avait avant qu'Hegel ne l'ait utilisé. C'est un mot que Freud n'emploie pas souvent (il figure, par exemple, dans *l'Homme aux rats*) mais la part qu'il fait à cette méthode dans ses écrits est considérable. A l'exception du chapitre VII, toute la *Traumdeutung* n'en utilise guère d'autre. Il s'agit, sans souci d'ordre chronologique, et sans s'appuyer sur des principes, d'essayer de présenter des exemples de façon, pour ainsi dire, qu'ils s'interprètent les uns par les autres. Beaucoup de textes ont le même caractère. Dans *l'Homme aux rats*, Freud, sans pouvoir formuler une théorie, confronte des exemples de différents phénomènes obsessionnels. Le passage qui a l'air consacré à la clinique est en réalité constitué par des exemples de phénomènes de transfert.

Bien entendu, l'appui d'une théorie et l'illustration de la clinique sont toujours présents; mais, sans l'élément phénoménologique qui joue un rôle de médiateur, la théorie et la clinique s'appliqueraient directement l'une sur l'autre de façon stérile, la théorie fournissant toute l'explication, la clinique illustrant la théorie—sauf à de rares moments, ceux où, selon la méthodologie des sciences positives, la clinique contredit la théorie et invite à inventer de nouvelles hypothèses, ce qui nous ramènerait à Claude Bernard. Freud a procédé ainsi à l'occasion, du moins en apparence, mais en cela il n'innovait pas, et ce n'était pas la méthode que nous reconnaissons pour la sienne propre. Celle-ci, à y bien regarder, suppose que l'élément phénoménologique (au sens où il l'entend) est toujours présent, même caché, dans toute recherche authentiquement analytique.

Notes

1. Paru depuis (P.U.F., 1967).
2. Paru chez Plon, collection « Terre humaine », 1959.
3. Cf. Pascal, *Pensées*, « quand la parole de Dieu, qui est véritable, est fausse littéralement, elle est vraie spirituellement ». (Elle est véritable *quand même*.)
4. « Le Théâtre du point de vue de l'Imaginaire », *la Psychanalyse*, 5, P.U.F. Ici, p. 164.

THE PERVERSE COUPLE

Jean Clavreul

Source: Stuart Schneiderman (ed.), *Returning to Freud*. New Haven: Yale University Press (1980), pp.215–233.

I cannot fail at the beginning of this communication to underline the fact that there is a paradox in speaking about the perverse couple. The principal themes of my discussion will bear on this paradox, and I will be open to criticism asking by what authority I link the notion of the couple with that of perversion.

Recent works on perversion—I refer essentially to those of the Freudian School of Paris—obviously prohibit us from considering the question of the perverse couple as that of the influence of a perversion on the life of a couple. Such an approach would necessarily imply that we consider the perverse act to be a fantasy enacted by a normal or neurotic subject. Now, all the recent works tend to show that on the contrary, the perverse act is engaged in by subjects whose libidinal investments, whose relations with desire and the Law, are profoundly different from those of the neurotic. That is why, rather than speak of perversion (in the singular or plural), we speak of the perverse structure, since this term permits us to approach the problem of perversion independently of the particular form that any perverse act may take.

Here we encounter the paradox: in isolating a perverse structure, as distinguished from that of the normal or neurotic subject, do we not deny to the pervert a knowledge of and participation in the ultimate goal of libidinal evolution, the greatest achievement of sexual life, the “love” that each of us would say is alone capable of maintaining the solidarity of a couple? Is the perverse structure compatible with love? This is the first question to which we are tempted to respond in the negative. But if there is no love, what is the tie that assures the extraordinary solidarity of certain perverse couples? This could be a second question. Finally—and this is not the least important of the problems that I will raise today—what happens in the psychoanalytic relation when a pervert is introduced into it? Does our conceptual apparatus

permit us to speak of the couple formed by the pervert and his analyst? Notably, is it possible to take up the notion of "transference" as we utilize it in the analysis of a neurotic?

We do not pretend to respond to these questions here; our aim is only to articulate them: we have chosen the theme of the perverse couple not to provide a clinical study, which could only unite some very disparate elements, but to create openings, both in our approach to the perverse structure and in our more or less explicit idea of the love relationship, of the libidinal investments implied in the life of a couple.

We can now mark the opening through which we can legitimately introduce the pervert into the life of a couple. *Love*, which we speak about easily and even nonchalantly when we are talking about couples, is a complex feeling, whatever sense we give to it, and we have difficulty in explaining how a libidinal investment is fixed on a privileged being. We must notice that perverts often are those who speak of it best. Discourses, poems, romanesque descriptions—whatever the form of expression, the uninformed reader cannot be assured that his judgment will permit him to recognize whether or not the author is perverse.

And again, is it not patent that on the whole, erotic literature has been made up of writings by perverts? Again we must add that from the point of view of eroticism, the "normal individual" is presented, next to the pervert, as an inept yokel unable to elevate his love above a routine. The sexual good health that he brags about appears to derive from a lack of imagination. We cannot fail to notice that the ordinary heterosexual seems very often to be a prisoner of this "vulgar love" denounced by the participants in the *Symposium*, who themselves do not hesitate to dismiss as uninteresting the bestial coupling that is only good for assuring the necessary and uninteresting mission of the perpetuation of the species.

Let us say, then, that we could not dismiss perverts from the field of love without getting off the track. In large part it is they who have sustained its discourse the best. Everyone is more or less conscious of, and easily lets himself be fascinated by, the relationship between the pervert and erotic love. But if someone normal eagerly looks to the pervert for lessons, he is not inclined for as much to take him as a model, and he rejects, often with intolerance, the practice of perversion. This characterizes the ambiguity of our position, which accommodates itself in order to gather a discourse while at the same time it denounces a practice.

Doubtless it would be possible to justify such a position by saying that knowing how to speak of love does not mean that one knows how to love. This would be to avoid the difficulty and, in any case, not to take account of the problem that a perverse patient poses for an analyst when he speaks of the love he bears for his partner. If such "material," when it is given to us, is not readily interpretable, we are no less constrained to have an opinion on this tie, which is often very lasting and which the patient will talk about

throughout his analysis. Perhaps in such cases we should denounce the inadequacy of the notion of love, saying that this term is only employed by gross analogy, and speak rather of "passionate bond," which evokes more the absoluteness of psychosis than the diverse attachments of love. I will not, however, raise the question of passion envisaged as an entity distinct from love. Not that this question is not pertinent, but introducing a distinct category could only obscure one of the points that I want to talk about today and that I have just indicated. What the pervert talks about and pretends to talk about is surely a *discourse on love* and on nothing else, whether he is writing a literary work or doing a psychoanalysis.

To be more precise, and to interpret at the same time the aim of his discourse, let us then say that when a pervert talks of his love, we cannot be satisfied in thinking that he is giving a simple description of the passionate state that he experiences. If he speaks of love, what he says about it must be situated in relation to what he can know about people's willingness to forgive amorous states and to justify all of the abuses of these states in the name of a cult of Eros. It is certain that this is not proper to the pervert and that any analysand who invokes love is going to obscure the issue. We know well that at such a moment a fault is being hidden from us; but in the case of the pervert we must mention a note of challenge that seems to provoke us to tell him that if he wants to be cured, he must triumph over his love as well as over his perversion—his homosexuality, for example. More than of passion I will speak of "alleged love" to designate the sentiment that the pervert uses when he comes to us. To justify his perverse practice, he invokes a feeling about which we would be tempted to say that it constitutes one of the most solid criteria for a harmonious affective development, according to either the most currently admitted prejudices or to a psychoanalytic theory that is obliged to speak of investments, of object relations, but has certainly not said its last word about the role played here by the presence or the absence of the real penis. We can thus introduce a question: in alleging love, is not the pervert the one who first captures us in our own trap, using it for his own purposes and thus assuring the inanity of our eventual interventions? The love we often talk about is one of the central elements of the challenge that he throws at us. We now see the limits of his position, for when the pervert maintains it in the name of values that we are supposed to respect, he is revealing the importance of his reference to a universal discourse.

Rather than denounce this challenge, we speak of alleged love to designate the feeling through which certain subjects succeed in misapprehending themselves completely in their perversion. These subjects pretend to do nothing other than submit to the perverse practices of their partners, and this because of something that they call duty, pity or, more often, "love." Such a feeling is supposed to justify all weaknesses and all liberality. Thus we should not, even while invoking the pretext of love, spare ourselves from questioning the role of the wife of the fetishist, of the husband of the kleptomaniac or

nymphomaniac, and even of the older woman who takes some very pretty pederasts under her wing. It is too easy to discard this difficulty by referring to signs of morbid complacency in one who submits to the other's perversion because of love. We would say, on the contrary, that the fetishist's partner is even more in question than the fetishist, for it is clear that the relationship between the fetishist and his fetish is sustained only when this fetish has the power to fascinate the other. This is one of the most important elements of the perverse structure, and since it is through the pervert that we understand the role of the other in this structure, we will return to him.

Thus love may be invoked by one of the partners to justify his perversion as being compatible with the most respected values. It can also permit the partner to live his perversion without thinking himself a pervert. The alleged love constitutes the ambiguous link, the common theme in which the two partners find each other. The ambiguity of this link is such that it would seem to merit very little interest; the link would be very close to a simple misunderstanding if its persistence through time, its resistance to mishaps, were not there to show once again that a good misunderstanding has all the chances of lasting for a long time—and not only in analysis! Now this remark—and even this comparison with analysis—permits us to indicate that this pretended linking through love functions like a contract in the sense that a contract united Sacher Masoch and his partners (a very precise contract, resembling a notarized document, defining the authorized limits of abuse) and also in the sense in which a contract linked Gide to his wife, who was condemned by the artifice of a ridiculous marriage to be a witness and accomplice to practices that she could only suffer and condemn. Here there is no need to recall the innumerable facts that are easily recognized as related to these examples.

The eventual breaking of such contracts has a completely different sense and a wholly different bearing from that of the failure of love between normal or neurotic subjects. The fact that these contracts are secret, that their terms and their practice are only known to those involved, does not in the least signify that the third party is absent. On the contrary: it is this absence of the third party, his being left out, that constitutes the *major element* of this strange contract. This third party, who is necessarily present to sign, or better, to countersign, the authenticity of a normal love relation, must here be excluded, or to be more precise, he is present but only insofar as he is blind or an accomplice or impotent. For this reason the eventual breaking of a perverse relationship is very different from the breaking of a love relationship. In the normal relationship one speaks of suffering, the infidelity of the partner, and the waste of time; the third party has no other role than to register the failure. But for the pervert, to the extent that only the "secret" kept from the third party constitutes the foundation of the contract, it will not be the infidelity, the suffering, the indifference of one of the partners, or the waste of time that will lead to the breakup. It will be the failure to keep the secret,

the telling of a third party, and the ensuing *scandal* that will bring about the breakup. Thus the perverse couple will support without difficulty any suffering, meanness, or infidelity. It is sufficient that the secret be preserved. But on the contrary, we see the couple torn apart when one or the other makes a public allusion to their practices; for example, a professor or a priest will be sincerely revolted if his protégé reveals the acts to which he (the protégé) lends himself. Finally, the third party himself will be scandalized by such revelations: thus Krafft-Ebing was revolted that the wife of Sacher Masoch revealed to him the secret contract. In any revelation of an intimate secret, it is difficult not to have scorn for the one who gives it away. We cannot overestimate the importance of such a secret contract, without which we could not begin to understand how the most extreme perverse practices can be perpetuated for such a long time, leaving the occasional spectator fascinated and finally an accomplice because he cannot give away the secret.

Perverse bonding, passion, alleged love, secret contract—these notions permit us, then, to approach the solder joining the two partners in this couple. It is necessary to note a point that is currently observed but is dissimulated by the fact that perversion lends itself particularly well to the role reversals that characterize other couples. We remark that homosexuality unites the same with the same, that the homosexual relation can be triangulated indifferently with a third party who is of the one or the other sex, that sadism can turn into masochism, exhibitionism into voyeurism, and so forth. This is certain. But a possible role reversal does not signify a symmetry. We should note how different each partner in a perverse couple is, precisely in the most lasting couples. The couple's *disparity* is always remarkable. And I cannot fail to recall here that Lacan in his seminar on "subjective disparity" referred continually to the homosexual couples of the *Symposium*.

Thus we find the athlete linked with a puny little kid, the refined intellectual with the hillbilly, the massive woman with an angel of femininity, the immoral alcoholic with a saint, the vicious dirty old man with the prepubescent adolescent, the sociably respectable person with the hobo. We would not finish if we tried to enumerate the infinite variety of strange couples who seem to defy the third party who observes or would observe them, so much are the disproportion and ridiculousness shocking. Yet the meaning of such unions goes well beyond this exhibitionism, scandalous for the bourgeoisie. The alibi of love will not prevent us from seeing an essential characteristic of the perverse structure in these dissymmetries. Only the most radical ambiguity permits the pervert to pursue a tightrope act, we can only guess how close he may be to a bad fall.

Such disparities do not allow themselves to be reduced to the waverings of our categories. The masochist would not be so interested in seeing his torturer in action if this latter did not incarnate some model of force or virility. And even the characters of the divine Marquis [de Sade] are not interested in Theresa because she is a masochist. For Theresa is first "Justine," which is to

say "the misfortunes of virtue." What would she be, this designated victim, if she did not incarnate a value, one of those values that the entire century venerated? It is through her, through this victim, that the perverse act finds not only its sense but also its place in a contemporary discourse—this in the same sense in which we said above that love, more than being an alibi, is a *moral reference*.

The recent trial of a couple of sadistic Scottish murderers awakened the fantasies of a number of our perverts in analysis. Their commentaries are precious, even though they chose very diverse facts to focus on. They all told us that the erotic excitation that comes from the contemplation of the other's suffering sustains itself in only one certitude: that the *other is innocent*. Also, even more important to the sadist than the victim's cries of suffering are his protestations of innocence and his pleading for mercy. All the stories of Sade insist on facts of this order, and we can only underline their importance. The pervert is not indifferent to his choice of partner.

Of importance about the other are his activity, his commitments, the insignia that he bears, the virtues that he possesses. The crossing of two paths, let us say, of two ways that are profoundly different, the fascination in an uncommon encounter where the aim of the one is in no way similar to that of the other, the misunderstanding, the *quid pro quo* that is inseparable from the act itself—this the pervert seems not only to submit to but to *seek*. Perverse eroticism is most certain to be sustained if one of the partners defends himself in the name of certain values and thus precipitates himself even more quickly into the other's game, first as a participant, then as an accomplice. Not only the eroticism, which is to say the desire, but also the anxiety; each of the partners takes care to misapprehend the field of the other's desire sufficiently for the erotic game to be played in an affected ignorance of the partner's aim. This makes the emerging anxiety and *jouissance* closer to the everyday outcome of an unknown desire.

We thus recognize one of the singularities of the perverse couple in this deliberate misapprehension of the other's aim. It will suffice for the functioning of the couple if one partner knows definitely which signifiers imprison the other; it will suffice for him to know what the other cannot extricate himself from, for then he will use this knowledge to make the other attain the summits of anxiety and *jouissance*. With these givens there are enough elements to activate the delicate and fascinating mechanism that makes the two partners into consenting playthings, impotent to be anything other than consenting. *Jouissance* will come especially from everything's unfolding according to the law of an implacable mechanism to which the disparity of the partners is reduced. This permits us to understand why it is not only possible but rather indispensable for the other to conserve his autonomy, his role of unknown. Perverse partners do not fail to flatter themselves for being, years later, as attentive toward each other as if they had just met for the first time. We must also note that they take the necessary steps to renew this illusion

every day. And as proof of the love that they bear each other, they give the respect that they have for the intimacy, the secret, and the liberty of the other. The transfixed observer will never fail to be astonished in remarking how perverses reconcile their extreme delicateness with the total disrespect for the other that their practice implies.

Such are the clinical facts that need to be pointed out before we go any further with the question of the "perverse couple." Obviously it is out of the question to pretend to make a complete study of this topic, as much because of the extreme diversity of the facts we should have to consider as because of the complexity of their interpretation. The only goal of my remarks is to attract attention to a certain number of particularities that, without neglecting the privileged importance that should be given to the *fact* of the perverse act, will permit us to discern a certain style, a certain mode of relationship with the other, that overflows the traditional and relatively narrow frame of perversion. To tell the truth, it is through the relation with the other, or thanks to the lever it gives us, that we may attempt to discern in the perverse structure the elements that will permit us to move away from that which in practice always remains marked with the seal of contingency. Perverse practice, the perverse act, in soldering the elements of the couple and in constituting the major element of their contract, is always something that appears to be a "find," in the sense in which one would say "a clever find or a poetic find." If the gestures of the perverse ceremony are so clearly dependent on cultural background, even on fashion, the actors are no less conscious of their participation in a kind of "black mass," which doubtless could not have its value if it were not also a mass but whose wit is contained especially in the fact that the challenge it brings has no name and no face except for the few initiates who have been able to find the place and the mode of its ceremony. Thus the perverse ceremonial is always profoundly marked with this seal of secrecy, of a secret whose fragility (we will come back to this point) is the illusory guarantee in this ceremony that the "unknown" is to be found.

Since we are proposing to go beyond the clinical facts into the psychoanalytic interpretation of the perverse couple and the perverse structure, we cannot avoid referring to the question of disavowal, exactly as Freud discusses it in his article on fetishism. I do not have to recall the questions raised about this matter, notably those that led Freud to utilize notions such as "splitting of the ego" and "coexistence of contradictory beliefs," notions that are finally obscure but whose sense appears clearer, thanks to the elaboration given them in Lacanian theory through the notions of "subjective splitting" and of noncoincidence between "knowledge" and "truth" . . .

What I want to talk about today, the emphasis that I want to give, does not concern the *object* of the young boy's discovery, that being the absence of the penis in the mother, but rather the child's *subjective* position. If it is true that the discovery of this absence of the penis in the mother counters the presence

of a penis in the child, and if it is true that such a discovery brings with it the theme of castration in showing that what *is* can also *not be*, we must also recall that Freud always designated the true knot of the castration complex as the acquiring of *knowledge* about this absence. And he has said that this acquisition is made at the cost of great internal struggles. Then, aside from the threat (of being castrated) that this discovery brings virtually (it is possible to be dispossessed of it), there is something else that bears on the discovery, which concerns knowledge itself. And this is that knowledge can be deceiving. The child discovers that his previous subjective position has been based on an erroneous knowledge (all beings—including his mother—have a penis). To be more precise, the child must recognize at this moment that he had been living in a universe of certainties where there was no place for the problematic nature of the existence of the penis. Thus, beyond his discovery, the child has to learn that he must leave a place for a “not-knowing” whose importance is primary, however, since it touches the field of his libidinal investments.

Now the question can also be posed in other terms (at the moment of the discovery?). Is the child spectator or voyeur? explorer or jouisseur? This question recurs constantly in any consideration of perversion, and the exhibitionist asks the same question about anyone who sees him exhibit himself. This questioning concerns a *look* (here, the Other's look). We can pose the question in the most precise way, “precise” as regards psychoanalytic theory, in the very terms Freud used in his article “Drives and Their Vicissitudes,” where he speaks to us of the separation that we should make between the external, exogenous excitations, which one can be rid of through an appropriate act, and the endogenous drives. It is worthwhile to modify this distinction, since the drive, or better, the drive circuit, necessarily includes its object, which is generally on the outside. We will interpret the discovery made by the young boy differently if we consider either that it is in some way accidental, something given by the external world, from a “reality,” as we say, that imposes itself on the child despite himself, or that this reality is discovered by the child because he was moved by a desire to see, by a scopophilic drive. Evidently our interpretation of this moment of discovery is suspended according to what we will say of this drive. This recalls the fact that we cannot have a correct psychoanalytic concept of reality without referring to the reality of drives, which is to say, finally, to the libidinal economy which is dependent on the pleasure principle.

Freud does not really take a position on the question of the drive in his article on fetishism. We can even say that in isolating the moment of the discovery, Freud's text lets it be understood that the discovery is in some sense accidental. But no text of Freud really states that the libidinal development is perverted because the child was taken unawares by a traumatizing discovery. Freud's interpreters have never moved in this direction, and in any case, we do not see where such an explication could lead us. It appears

impossible to understand the event if not as a function of a scopophilic drive that was inciting the young boy at this moment.

In isolating this moment of discovery—we can consider it to be mythic—Freud separates a “before” from an “after.” And if it is vain to decide arbitrarily whether the child wanted to see and to know or whether he only interpreted the discovery retrospectively as the endpoint of such a desire to see, it is important to note this other fact whose bearing I indicated above: the child must also discover that he was ignorant of the reality of sexual difference. What we learn here concerns the fragility of a subjective position: it is a question not merely of having to accept a singular but contingent anatomical fact but also of having to integrate the other fact, that only the *lack* can be the *cause* of desire. It is precisely on this point that the pervert brings his disavowal to bear: it is not the *lack* that causes desire, but a *presence* (the fetish).

The discovery of the difference between the sexes is for the young boy the occasion for a reinterpretation of the cause of desire, and it is this reinterpretation that the pervert misses. We must add that this reinterpretation has a retroactive effect: how could the child have made his discovery, by what scopophilic drive could he have been moved, if a *lack of knowledge* had not provoked him? Thus the discovery of the absence of the penis will normally lead the child to recognize not only this lack as the cause of his sexual desire, but also his *lack of knowledge* as the cause of the scopophilic drive that led him to the discovery. Thus the desire to see and to know is not structurally different from sexual desire.

The pervert’s disavowal bears first on the lack of a penis as cause of desire and then on the lack of knowledge as cause of the scopophilic drive. Here we find the incidence of the retroactive interpretation that follows the discovery of the absence of the penis in the mother: the child has to discover that concerning *the object of his love, his mother*, he ignored an essential aspect that concerns him as a sexed being, as a desiring being. Better yet, the child must still learn that as concerns the object of his desire, his mother, someone else—*sharing the same desire*—knew more than he did, knew what he had ignored of his own desire. The father’s role, the role of his priority or his anteriority in knowledge, gives the sense of the avowal, as indicated after the report of Rosolato: this is the avowal of the priority of the father (the avowal that someone knew his [the son’s] desire at a time when he [the son] himself did not). It is here, around this knowledge of sex and desire, that the subject discovers his place in the signifying chain, the place where he finds himself marked by a desire to which the Other, the Father, has the key. At the same time the child has his place identified for him, and since he is alienated from his desire, its object is unconscious.

On what does the pervert’s *disavowal* bear? In terms of the relation to *knowledge*, it signifies that the child did not recognize himself as the one who did not know and who *wanted to know*. In terms of the relation to the father,

it signifies that the child does not submit himself to the sovereignty that is his father's by virtue of his preceding the child in knowing. This leads the pervert to place himself in the position of never again being deprived with regard to knowledge, and most particularly knowledge concerning love and eroticism. Here we find one of the themes that I evoked at the beginning of this report, concerning the pervert's wager, where it is easy for us to recognize the challenge that he presents to our position with respect to the "supposed subject of knowing," to use Lacan's term. The pervert's knowledge is equally a knowledge that refuses to recognize its insertion in a "not-knowing" that precedes it: it is a knowledge that is given as the truth, it is the "gnosis" to which Rosolato has attracted our attention. Finally, this knowledge is rigid and implacable; it cannot be revised in the face of facts that belie it. This knowledge about eroticism feels assured of obtaining the other's *jouissance* under any circumstances.

I will not return to these facts, which are not essential for pursuing my argument. I will ask only one essential question: what is the quality of a knowledge that does not leave any place for the field of illusion? We know that this field of illusion is necessary to the constitution of the symbolic order in which Lacan has designated the object *a* as the first term of the only algebra where the subject can be recognized. It is there that the subject discovers the only subjective position in which he can get his bearings and identify himself, that of the desiring subject. Where is this object *a* to be found, which in revealing itself to be deceptive, evanescent, illusory, and substitutive confirms the subject as a being of desire? We know that that child looks for the *object* in his mother. The lack he encounters there cannot lead him to anything but this desire evoked by the lack, which makes plain the fact that this object is missing at the same time that its value for access to truth becomes apparent. The object of desire will forever remain marked by this sign of the illusory, and thus when we speak of love in the normal subject and in the neurotic, we never fail to remark that the love relation is founded on a first experience of illusion, which is to say that any chosen object will always be a substitute. Only through an investment will a chosen object occupy the place left by the lack, a place that draws its signifying function for desire only by having been left empty, by being seen as illusory.

We see that theory of the disavowal does not permit us to consider the pervert as choosing, as investing, a privileged object whose function would be to occupy this eminent and fragile place whose contour is given by the object *a*. If the pervert in his disavowal maintains that he has discovered nothing concerning sexuality and his mother, this contention signifies above all else that there is for him no difference between a before and an after, that there was no illusion or disillusion. Nothing permits him to think that he loved what he did not know, that he could have wanted to know what he loved, which is to say, that he could have wanted to know and to lose in the same movement what was most dear to him.

The danger that the pervert is always bordering on—I must repeat it here—is psychosis, and we see then that it is on the level of the absence of the subjective root of the “not knowing,” of the desire to know, that the difficulty emerges, since then an absolute knowledge, outside of time, outside of the dimension of the illusion, may come to prevail. But such a knowledge would be psychotic, and the pervert does not let it take root. The specificity of his own position and its originality lies in his success in parrying this danger by reconstituting the field of illusion elsewhere. This elsewhere is the fetish. It is also the masquerades that perverts are so fond of, the travesties, the transvestitisms that are so close to psychosis. Finally, these are the games, the arts in which one is supposed to create an illusion and, if I dare say so, to fetishize it. The pervert seeks not only to create this field of illusion but also to limit its range so that it does not attain to the function that it acquires in the normal subject, that of being the means of access to the Truth that the Other necessarily discovers on his path. This fetishization is marked by the fact that the activity, the knowledge, and the interests of the pervert must above all be *rigorously of no use*, to lead nowhere. Anything validated by the pervert is marked with the seal of uselessness.

The decision to establish a field of illusion is obviously not sufficient for its emergence. The illusion, in such a scheme of things, must be self-sustaining, and this does not happen without difficulty. In confronting this difficulty the pervert demonstrates his own genius. The necessity that constrains him to move into the useless obliges him to glow with a particularly lively light in the eyes of those who observe him and who are supposed to be dazzled by him. There is another difficulty that we must now consider again. We return to the interpretation of the scene where the young child discovers the absence of the penis in his mother, since we must elucidate the very important question that P. Aulagnier has rightly posed: *with what eye does the mother see her child, who looks at her?* It is here that we find the question, left to the side for a moment, of the scopophilic drive, of the look. Can the mother believe that her child is looking at her innocently? . . . We can continue with another remark, bearing on the mother's look. Each one of us has often learned, from the confidences of our patients, with what evident complicity mothers are attentive to the effect produced on their children by these discrete exhibitions.

But here there is no response, there is only a question. The look and the eye retain their mystery. And it is thus that for the pervert the eye will have a problematic place that neurotic and normal subjects reserve for the phallus and the loved object. This eye, which did not consent to recognize itself as deceived or tricked, discovers itself and lets itself be discovered as deceiving. Is the eye there to see, to look, to jouir, or better yet, to seduce? It is always there that the pervert will have to employ his charms [spells]. From the side of this “seeing” that proposes itself as true, he will have to reconstitute the illusory.

Coming back to our argument more directly, we ask ourselves what becomes of the Other in this affair, of the Other as partner in the perverse game. It is clear that insofar as he brings a look, the Other will be the partner and above all the accomplice of the perverse act. We touch here on the distinction between a perverse practice, in which the Other's look is indispensable because it is necessary to the complicity without which the field of illusion would not exist, and a perverse fantasy, which accommodates itself very well to the absence of the Other's look and asks one to be satisfied in the solitude of the masturbatory act. If the perverse act is distinguished without equivocation from the enacted fantasy, it is at the place where the Other's look is inscribed that we discern a frontier. This look, whose complicity is necessary for the pervert, denounces both the normal and the neurotic subject.

We understand thus the importance that the mother's look may have. Assuredly she is the young pervert's spectator at the decisive historical moment of the discovery. It is thus that this look participates in the creation of the field of the illusion. But it will be necessary in what follows that this look continue to let itself be seduced by the charm of the fetishes, by the child's gifts. You will easily recall these mothers, fascinated by the talents of their boys, who let them settle into a homosexuality in which the mothers play the role of accomplice. These mothers pretend not to see the direction taken by their sons' sexuality and remain in a curious position where they can guess everything, without really knowing, in a reverse reproduction of the scene Freud talks of. We know that if the mother fails to play such a role, the pervert will not fail to find some other, somewhat elderly lady who will offer him the same complicity and sustenance. How many women love the company of these men who are so gracious toward femininity without making the women sense that as men they possess a penis, which the women are deprived of! Here the complicity is patent and is designated for what it is, the refusal of a desiring look, the refusal to enact a disparity that would be rooted in an anatomical reality.

But if the mother's look has such an importance for the pervert, it is because this look is equally the one that knows how to see something other than the illusion that her son proposes, and it is also because it is the one that refers to the father (who is thus not entirely lost), the one through which a relationship to the law is found, the one that it is interesting to seduce because it is sufficiently moored to a family and social foundation for the challenge of detaching it or perverting it to retain its value. This challenge also determines the interest that the pervert always has for people well placed in the social order, for the people who sustain social order, which is manifested, for example, in the project about which homosexuals speak so willingly among themselves as a joke: to succeed in seducing . . . the policeman or the priest.

Without going to such extremes, let us rather say that most important for the pervert is the fact that the Other be sufficiently engaged, inscribed in the

social structure, notably as someone respectable, for each new experience to have the sense of a debauchery where the Other is extracted from his system in acceding to a jouissance that the pervert has mastered. There is always, in any perverse act, an aspect related to rape, in the sense that the Other must find himself drawn into the experience despite himself and that this experience must be a falsification of his social position.

To avoid confusion we must specify here that the desubjectification whose essential role we have signaled in perverse practice signifies not the absence of subjectivity, the anonymity of a partner who would be indifferently replaceable by an other, but rather a loss or abandonment of subjectivity. This implies that it existed at the beginning and had only to be erased; subjectivity must constitute the canvas on which the pervert's mastery of the fetish will have to affirm itself, be it with a whip or with an erotic technique.

We must add that it is of little import, finally, whether the pervert's partner is or is not an important person whose dignity, purity, and power are debauched. If it can happen that a respectable person lets himself be drawn into perverse practices, it may also be that the perverse partner plays at being a respectable person. The essential point in the illusion is to maintain enough verisimilitude to cause anguish and enough of a lack of verisimilitude and of fantasy for all this to be interpreted at the desired moment as a simple play at which it is not possible to take offense without appearing ridiculous.

We see that the perverse couple will be led to reestablish the place where the Law is represented. And if the presence of the Law is necessary to assure the quality of the challenge, we must also remark that even here this step has the function of restoring an illusion that, in the problematic proper to disavowal, has been eliminated to prevent the deceptive character of the mother's desire from appearing. This desire lays a foundation because it is deceptive.

This tightrope act that the pervert must maintain does not continue without difficulty and may even lead him to the analyst's office. What does he come to do there, and what couple does he count on forming with the analyst? I attempted in 1964 to give a first answer to this question, and at that time I placed emphasis on the fact that the transference is falsified and eluded by the pervert because his demand cannot be superimposed on that of the neurotic: it is not a demand to know, a demand for a knowledge that can cure and to which the neurotic aspires. I think that it is useless to return to this point after what we have just said, that it is impossible for the pervert to take the position of the one "who does not know" before a "supposed subject of knowing," a position of "avowal" [*aveu*], where one can recognize oneself as the "solicitor" [*avoué*] of the one who knows something about the object of one's own desire that one cannot know oneself.

If this position, which is the foundation of the transference, is in default, what can our role be? What is the pervert asking for when he asks for an

analysis? The analyst's role can best be approached through an example that was brought to me as a fragment of an observation and presents the advantage of having close affinities with theory.

It concerns a young man with homosexual and fetishistic practices. This young man also has a particular liking for striptease. Now, after such a spectacle, but never after the other practices, he has the unbearably intense feeling that a look has been fixed on him and that he is being followed or trailed. The painful impression persists and only disappears when he goes to confession. This curious phenomenon continues until the day when a priest is disturbed by the role he is being made to play.

It is not necessary to underline the interest that the story of this look can have for us. This look weighs on the pervert as soon as he puts himself in the position of the voyeur. We see how anxiety is evoked by this look, and the subject may at any instant become prey to a delusion of surveillance or to some other psychotic process. It is striking to find vividly presented here a devolution of the priest's function of granting absolution. It makes little difference who is giving the benediction, as long as it is given in the same way, with the soutane in play. This action makes the priest the accomplice of the act that is being erased. Through a ritual gesture surely denuded of sense for the penitent, there is the assurance that someone who has an affirmative relationship with the Law looked at his voyeurism with a blind look because he was secretly fascinated and thus an accomplice.

Merchant of illusions—here is the role to which they confine me, this priest said with a melancholy tone, but happily he was sufficiently reserved to see that there was no urgency and doubtless some danger in denouncing the role that he had been asked to play.

Merchant of illusions, or better, charlatan [*marchand d'orviétan*], a patient said of me, finding this nice word "quack medicine" [*orviétan*] as a substitute for our more modern "placebo." But she told me this (experienced analysand that she was), only because she knew me to be a bad merchant, not generous enough. Being able to recognize her true demand constituted progress, nonetheless, for this masochist who, after having failed to get herself strangled on several occasions, was preyed upon by oneiric anxieties in which a hallucination with the theme of persecution appeared. The view of herself as the buyer of quack medicine [*acheteuse d'orviétan*], was new to this alcoholic, and yet she could have known that she sought some quack medicine [*orviétan*] in alcohol. I could have been maladroit, and I might have been offended by what she was saying, had I seen there an expression of lassitude concerning the length of her analysis. She did not hesitate to explain to me that this quack medicine [*orviétan*] brought all kinds of goods [*ors*], but also slowworms [*orvets*], and that this had been going on for some time now [*de tout le vieil or*]. In short, this word brought with it a mine of signifiers that was, without doubt, of primary importance for this woman, who made the art of writing a privileged activity and excelled in it.

I am not the first analyst to observe that the demand for analysis from a pervert is particularly strange and ambiguous. Its challenge cannot be avoided. The courteous appearances that pervers affect generally do not deceive for very long. The analyst questions himself about the nature of a challenge borne in this way. Does the pervert seek from us protection against eventual medicolegal troubles, thus reducing us to the role of accomplice or protector? Or does he seek to prove his good will in the eyes of a third party? Does he come into analysis to seek scabrous images that will aid him in ameliorating his perverse practices? Or better yet, does he want to get rid of some minor problem while remaining firmly decided to modify nothing of the essential?

All the questions that one may ask oneself, that one *does* ask before or at the beginning of the analysis of a pervert, constitute the principal reason for the extreme reserve with which we greet such a patient. This explains—without justifying it—the preliminary precautions that are often taken, for example, a close questioning of the sincerity of a homosexual's desire to be cured, as though we wanted to verify that the analysis is based on a "firm purpose." Or we may place the rule of abstinence in the forefront. Sometimes this may represent the technical alibi behind which the refusal to analyze is hidden, but it can also be a way of misapprehending the patient's perversion by focusing the relationship between analyst and analysand on a particular element (acting) and thus pushing the relationship toward a sadomasochistic mode.

In fact, whether it is a question of the technical rules of analysis or of any other consideration, one can only ask whether the analyst does not respond to the challenge posed by the pervert in taking refuge in such familiar terrain as alliance with the sane part of the ego, refusal of acting out, and so forth. Such actions finish by "moralizing" the analysis, in the sense in which it is always possible to say that within the correct psychoanalytic norms matters should present themselves in such and such a way, well codified.

Doubtless we are provoked by this questioning of the ethics of psychoanalysis or by this questioning of the analyst's desire, which is the same thing. Who will sustain the desire to be cured when it can easily become identified here with a suppression of perverse practices? Or else, if we agree—at least tacitly—to attach only a secondary importance to the symptoms and to make the analysis an end in itself, what demand on the part of the analysand will come to sustain the undertaking? We understand the impasse that we would confront if we tried to reduce the analytic act to purely gratuitous research that proposes no preliminary goal. Such an undertaking would be tacitly accepted by the pervert without difficulty. *It would reduce the analyst to the role of pure voyeur.*

It appears that the analyst finds himself reduced to a position that is either moralizing or perverse, capable of passing from the one to the other very easily. This is not surprising when we know the structural analogies between

the two positions. We understand that analysts often refuse to take on this impossible role, since it touches them at a point where the questioning of their practice and theory is impossible to elude. To tell the truth, we expect no less from the pervert. He aims at precisely the place that constitutes our Law and is sustained by our desire. Here we find, in the context of the practice of the psychoanalytic cure and of the couple analyst-analysand, exactly the same question that we posed concerning love and the perverse couple. Are we going to say that the pervert is incapable of love and of life in a couple? and that he is even incapable of the transference and the analytic relation? Why not? But we should expect that the challenge will be picked up: we will see perverts rejected from the psychoanalytic paradise, but they will be those (if this has not already happened) whose discourse on love, transference, law, and desire most people listen to. We note in passing that the pervert shows his true adroitness when he is sustaining a discourse that does not appear to be his own but is argued in response to a challenge declaring that only the demonstration of a virtuosity without object is important.

Reduced to the role of pure spectator, of pure auditor of a pervert whose discourse has no other end than to affirm the total gratuitousness of its content, the analyst—no matter what he says about the fact that the aim to be pursued should properly come from the analysand—finds himself reduced to impotence. Whether he is called upon to witness the delusional phantasmagoria of an orgy or to try to make sense of a tortuous narrative in which the patient leads him on between clarifying metaphors and deceiving images, between honest avowals and the corrupting exhibitions, the analyst finds himself trapped in his own discipline. The pervert will thus have succeeded in creating a situation with a tacit contract founded on the impotence of the analyst and the sterility of the analysand's discourse. To escape from this trap, we must remark first that it could not have been set except by our own hands, that the challenge can only exist to the extent that we feel ourselves challenged.

Another approach is possible if we begin by observing that the illusion we are asked to accept and to share it not entirely unknown to us and that its place is not negligible in our theory. This permits us to be neither fascinated nor ignorant in relation to the quack medicine, which we can finally accept for its exchange value as the medium in a relationship where the merchant and the buyer find themselves in a disparity without which there would not be a subjective position. After all, why would we not haggle over the price of this quack medicine? We analysts are particularly well placed to know the price. We know that if our function is to make a hidden truth emerge, this truth will not appear definitively until it has been revealed as elusive, until it has shed all the masks of false imitations, mirages, or illusions.

The analytic relation is thus dependent on the analyst's ability to sustain the discourse of a patient for whom the field of illusion remains the privileged register, where the perverse structure permits him to glow in such a way

that the person who listens to him feels himself always more or less threatened. And in fact it is there that the analyst's knowledge is definitively put to the test. The challenge that the pervert throws at him, this challenge from which he tries too hard to preserve himself—the analyst only feels it as such to the extent that he *in his relationship with his knowledge* feels himself threatened by the ambiguity of the perverse position. We can see this threat emerging in relation to the place that we must accord to this disavowal [*Verleugnung*], which we are always tempted to misread as the denegation [*Verneinung*] or the rejection [*Verwerfung*]. In either case we end by denying the particularity of the perverse structure. The term “disavowal” that we use to designate the position of the pervert faced with the discovery of the absence of his mother's penis cannot take on its veritable sense unless we give it a place among the other markings of the perverse structure. Behind the question of the real presence of the penis, we find another concerning the significance of a discovery that introduces the place of a phallus whose existence is only specified as not being lacking. Beyond the problem of reality is the definitive issue of the Other who guarantees it. As such, the Other is disavowed, and the entire analytic relation finds itself transformed from the beginning, when the pervert refuses to the analyst this place in which the neurotic would see the “supposed subject of knowing.” The analyst is defied to the extent that he wants to find refuge in this place, and this defiance can be interpreted as a refusal to be treated like a neurotic, which thus signifies the pervert's attempt [in the analysis] to stage the fundamental elements of his structure.

I will close by leaving suspended the question of the perverse couple, first, to create a place for discussion, but also because it does not appear to be possible to do much more here than to disengage ourselves from the more or less implicit and vague notion according to which the pervert seeks with his partner a complementarity in which his predilections can be satisfied. Often clinically inexact, this “complementarity” is in any case insufficient to account for the complexity of the relationship. For whatever the form taken by the couple's relationship (and the forms are many and varied), the decisive influence on the solidarity of such a couple will be the presence of an eye susceptible of judging the perverse game—this eye, impotent accomplice, whose blindness must be renewed day after day, even if this entails making it a partner, occasionally or permanently. The true partner of the pervert will always be this eye, which because it lets itself be seduced and fascinated, proves at every moment the existence of the register of the illusion, even if it could not have had for the pervert the historical function of founding the accession to an object relation that it does for the neurotic or normal subject.

In sustaining such a wager, in spying on the place where he will succeed in imposing himself on the Other's look, the pervert displays his expertise. His abilities are astonishing without being convincing. But we cannot ignore them, and perhaps the current interest in the perversions derives precisely

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from the fact that his challenge questions us on the most delicate and uncertain point of analytic theory. For that reason this report will leave many questions barely opened, even though they are essential because they touch us at the quick. They do not touch us in the same way as the love and hate that the neurotic uses to catch and to imprison us. At this point we are most profoundly bound to a theory that, like all knowledge, has its blind spots and is silent about the essential; here the lack of knowledge finds itself filled, not by a delusional discourse, but by the dazzling know-how of the pervert.

EXTRACTS FROM *PSYCHOANALYZING*

On the order of the unconscious and the practice of the letter

Serge Leclaire

Source: Serge Leclaire, *Psychoanalyzing. on the order of the unconscious and the practice of the letter*. Stanford: Stanford University Press (1998), Ch. 5: pp. 70–87; Ch. 7: pp. 110–127.

The dream with the unicorn

Psychoanalysis, therefore, proves to be a practice of the letter. To illustrate this fact, I would like to relate here a fragment of the analysis of Philippe, a patient in his thirties, which I have already had occasion to report elsewhere.¹ The study of a dream, that “royal road to the unconscious,” will take us by the shortest route into the heart of this story. Here is how Philippe relates the “dream with the unicorn”:

The deserted square of a small town, it is odd. I am looking for something. There appears, in bare feet, Liliane whom I don’t know and she says to me: “It’s been a long time since I saw sand as fine as this.” We are in a forest and the trees seem to be strangely colored, in bright primary hues. I think that there are many animals in this forest and, as I am getting ready to say this, a unicorn crosses our path; all three of us walk toward a clearing that we glimpse below us.

Concerning the principal part of its manifest content, the dream takes up an event from the preceding day: Philippe had taken a walk with his niece Anne in a forest where they had played at stalking game and had noticed, near a stream, deer tracks (or as hunters say in French, “pieds” [feet]). As for the pretext of the dream, Philippe tells us it was thirst, which all the same woke him up soon after this dream.² In this regard, he adds that his dinner

the evening before had consisted of Baltic herring, of which he is particularly fond.

The unicorn dream, as we shall see, accomplishes the desire to drink, and it is the underlying thirst that we will have to investigate in all its implications. Upon first analysis, the dream leads to three childhood memories that are going to make up the several scene changes on the stage where the play of Philippe's thirst will be acted out.

The deserted square on which the dream opens, like a still-empty stage, leads us directly to the heart of the play. The oddness has to do with the feeling that a monument or a fountain is missing from the center of the square. Having been thus evoked, they then emerge from memory, brought together in a monument—the unicorn fountain.³ This fountain, which has a statue of a unicorn at its summit, is in reality found in the square of a small provincial town where Philippe spent his vacations between the ages of three and five. But it is not just the remarkable figuration of the imaginary animal that is evoked by the square. It also calls up the memory of a familiar gesture, that of joining one's hands along their interior edges so as to form a bowl and then trying to drink from this makeshift cup the water gushing from the fountain. It is a variant of this gesture that we are going to encounter again in the second memory.

It is still vacation time, probably the summer of his fifth year, during a walk in a mountain forest. The fragment of the dream: "It's been a long time since I saw . . ." leads to this second scene. The phrase is literally repeated in a remark made during the walk the day before with Anne: it's been a long time, said Philippe, since he saw heather so thick and brightly colored, perhaps since he was five years old during a summer in Switzerland. This is the same blaze of color found elsewhere in the text of the dream, transposed onto the trunks of the trees. But the event from the walk that marked him was the attempt to imitate one of his older friends who was able to produce the sound of a siren by blowing through the opening formed between the adjoined thumbs of his two cupped palms.

We find another call, more distinctly articulated, in the third memory, which is staged on an Atlantic beach. We are led there by the "fine sand" that complements the day's residue in the dream: "It's been a long time since I saw. . . ." Philippe probably stayed here at the beginning of the same vacation that would lead him eventually to the town with the unicorn (the summer of his third year). One finds here the principal identity of the unknown person in the dream, Liliane. If one breaks the name down and eliminates Anne, who is already identified, there appears Lili, a very close relation by both blood and marriage, who was with him on that beach. The memory chosen to mark this stay is Lili's teasing: because Philippe, during a very hot July, never stopped saying in every situation and in a grave and insistent manner "I'm thirsty," Lili wound up asking him every time she saw him, "So, Philippe, I'm thirsty?" This affectionate kidding became in subsequent years

a complicitous greeting, almost a sign of recognition, a formula pronounced with the same grave and falsely desperate tone that expresses above all the expectation of a guaranteed satisfaction: "Philippe, I'm thirsty."

"Upon complete analysis, every dream reveals itself to be the fulfillment of a wish": this is how Freud condenses in one sentence the essence of his discovery concerning the interpretation of dreams. But what is a wish (*Wunsch*) in the Freudian sense, and what is meant by its fulfillment (*Erfüllung*)? We should not consider that such questions have been resolved simply because these terms have become so banal nowadays. Although we are still far from a complete analysis of the unicorn dream, we can already say upon initial approach, which is more intuitive than analytic, that the dream represents Philippe's thirst. We can even go along with Freud and suggest that it accomplishes it, that is, fulfills in its way the wish to drink, to the extent at least that it defers the moment of waking and drinking. One should point out in passing here that, of course, the thirst in question, as well as the wish to drink that precipitates the dream, cannot in any way be reduced to the circumstance that provokes it, which is a contingent thirst, a need to drink following the meal of herring.

Once evoked, the central function of thirst, far from closing down the interpretation, is presented as an open term, as if this thirst avidly demanded that one listen to the literality or the reality of its interrogative appeal. One may then wonder how the appeal "I'm thirsty" is in return settled upon Lili's interpellation and why this wish to drink is placed under the sign of the unicorn.

As one does in the course of an analysis, we will let the memories, images, and words form a chain so as to attempt to follow, in the strict order of its detours, the path that leads to the unconscious.

It did not take Philippe long to say that he did not like the beach, but he said this with such vehemence that it was easy to guess there was some important theme nearby. Indeed, when he calls up that summer by the Atlantic, memories emerge as clearly and vividly as if they were still current, memories that are literally sensitive: the contact of the hot sand over the whole surface of the body, of fresh, wet sand when one played at burying oneself in it, and also of burning sand against the soles of the feet, which is a pleasurable irritation that doubles the biting sensation of the inhospitable metal covering an overheated balcony under the noonday sun. For Philippe, the idea of a beach still calls up the phobia of sand getting into everything—hair, teeth, ears—and to lounge on a beach, for him, means to expose oneself to the annoyance of not being able to get rid of the sand. Days later, he contends, whatever one does, one still finds some sneaky grain of sand that has escaped from the most careful ablutions in fresh water, a grain that all by itself, crunching in silence, grows next to the skin. Thus, there came to the fore one of Philippe's minor symptoms, a real little phobia regarding badly pleated clothes, the stray crumb in bed sheets, hair that gets into the collar after a haircut, a pebble in the shoe. One sees how, with the evocation of the

beach, there arises an overly sensitive little nothing, a grain of the unconscious brushing the surface of the skin and putting the nerves on edge, which can on certain occasions drive Philippe to the edge of the most intense irritation, or even to the borders of anxiety.

Another theme in the dream, the foot (Liliane's bare feet), finds on this beach the chosen ground of its traces: tracks (again, "pieds" [feet], in French hunting vocabulary) of the deer seen the day before the dream, which converge on a place for drinking, the stream at the bottom of the valley; marks of bodies on the sand of the beach where the weather is thirsty; and footprints that get filled in on the shifting shore, lose their outline in the very fine sand, and evaporate from the boardwalk where damp feet have walked. The trace that effaces itself, to be sure, but also the trace that remains: thus, on the outskirts of the town with the unicorn, pressed into the rock, two hoofprints of the horse belonging to a legendary prince who, with a desperate jump into a ravine, eluded his pursuers. Philippe loves his feet, thinks them not at all silly, and takes pleasure in their play. There was a time in his childhood when by often walking barefoot he endeavored to develop the epidermis of the soles of his feet, which he dreamed of making as hard as horn so as to be able to walk without injury on the roughest ground, to run on the beach without fear of hidden pitfalls. And no doubt he succeeded in part if one can believe the story of an exploit in which he sees himself under the admiring eyes of his friends rushing down barefoot over the fallen rocks of a glacial hillside. He fulfilled there in a partial fashion the clearly obsessional phantasm of keeping his body protected beneath the covering of an invulnerable hide.

We thus come once again upon that other major term of the dream, the horn decorating the forehead of the fabled animal. The unicorn's meaning as a phallic representation constitutes the common theme of legendary stories: an emblem of fidelity, the unicorn obviously cannot be procured without difficulty, and it is said that he who wants to get hold of one must leave a young virgin as an offering in a lonely forest, since the unicorn after having placed its horn on her lap falls asleep right away. To be sure, no unicorn really exists, anymore than does the horn of a unicorn: its place is taken by the tooth of a narwhal, a superb spur of twisted ivory, which draws its beneficent power precisely from the real-nothing it represents.⁴

On his forehead, in the place corresponding to the horn's implantation, Philippe bears a scar, the trace that remains from a childhood fight or a fall from a tricycle, an indelible mark, like the mark of ritual circumcision on his sex. The trace on the sand, which is a mark of the body, can now be seen on the skin, a mark on the body, a scar into which the phallic emblem and the trait consecrating it send down their roots in a dream.

Concerning scars, we must here relate another scene that Philippe dreamed not long after the encounter with the unicorn and that seems to take up again the theme of hidden pitfalls in the sand of the beach.

Someone (a boy about twelve years old, it seems) has just slid with one leg into a hole. He is lying on his side and cries very loud as if he were seriously hurt. People (myself included) run to see where the wound is; but there is nothing to see, neither on his knee nor his leg; all one can find, on his foot on the side of his heel, is a visible scratch in the form of a thin red crescent but it is not bleeding. It seems he hurt himself on some object hidden in the hole: thinking it may be a rusty nail, people look for it but find a billhook [*serpe*].

One sees that in this dream the scar (a wound barely open or already closed) has gone from the forehead to the heel, thereby reversing the movement of the horn. One certainly need not be a psychoanalyst to hear in this narration the most direct allusion to the theme of castration. One can likewise guess that the figured agent of the wound, the *serpe*, veils only through the alteration of one letter the identity of the desired castrator, the psychoanalyst, whom the dreamer names or addresses by his first name. One may thus say, with a summary and allusive formula, that the desire motivating the dream is for castration, on the condition that we make clear the psychoanalytic sense of this term.⁵

But let us pause for a moment with Philippe and consider what a scar is: on the skin, a mark, a slight depression, white or pigmented, more or less without sensation, points to what was a scratch, a cut, or even a wound whose two gaping lips had to be dressed, sometimes even sutured; the trace of a violence done to the body, a durable inscription of a painful, sometimes catastrophic irruption. If the horn is a representation, as we said, of a real-nothing, the scar has the privilege of being, on the contrary, the inscription on the body of the interval of a cut, the mark of a gap that could be felt.

Now, Philippe, for whom the integrity of his body is of essential importance, considers a scar above all to be a filling in, a repair, a suture. For this reason, it is indissolubly linked to his mother's passion to protect, close, fulfill, or gratify. The scar, but as well the whole surface of the body, is a reminder for him of the attentive care of which he was the object on the part of a mother impatient to satisfy her passion at the level of bodily needs. Philippe was washed, fed, warmed, cared for in accordance with the excessiveness of the maternal phantasms. And we know what this kind of maternal love hides and manifests by way of unconscious and well-meant destructive tendencies: no cry that is not smothered, so as not to have to listen to it; an overabundance of food, as if he were nothing but a voracious appetite; no thirst that is not immediately drowned. That is why Philippe, filled to the point of bursting, continued to be thirsty!

We would be mistaken, however, if we went along with Philippe when he claims, and tries to make us believe, that he has only cause for complaint in this excess of maternal kindness. One may guess that he was profoundly marked, in a way that is more ineffaceable than any other, by the passionate

embrace of this smothering tenderness. Philippe was most certainly his mother's favorite, preferred over his brother, but also no doubt over his father, and on the always veiled horizon of his story one discovers that precocious sexual satisfaction in which Freud recognizes the experience leading to the obsessive's fate.⁶ To be chosen, pampered, and (sexually) gratified by his mother is (as we have already seen for the Wolf Man) a blessing and an exile from which it is very difficult to return. Thus, the scar, for Philippe, is above all this mark of the favorite and this closure of the paradisaical limbo to which are relegated those who are outside of life, not yet born to desire or already dead, like so many shades of an Oedipus, seduced too early and gratified by their mothers.

With this evocation of the phantasms and desires of his mother, with this position of the favorite, we accede to one of the major themes of Philippe's analysis.

One may at this point better understand the desire that this dream "à la serpe" fulfills. It accomplishes in its own way the wish, which is moreover ambiguous, to see the mark of maternal closure reopened so that finally the pain of exile may be lifted. This is indeed the first idea that occurs to Philippe regarding the strangeness of the cry in the dream: "[the boy] cries very loud"; it is an odd yell, both a cry of terror and an irresistible appeal, which reminds him of the cry, the "kiai," of the Zen tradition, supposedly capable of resuscitating the dead. Moreover, this cry refers back to a memory not yet mentioned even though it was called up very soon after the relation of the dream: Philippe is eight or nine years old, traveling with his parents and brother. At the end of one leg of the journey, they put up in a fine hotel, and, alone, he explores the grounds around the hotel that seem to extend very far. Then some noisy, excited boys arrive who are older than him (this detail shows up in the dream: "about twelve years old") and who are probably playing cowboys and Indians or cops and robbers. They pretend to attack him; Philippe, panic stricken in the face of this horde, runs away yelling . . . but not just anything: he cries very loud as in the dream, calling for help from Guy, Nicolas, and Gilles, so as to throw off his attackers and make them believe that he too is part of a large gang. But in spite of his fear he is careful not to yell out the most common names—Pierre, Paul, or Jacques—for his cries must seem to be quite specific. He remembers precisely having invoked the name "Serge" (at the time, it would have been Stavisky or Lifar).⁷ This memory makes clear the sense of the appeal in the dream and, as I have intimated, confirms the identity of the castrator (or liberator) who is invoked. It also brings us back to those less clearly articulated appeals called up through the memories revived by the dream with the unicorn.

Philippe, captive of his mother's phantasms, is walking by the sea, saying to himself "I'm thirsty." One can imagine the ambiguity of this declaration inasmuch as it seems, on the one hand, to call once again for the mother's gratifying presence and, on the other, to contest at the same time, in its very

repetition, the possibility of quenching his thirst by taking it literally. Here the image of Lili is essential; she is set apart from a group of several other women friends, gathered on this beach, exposing their finally unveiled bodies. Lili is small, her form is filled out, and her breasts are large. It is as if Philippe were moved by her, sensing that she will be better able than another to hear his call. He guesses, with as much certainty as confusion, that Lili is more open than the other women who usually surround him, that she is less captive than his mother to archaic phantasms, and that for her a man, even her husband, is a possible lover. It is as if Philippe were meeting a woman for the first time. This "first time" recalls a process of fixation, and one can find in this occurrence what will later constitute for our patient the inclinations, difficulties, and impasses of his choice. Lili, as a woman, shows herself to be a good listener to the seductive "I'm thirsty." Her address in return, "Philippe, I'm thirsty" seems to seal the success of this seduction and to confirm that the complaint or the thirst is finally heard as a call to desire, if not already as desire for Lili. With the warranty it has of being proffered by the mouth of another, the formula "Philippe, I'm thirsty" fixes in place and summarizes a first kind of compromise of Philippe's desire, in that time of hope or moment of opening that was the summer of his third year. "Philippe, I'm thirsty" combines in a few words the following three propositions at least, along with their respective reservations: (1) I am my mother's favorite, loved by her, but as such I am exiled to an imaginary and nostalgic paradise; (2) my call has been heard, but I have found a passive accomplice rather than someone to help me out of it; (3) I can love another woman (or be loved by her), but she is also prohibited. Indeed, one ought to add here that Lili, a close relation of his mother, was married to Jacques, a first cousin of his father, and we will have occasion to return to the role played by this first name in Philippe's history. Let us merely note for the moment that Lili, who was his relative twice over through blood and marriage, on the one hand wards off and represents and on the other hand doubles the dimension of incest that unfolds here anew for Philippe.

Hence, the meaning of this desire to drink begins to be specified: thirst, contrary to what one might think, represents more an appeal to opening than an expectation of some filling (gratification). It lets one see the primordial capture by the mother, Philippe's nostalgia, and his revolt. But one must also say that this first stage of the analytic work has far from exhausted the resources of the dream material. It is also far from having engaged the forces of the libidinal economy whose mechanisms must be unleashed by a deepened analysis. Nothing would be easier than to stop here and perform an interpretive reconstruction based on a few privileged elements. The temptation to understand is strong, especially when the analysis highlights themes that fit rather conveniently into the frame of our knowledge. But if we give in to that temptation, sooner or later comes the realization that, out of haste, we have done nothing more than substitute one construction for another

without bringing about any real modifications. By suspending the analysis of the dream, after having exposed its maternal hue, we would have succeeded at best in repainting with the aid of the palette of psychoanalysis the closure that Philippe complains of. There would be many ways to use this palette if one were not under the strict obligation as a psychoanalyst, first, to hear the sensitive points or the strong points in what the patient is saying; second, to respect these points; and finally, to avoid, as it is most appropriate to say in this case, any closed explanation.

We may recall here the manner in which Freud, in his analysis of the Wolf Man's nightmare, sums up his investigation after a first stage of the analysis. He enumerates the sensitive elements in such a way that, were this a strictly graphic representation, they would be set apart with bold-faced letters (the sequence is, moreover, italicized in the text): "*A real occurrence—dating from a very early period—looking—immobility—sexual problems—castration—his father—something terrible*" (SE17: 34; GW12: 60).

The work of analysis consists essentially in identifying or extricating in this way a series of terms whose more or less obvious insistence, which is always perceptible to an attentive ear, reveals that they are from the unconscious. Such work also requires that one maintain a faithful as well as an open ear, the precise recording and the always-renewable bare surface of a complete welcome. On the basis of our analysis of the dream, we can develop a series of terms that are repeated and underscored in the unfolding of the discourse of "free association." In a still more stripped-down manner than Freud's in the given example, we can enumerate here, without adding any phony links, a few key or crossroad words of Philippe's act of saying:

"Lili—soif—plage—trace—peau—pied—corne" [Lili—thirst—beach—trace—skin—foot—horn]. This is how, upon analysis, the unconscious presents itself: a series of terms, which exhibited together create, for whoever has not entered into the detours of analytic discourse, the heteroclit impression of some bric-a-brac devoid of any order. Faced with such a series of heterogeneous elements, the most natural response, from which no one is immune, is to order the set within the frame of a construction whose type varies according to individual taste and ranges from the biological to the symbolic. Experience most often proves, and one cannot insist too much on this point, that by responding without discrimination to the demand to construct (or reconstruct), one loses, as Freud pointed out,⁸ the heart of what the patient's discourse is tending to say: there is thus no other way to listen at first than literally. If we therefore consider the utterance of this unconscious chain in its literality, we notice that when its two ends are brought together, the word *licorne* [unicorn] appears.

A monument of Philippe's phantasm and a metonymy of his desire, the *licorne*—through the displacements it figures, through the intervals it assembles and maintains, through its legend, and through the statue that decorates the fountain—says better than any proof the insistence of

Philippe's thirst. It marks at the same time a place at which the desire to drink was asserted. At this point in the analysis, where the effigy breaks down into a play of letters, *licorne* indicates clearly the path leading to the true dimension of the unconscious. And yet, if we are not careful, it can also be the ultimate trap along this path. For one may be tempted, as a last resort, to seize upon the pretty composition of the monument and make it perform the filling-in function of any other construction whatsoever. The *licorne*, as mythical object, is particularly well suited for this use. One need only let its elements become arrested in an image. This, however, would go directly counter to the movement of analysis, in which what is important, on the contrary, is to let the intensity of the meaningful echo spread out and exhaust itself in the unfolding of its reverberation, up to the point at which the literal trait can be heard in all its hardness. One must let it resonate like the call of the siren that Philippe endeavored to produce by blowing into the hollow of his joined hands. In its concise trait, *licorne* marks the gesture of drinking and the movement of the two hands pressed together to form a cup, the concave counterpart to the convexity of the breast, a mimed reproduction of a symbol in its original sense: a gesture of offering or supplication, but above all a gesture of mastery through which Philippe fulfills something of his desire.

With the evocation of this gesture, we step truly into the private domain where singularity reigns in its most secret difference. This movement of the hands, however banal it may be when one describes it formally, is thought of by Philippe as irreducibly his own, on the same level as the scar that marks him on his forehead. And here we touch on the limit of the secret, which one inevitably crosses over when relating an analysis, thereby producing a faithful image of the transgression that is psychoanalysis itself. For the description of these singularities outlines something like the proper essence of each individual in his or her most intimate self.

The ideal aim of a psychoanalysis would be to bring out these irreducible traits, the elementary terms where all echoes fall silent. But it is very rare that one even approaches such a draining away of the mirages of meaning through the stripped-down formality of a literal network. With the *licorne*, however, we seem to get quite close to this knot of Philippe's analysis, not so much, as we have just seen, because of the possible meaning of the *licorne* (even though one cannot exclude it) as because of its formal composition.⁹

The next step of the analysis, which must be understood literally in the sense of a movement, allows us to pass irreversibly into that matrix zone of psychic life where meaning is reabsorbed for an instant into a literal formula, the secret replica of the proper name, cipher of the unconscious. A jaculation, here transcribed with the minimum of travesty, seems to have been the secret name of Philippe: "Pôor(d)j'e—li."

It is very rare that one manages in psychoanalysis to receive the confession of these secret formulas, for they are always jealously guarded. Philippe got

around to being able to say this name via a path that deserves to be described in detail. It was, then, a question of gestures, like that of putting one's hand together to drink or to whistle, and, through association, of muscular control, as illustrated by two memories. In the one, he sees himself falling backward from a balcony without a ledge and landing on his feet three meters below, after having executed a dangerous back flip, almost as naturally as a practiced diver might have done. In the other, he sees himself likewise falling, but this time from a farmer's wagon in which he was sitting. By means of a similar natural and rapid movement, forward this time in a kind of head-over-heels, he escapes as before, without the least harm, from the threat of the large wooden wheel. "A misstep, a pirouette, and there you are" could be the formula that sums up this sequence of banal clumsiness, followed by an exceptional deftness, and that ends up in the satisfaction of our little guy, intact and standing on his own two feet. We could translate and interpret the formula as "Fortunately I regained control of my fall into the world." In fact—and this is how we got there—the secret formula prefigured, accompanied, or recalled from most distant memory a jubilant movement that consisted in rolling himself into a ball and then unrolling, finding the result pleasing and then starting over. More simply put, it was a kind of somersault or pirouette that like a magic trick could give rise in an instant of pleasure to something new, but also illusory. *Poord' jeli*, in the very scansion of its secret utterance, somersaulting around the central *d'j* and falling back on the jubilation of the *li*, seems to be as much the model as the reproduction of the tumbling movement.

It is interesting to compare Philippe's self-given secret name, "Poordjeli," with the one given to him by his parents: Philippe Georges Elhyani (also transcribed with a minimum of necessary distortion so as to keep secret the patient's real identity but also to preserve all the possibilities of transgression in analysis). One may find in the latter name, although in a more developed form, a rhythm analogous to the scansion of the formula. But whereas the *j(e)* of the jaculation is in the median position, in the name it pivots around the central *or* of *Georges*. It is possible to identify in this formula the constitutive elements of what may also be called a fundamental "Poordjeli" phantasm: *or* and *je* in *Georges*, as we have just pointed out; *li* in both the first and last names; and finally *p(e)* as the syncope that results when *Philippe* and *Georges* are strung together—which is accentuated at the beginning of the formula,—while a *d(e)*, a dental stop (which cannot be elucidated in our transposition) reproduces at the center of *Poordjeli* the syncope of *Philipp(e)' Georges*.¹⁰ One thus finds in Philippe's analysis, as is often the case, this resemblance between a patient's fundamental phantasm and his name.

With the evocation of this secret name, it seems we have reached an end point beyond which we cannot go: as an irreducible model, deprived of meaning, it truly seems to be one of those knots that constitute the unconscious in its singularity.

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Nonetheless, the work of the analysis is not at all complete. When it happens that one succeeds in identifying one of these knots as clearly as in this case, another movement of elucidation can take off from there, a kind of analysis in reverse, which shows how meanings come to be formed in the singularity of the unconscious model and how multiple meanings arise out of these literal matrices. Let us spell out once again the terms of the formula "Poord-jeli" while enumerating this time, in this analysis in reverse, some of the meaningful forms that branch out from these elements. Thus, on the basis of the formula's initial *po*, one may bring out meanings such as its homonym *peau* [skin], hide, epidermis, envelope, the importance of which we saw in Philippe's libidinal life. One could likewise follow paths opening onto the particularities of this story, through a word such as *pot*, also a homonym, as in *pot à boire* [drinking mug] or *pot de chambre* [chamber pot], or yet again through the affectionate and gently complaining exclamation of "pauvre" [poor] Philippe, in which the mark of the second *or* already appears, veiled in *ovre* by the light caress of a *v*. Moreover, this median *or* is insistent in several major words of Philippe's singular vocabulary: words such as *fort* [big, strong], *mort* [dead, the dead man], and *port* [port] (or *porc* [pig]) have such a common use that one cannot convey how their originality for our patient stands out from everyday banality, how these words cling to his body.¹¹ In *corne* and *licorne* this originality appears more clearly, as it also does in a variant of the mother's loving nickname, *pauvre trésor* [poor treasure], although with this common exclamation our attempt at imitation can succeed only feebly in rendering the insistence of this *or* in Philippe's discourse. More singular, however, is the movement of reversal, as scanned by the formula, of *cor* into *roc*, *des or* into *roses*. Thus one finds curiously enough another privileged place of his childhood, the "rose garden," which is located in the same city on the other side of the road not far from the fountain with the unicorn. And Philippe talks endlessly about roses,¹² from their smell to the War of the Roses, a mythical place, a mystical theme, the heart between two breasts at the bottom of a gorge.¹³

No less than the *or*, around which it is doubled in *Georges*, the *ge* brought forward again by this *gorge* is a pretext for some spade-work along the singular paths of Philippe's unconscious desire. Thus, we recall the *moi-je* [I-me] nickname that was very early pinned on him so as to stigmatize his overly manifest "egotism." This nickname, which is the pejorative counterpart of "Philippe, I'm thirsty," constitutes here a priceless indication, as does the series of words ending in the same syllable: *plage*, *rage*, *sage*. But we will emphasize instead the path that is opened by the *j(e)* in the direction of the series of *Jacques*. Jacques is above all the father's older brother, who died before the birth of his namesake, Philippe's older brother. It is also, as we have already mentioned, Lili's husband. But the *je* is especially emphasized in the *je* of Jérémie,¹⁴ the paternal grandfather, who died very prematurely and whose monogrammed initials, "J.E.," on books and suitcases remain the

sign of origin or the maker's mark—the figure of the dead father that cannot be erased by the face of the replacement grandfather.

We will not linger any longer in the paths presented by *li* on which the scansion of the secret name finally lands or its repetition in the first and last name, up to the very significant and explicit *lit* [bed] of Lili.

This manner of analysis, which takes off from a literal formula, may seem surprising or part of some gratuitous game if one forgets that it does no more than bring out in reality, and without the least interpretation, the most sensitive terms in the patient's act of speaking. One could even call them "sensitive" in the physical sense of the term.

That one must not settle for the indefinite games of meaning can be best illustrated if we examine the difficulty of a discourse that takes shape in meaning, a difficulty encountered by the analyst at every moment. Thus, when Philippe relates his memories of the beach and the novelty of his gaze on the feminine body, it is the most natural thing in the world to underscore in passing the privileged representation of the "corps de Lili" [Lili's body] in the bright sunshine. Right away, this representation makes sense, and the body, which is other and the other's, imposes itself, leading to the incestuous desire for the mother and to the fantasy of a fullblown fulfillment. The sense of a certain precocious mastery gets added to this, as power of seduction combined with the impotence of a too tender age. But what probably happens when one interprets the representation in this way—along with the well-known order given to the unfolding avenues of meaning—is that once again the major path, the one that would lead to the unconscious phantasm in its non-sense, in other words "Poordjeli," gets closed down for a time.

The question may be posed here concerning the relations maintained between the representation in language "corps de Lili" and the unconscious jaculation "Poordjeli." Going against common sense, I will insist on the fact that *the literal formula gives the representation its singular value* as much as, if not more, the representation "corps de Lili" invests the secret jaculation after the fact by giving it a meaning. As proof, one may go to the linguistic variants that, for Philippe, make sense, from *corps joli* [pretty body] to *trésor chéri* [cherished treasure], passing through *lit de roses* [bed of roses], which contrast in their meaningful multiplicity with the unsurpassable immutability of the literal model "Poordjeli."

There remains to be considered, finally, the manifestly solipsistic character of the secret jaculation. In the movement of jubilation that it connotes, the formula contains an obvious autoerotic dimension and a narcissistic affirmation, which the evocation of the *moi-je* also renders, but more feebly. The articulation of the formula accompanies, evokes, or translates—better yet, it mimes in its utterance—the movement of the somersault that causes to appear, or that leaves as remainder, something more: mere lure of production, a derisive creation, but at the same time a self-affirmation, "well

landed" as a result of the operation. In this autoerotic game, the sequence fulfills a narcissistic phantasm of auto-engendering: on the one hand, Philippe, as an expressive mime, plays out this affirmed apparition of himself at the stopping point of the pirouette. On the other hand, through the repetition of the literal articulation, he seems to reach bliss [*jouir*] in the effect of production or engendering that is correlative to the stringing together of the literal terms, as if the articulation of this secret name caused him each time to be born (or reborn) from his own head, on his own initiative, into the world of language and into his own subjectivity. In a word, we could say that Philippe, through the use of the secret formula, attempts each time to annex for himself the scene of his own conception and that he thus rediscovers his primal scene as often as he impugns it.

What Philippe is trying fundamentally to impugn so as to feign mastering it is, in fact, the very dimension of the other's desire, inasmuch as he was no doubt prematurely its object, beneficiary, victim, and remainder. A castoff of paternal desire who finds his only landmark in the maker's mark of the name of the too-soon-departed Jérémie,¹⁵ an object abandoned to the mother's devouring desire, Philippe, as designated in his derisive formula, will from now on have no other concern than to defend against the other's desire, to contest the other as desiring, which is to say to take the other for dead or nonexistent. For he thinks he knows by experience that if he lets himself recognize the other it would mean falling once again (and perhaps this time without any recourse) into the gulf of lack that makes of him someone who desires, where he would be once again toppled, devoured, suffocatingly fulfilled.

This is the impasse of Philippe's desire, which the complete analysis of the dream with the unicorn reveals in its phantasmic ordering.

Repression and fixation, or the articulation of *jouissance* and the letter

Freud always held that the unconscious was a primary system rather than a secondary process like the conscious and preconscious systems. It is doubtless not essentially in a genetic sense that one is meant to understand this distinction between primary and secondary. The designated primariness of unconscious processes must above all be thought of as an assertion of their primacy in the logical order. The care we have taken to establish a minimal model of the unconscious structure reflects what we believe to be the Freudian sense of the primary term.

Turning again to our three- (or four-)termed structural model, we will now bring out its precarious nature, which must be added here to the aspect of its primariness. Practically, one has in fact to recognize that the system seems always threatened by a sort of reabsorption into the very annulment whose permanent transgression it performs. This is no doubt the fundamental

tendency of the primary system toward its own annulment that Freud identified as the "death drive" and that he maintained in the face of a unanimous chorus of dissent. In a more detailed fashion, one may indeed remark that, in our minimal formalization, the set of reciprocal relations we described tends to maintain around the radical zero a play that produces the zero through the object, represents it with the letter, and conceals it in the alternation of the subject. With the articulation of the letter in speech, the horizon of *jouissance* in annulment is, like blessedness in the word of God, constantly promised and withheld, to be granted only after death. Thus, the letter, the thetic function of an oscillating pulsation, is constantly pulled toward a signifying reduction whereby it is made to represent the object. Likewise, the subjective function of oscillating pulsation is constantly pulled toward the reduction into a stable function, whereby it is given a color for the circumstance that complements the one with which the object is being painted at the moment.

After this reminder of the instability of the oscillating system of the unconscious, which is apparently threatened at every moment with reabsorption, we can now better understand why it tends to call up the parallel organization of a system that is its antinomy and that can supply it in some sense with a less precarious organization. This is what we will call the "consciousness effect." This imagistic formula, however, should not lead one to suppose we have a finalistic aim here. In other, more measured terms, let us say that it is in the very order of the unconscious to induce, as we have just shown, the slippage of the letter toward the sign that is indicative of an object and to engender, out of the subject's function of alternating commutation, a unifying and stable agency that will be called the ego. It is, finally, also in the very nature of the unconscious order to maintain the stable function of the object by letting one "forget," so to speak, that the object derives this stability only from the absoluteness of the zero it masks. From these three derived elements, which are *the sign*, *the ego*, and *the objective "term"* (as opposed to the "stable function"), a parallel or derived system is organized. This is the secondary system of the conscious-preconscious in Freudian terminology, whose laws are obviously antinomic with those of the primary or original system. We will not say any more about the laws regulating the conscious system for they are all too familiar to everyone, and not just to psychologists. To assert that they are antinomic to the laws of the unconscious will suffice for our purposes here.

If we now continue to situate in this cursory way the psychic organization as a whole, conscious-preconscious on one side and unconscious on the other, we see right away that repression, the barrier or "cornerstone" on which rests the whole edifice of psychoanalysis (and the whole theory of the psychic apparatus),¹⁶ has for its primary function to assure a degree of purity to the unconscious order. Oddly enough, with the term *purity*, we encounter the moralistic language commonly used with regard to repression, insofar as it is generally conceived, in a first approximation, as a process meant to purge

the conscious system of some unconscious and libidinal reality and to do so in the name of a moralizing norm for which that reality is unacceptable. In simpler terms, which are opposed to a normalizing (or moralizing) conception, repression appears as the operation that maintains the clear-cut separation between the primary order and the alterations that give rise to the secondary order, at the same time that it assures the articulation of the two systems.

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So as to describe more precisely the crucial fact of repression, let us look once again at Philippe's analysis. Having been arrested by the enigmatic effigy produced in a dream of the fabulous unicorn animal and having developed the literal links condensed in the word *Licorne*, the psychoanalytic work brought out the profound unconscious coherence of the formula "Poord'jeli." At what point, one may ask, did the analytic work really lift the barrier of repression and open some access to the unconscious order? It was, in fact, at the point at which attention was drawn to the literal structure of the representation of the "Li-corne." At that moment, the path was opened to the elaborated series that followed: Lili—thirst—beach—trace—skin—foot—horn [Lili—soif—plage—trace—peau—pied—corne]. But if we are more precise about situating this lifting of repression, then we must say that it is at the moment already indicated, in which one manages to set aside the highly significant value of a linguistic representation, such as "joli corps de Lili [Lili's pretty body]," so as to make its literal structure appear. At that moment is produced, in the case of this analysis, what can correctly be called the lifting of repression. This step, in effect, gives access to the unconscious order as such, in a literal formula, "Poordjeli," which is deprived of any meaning but which, in its permanence, is loaded with libidinal imperatives.

As regards the nature of that which actually falls under the rule of repression, there are doubtless two competing conceptions.

On one side, there are solid reasons to think that it is the representation "Lili's pretty body" that bears the brunt of repression. As maternal substitute, Lili constitutes an incestuous, and therefore prohibited, object that the conscious organization must repress into the hidden reaches of the unconscious. In this conception, we clearly see the moralism we evoked a moment ago. It tends to impute to some conscious norm the unacceptability of the incestuous representation, which is condemned finally as bad, immoral, or dangerous. Above all, however, as one can see, such a conception simply takes as given or acquired by use the fact of the prohibition, without really questioning it.

From another side, if one remains as close as possible to the text of the analysis, one can say that what falls under the rule of repression is actually the unconscious jaculation "Poordjeli." At first approach, the reasoning here is less apparent. From the conscious point of view, the formula seems quite "innocent." Why, then, this repression? We will answer that question in a

rather abrupt and direct manner: *the formula is repressed because it is unconscious*. Let us explain. The unconscious as such cannot, by definition, have a place in any order other than its own: *the more structurally unconscious an element is*, in the sense in which we have defined it, *the less access can it have to an order in which nothing can receive it*, unless it in turn alters itself. Practically, one must say that this alteration consists most often in a slippage of the literal function toward a signifying value: thus, the letter *li*, by its sole thetic function or representation of the alternating commutation of the subject—through which it remains linked, as a letter, to any other trait that performs the same function—takes on signifying value in the conscious order by representing the object *lit* [bed] and, why not, “le lit de Lili [Lili’s bed].” One thus sees that repression, when more rigorously conceived, is nothing other than the limit that separates and articulates the primary order of the unconscious and the secondary system of conscious-preconscious. From a static perspective, it can be compared to a barrier, just as from a dynamic point of view it can be represented as a force of repression or, on the contrary, of defense. In this dynamic sense, one must also then specify whether one is speaking from the point of view of the primary or secondary system, thereby determining whether one makes of it a force that repels—or provokes—the conscious system out of the unconscious order or, on the contrary, a protective agency (in the conscious sense) that represses any element heterogeneous to the derivation belonging to its system.

Here we must make a digression on the nature of the prohibition or interdiction. We raised this question in relation to the first conception of repression but left it unresolved. To be sure, the question seems exemplary of the moral implication attached to the nature of repression. We are going to see, however, why the interdiction is not the consequence of some moral position but is, in its nature, that which grounds the very possibility of a moral dimension. Above all, the nature of the interdiction poses a problem of great importance for a science like psychoanalysis, in which practice as well as theory are centered around the knot of the Oedipus complex, hence of the major interdiction of incest, and . . . its transgression.

Strictly speaking, *the interdiction appears as the barrier of a diction*, that is, as the fact of a literal articulation, written or spoken. But there are still two levels offered to interpretation of this definition of the interdiction. The first and most common level takes the diction or the saying to be a signifying maxim, whose injunction is imperative in the mode of the commandments: thou shalt not kill. This level of interpretation of the nature of the saying as interdiction implies that there is posed simultaneously a whole parade of reasons, either divine or natural, that serve to ground the absolute of the interdiction: thou shalt not kill, because God said so, because you must respect life, because you don’t want to be killed in turn by another, because the human species would be threatened with extinction . . . and so on. It is

sufficiently apparent that the question, in its grounding, cannot be resolved, only indefinitely displaced by this level of interpretation.

The other level of interpretation holds that the diction or saying itself is a barrier, a limit. The interdiction, then, is the literal articulation in its formality, whether graphic or vocal, because, as we have already indicated following Lacan, it excludes *jouissance*. The one who says interdicts *jouissance* for himself with his saying, or, correlatively, the one who takes pleasure [*jouit*] causes every letter—and every possible saying—to vanish into the absolute of the annulment he celebrates. *The interdiction is the literal articulation considered in its function as limit on jouissance*. But just as one ought not, at this level of the analysis, confuse the letter with the sign, likewise one must recall the distinction between *jouissance* and pleasure. The *jouissance* in question here is the immediacy of access to the “pure difference” that the erotic seeks at the extremity of its border with death, and even sometimes in the annulment of this border. Pleasure is the representation of this access, *jouissance* tempered by the assurance of reversibility within the oscillating and cyclical economy of desire properly speaking.

We have already considered this moment of annulment called *jouissance*, first, when it was a question of describing the fact of pleasure and the interval of the erotogenic zone and, second, in the description of the unconscious structure. In this latter regard, the moment appeared both as the “positive” pole of the object’s stable function and as one of the faces of the subject’s function of alternating commutation. The never-ending difficulty in evoking this zero function is analogous to the difficulty one may encounter in trying to conceptualize the nonconcept of (pure) difference, the difference that is nevertheless constitutive of any possible conceptuality. What has to be grasped here is that, in the unconscious structure, *this moment of annulment or jouissance presents itself as irreducible reality in the opening out of its nothing*. Or, yet again, it presents itself as *absolute cause* of any possible function, whether stable, alternating, or thetic, in the same sense that in a biological order no life other than mortal life is conceivable. We emphasize in passing that *jouissance* cannot, all the same, be purely and simply confused with death, unless one wants to confuse the unconscious order with the biological one. What we are putting forward here may be summed up in these terms: *jouissance is the cause of the unconscious order*.

One thus sees, however, that although it is correct to assert that saying or diction, as literal articulation, interdicts *jouissance*, one must at the same time consider that *jouissance*, as annulment, erases the saying and installs the transgression by means of which a new saying (or the repetition of the same) will be imperatively called up so that *jouissance* remains possible. One may consider this reciprocal relation of *jouissance* and the letter to be an essential cycle.

The fact of transgression appears here as fundamentally correlative of the dimension of the interdiction. In other terms, *jouissance* and the letter can be thought of as engendering each other reciprocally. The interval, “pure

difference," or the annulment, in which we identified the *jouissance* of the body, engender the letter as mark of the erotogenic zone—as we have shown at some length.¹⁷ Correlatively, *jouissance* can be found again only in a movement of transgression of the barrier of literal articulation, the barrier that it has nonetheless engendered. For anyone who wonders about a possible psychoanalytic practice, it is essential to consider this movement of transgression, which finds here its structural definition.

After this long digression on interdiction and transgression, let us return to the crucial fact of repression, which in its primary meaning is the cornerstone of the unconscious order, and in its secondary meaning marks the separation of the unconscious from the conscious-preconscious system.

To lift repression, which is the simplest way to summarize the process of the psychoanalytic act, should therefore strictly speaking be understood as the result of two operations that are more or less distinct in practice.

The first consists in lifting the curtain of the secondary conscious-preconscious order, of letting go, so to speak, one's fascination with a signifying network so as to uncover the literal elements that subtend it and constitute the unconscious structure proper. Thus, in the example of the botanical monograph dream, this first operation consists in raising the term *botanical* over and above the signifying themes of justification and professional rivalry. Through a series of articulations that are both formal and significant, this term will lead to the truth of unconscious desire: *pflücken*, *entreissen*, to pluck, to tear away. Moreover, one can recognize in this first operation the role played by the empirical procedure of free association, which, through the implicit solicitation of a verbal linking detached from its expressive or signifying necessity, favors the raising of the curtain of secondary repression that tends to separate the conscious-preconscious order from the unconscious order. In fact, the greater part of the practice of analysis unfolds at this level, and there is good reason to say, as Freud did, that the level of secondary repression constitutes repression proper.

The other level of repression, primal or original repression, is truly constitutive of the unconscious order, at the same time that it grounds the possibility of repression proper or secondary repression. In the example of the analysis of Philippe, one may recognize the effect of this originary repression, on the one hand, in the fact that the repetitive jaculation "Poordjeli" evokes a clearly identifiable pleasure and, on the other hand, in the determining function that the formula fulfills in relation to a *jouissance* where the erotogenic organization tends to dissolve. In Freud's analysis, the "bliss" he experienced as he and his young sister tore apart the book of images of a journey through Persia far exceeds in intensity anything that a term like *entreissen*, to tear apart, might ever evoke, even though the very exciting action of tearing out these images is no doubt but an already revised version of some "first" or, at the very least, older rapture. The primal repression

separating the absolute of a mythical *jouissance* from its possible repetition through the defile of the letter makes manifest the proper structure of the unconscious order since it articulates—guarantees and defends—the anti-nomy of *jouissance* and the letter.¹⁸

The precariousness of the unconscious order, on which we commented previously, is clinically manifested in psychic organizations of the psychotic type. In such cases, it seems that repression has not been put into effect. This is because, on the one hand, the mechanisms proper to the unconscious order manifest themselves in a more or less wide-open fashion—which is the result of a failure of repression proper. And it is also because unconscious structures themselves turn out to be faltering, or at the very least precarious, as if the functions that maintain them were being poorly carried out, which is the result of a failure in originary repression. At this level, which is crucial for any possible comprehension of psychosis, it seems above all that the function of alternating commutation has been profoundly altered, as if it had become stuck at the pole of its opening to annulment. Thus, the stable function and the thetic function are also disturbed, to the point that, as we have already mentioned, the one can no longer be distinguished from the other, and letters are manipulated there like objects or, reciprocally, objects like letters. From the same point of view, one may say either that the psychotic is banished from any *jouissance* or, just as correctly, that for him or her everything is *jouissance*—both of which formulas mark the failure of the “primary” division between the letter and *jouissance*, which is to say, the failure of originary repression. The absence or weakness of conscious organization in these subjects can only be understood as a failure of repression proper, which is the obvious consequence of the failure of “originary repression.”¹⁹

A question of major importance remains: how is originary repression carried out? This question is legitimate and necessary because, as we have just seen, this moment seems to be lacking in the case of psychosis. Freud asked this question and at the same time attempted to answer it in a rather brief and difficult passage of his article on repression.²⁰ There he describes originary repression as the result of the first refusal by the conscious of a representative of the drive. He says nothing, however, about the mechanism or the cause of this refusal, except perhaps in another passage where these are attributed to counter-investment. With this first refusal, a *fixation* is established, and the representative in question becomes a constitutive and invariable element of the unconscious. In this connection, recall that we already tried (even before having developed the unconscious structure) to approach this major problem for any conception of the repression of the fixation. At that point, we illustrated merely the general economy of the process in the form imposed by psychosis on its theoretical reconstruction.²¹

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Our investigation of the nature of originary repression leads us, therefore, to a second and important digression as we continue our study of the essential moment of fixation.

Recall our definition of erotogeneity as difference fixed in its irreducible interval. Recall as well the little scene we described to illustrate this moment of the determination of an erotogenic zone: the softness of the mother's finger playing "innocently," as in lovemaking, which comes to inscribe, in the exquisite dimple it caresses, its mark, a letter in desire's alphabet. The interval is fixed, an erotogenic zone is constituted. In its simplicity, this conjuncture is going to allow us to specify the arrangement necessary for a *fixation* to happen and a division to occur. First of all, the caress of the dimple must be felt as a pleasure, and a difference must be sensed between the two edges of the lovely little depression, an interval that will become marked and that we will reduce for the moment to the formula $D_1 - D_2$, thereby inscribing this interval between two sensitive but not yet erotogenic points of the dimple. Next, for this caress to be so intensely felt as both pleasant and different than the contact with a piece of wool or the back of the child's own hand, the epidermis of the caressing finger must be clearly distinguished as belonging to another body, an interval that we will formulate as $D_b - F_m$, dimple on the baby's side, finger on the mother's side. Finally, so that the latter interval may be truly distinguished in this division of alterity, clearly the principal and absolute condition is that the caressing finger be itself constituted as erotogenic (in the economy of the other's body), an interval that we can formulate as $F^E_1 - F^E_2$, thereby marking the sensed difference, which is for her already erotogenic, of the end of the mother's finger.

We may consider that, in this conjuncture, a division has occurred between, on the one hand, the *jouissance* that is indiscernible in its essence and, on the other, a letter, which can be figured here precisely by the tracing of an index finger and through which the path to the syncope of an analogous pleasure remains open. The operation of division or, from the literal point of view, the process of fixation seems to be, in the circumstance described, the effect of an encounter or conjunction among three kinds of interval: the not yet erotogenic and exquisite sensibility of the dimple ($D_1 - D_2$), the erotogeneity of the other's finger ($F^E_1 - F^E_2$), and the difference between them ($D_b - F_m$).²² Notice, however that once again none of the intervals can really be considered outside of its relations with the two others: thus, one cannot describe the zones of exquisite sensitivity ($D_1 - D_2$) outside of the encounter of two bodies ($D_b - F_m$),²³ and this encounter itself, or this alterity, cannot be articulated in a coherent way without distinguishing the erotogenic difference ($F^E_1 - F^E_2$) as such. From another angle, however, we may consider that, in this conjuncture of three correlative intervals, erotogenic difference deserves to be particularly distinguished inasmuch as it is intrinsically the bearer of a letter in its originality, as we have already shown.

As such a bearer, it is as if this difference were capable of engendering others, in other words, of investing new zones of another body as erotogenic.

We have, therefore, a first part of the answer to the question we were asking about the mechanism of this first fixation or first division by means of which one may describe originary repression: an erotogenic zone must project its interval or the index of its letter onto the sensible difference of another body.

But how is it possible, then, for this operation not to take place or to occur in such a precarious fashion that it seems to remain ineffectual, which is what we supposed must have happened at the origin of psychotic histories? The disturbance can only come from a profound alteration of the erotogenic interval of the mother's body, $F^E_1 - F^E_2$, in our example. It would be exceptional to have to consider a global anesthesia in which the interval $D_1 - D_2$ would be disturbed; exceptional also would be the circumstance of a form of prolonged symbiosis in which the division of alterity is seriously affected.

We must now look more attentively at what we have called the "erotogenic interval of the other's body," for it seems to us that its specific dimension is essential to the effective operation of the division of originary repression. We have described at length, and repeated several times, the interval or the difference that surrounds the limit of the erotogenic zone, as well as the scansion, by a distinctive trait, of its appearance as void or annulment. Before coming to the essential question of this letter, we will pursue a little further our thinking about the "erotogenic interval of the other's body." Looking now at the possible alterations of this interval, we find that we can distinguish two principal sorts here as well.

First, the disturbance of the erotogenic interval, in the context of the neurotic order, can result from the effect of secondary repression. There is nothing more banal than the extreme erotogeneity of an intimate zone veiled beneath a hyperesthesia or an anesthesia, which it does not take an analyst to reawaken to its erotogenic function. But it can happen that the repression is more vigorous and that the whole of the cutaneous covering falls under the sway of its effects. One can then imagine, in the context of our example, how little "inscribing" effect will be produced by the hand of a mother afflicted with such a repression.

Second, we can specify the difference of the psychotic disturbance, in which the erotogeneity of the parental body—the one that must mark the other body of the *infans* with libidinal traits²⁴—is, not repressed in some way, but insufficiently "fixated," as if the interval that ought to constitute it were fundamentally uncertain, poorly or not at all fixated.

We see, however, that whatever sort of disturbance may afflict the erotogenic interval of the other's body, there is the same necessity for a letter to attest or guarantee that this other's body is indeed erotogenic and, as such, capable of giving the body of the *infans* access to *jouissance*, to the letter, and hence to speech.

To be sure, one could remark here that, for originary repression to be effectively constituted, a sufficient condition is that the other, to whom falls the task of marking the child in this way, be actually endowed with speech. This would be approximately correct since it is true that any literal articulation attests, in the final analysis, to this primordial division between the letter and *jouissance*. But this way of saying things remains too imprecise because the transmission of erotogeneity, which is a body of *jouissance* as much as it is a letter, cannot in fact be carried out except by a mark made on a body with another body, except by a trait inscribed directly by one body on another body. The agent of this inscription is, as one may guess, the phallus: it is the type of the organ of erotogeneity, no doubt, but also the vector or witness of the function of engendering (commonly called reproduction).

The study of repression, by requiring us to investigate the essential moment of fixation, thus leads us to consider finally the privilege of the phallic function. We are therefore forced to situate better the oft-invoked phallus, the distinctive element of sexual difference in which psychoanalysis chooses to recognize the model of all difference and, therefore, of all possible literality. In using the term *phallus* here, we must underscore the extreme singularity of this word that *designates the penile object*, as body part and organ of copulation, and, *at the same time, a letter*, which may be called the alpha and omega of desire's alphabet. This second, literal implication of the word, which dictates a preference for *phallus* over *penis* in our language, makes evident its altogether exceptional nature as original letter or *letter of the letter*. On the one hand, in effect, the phallus is the trait that, when isolated in its erection like a stele or obelisk, universally symbolizes the sacred and central character of this eminent erotogenic zone; on the other hand, without any other mediation, doubling, or representation, *it is in itself a differential term* that makes a body either male or female.

To understand the expression "letter of the letter" or "original letter," we must first recall the nature of abstract materiality—abstracted *from the body*—by which we defined the literal trait, in the form it presents in the unconscious, namely, the thetic function. We must also recall that every letter inscribes itself at the same time as it poses the set of letters with the lack that it leaves marked there. By its double nature of object-body part and of differential trait, that is, by the fact of the impossible and patent confusion it represents between the object and the trait, the phallus guarantees paradoxically the distinction between the stable and the thetic functions. The division between *jouissance* and speech (literal articulation), in which we recognized the essence of originary repression, finds in the phallic trait the letter constituting it in its possibility, as if this trait demonstrated the interval that becomes confused with it, or as if it fixated, in its singular and universal privilege, the essential difference that makes any literality possible. One could

no doubt also see, in the physiological evanescence of its trait, a paradoxical "immediate model" of the subjective function in its vacillation.

To say that the phallus is at once the letter and the stylet that traces the letter is not, however, to assert that it suffices to engender sexually in order to guarantee, on the side of the genitor, some real fulfillment of originary repression. Certainly nothing prevents the exercise of the organic function with complete disregard for any *jouissance* worthy of the name. Nevertheless, the phallic implication in everything related to *jouissance*, that is, in everything related to the affirmation of the letter and to its transgression, derives from the privilege of this body part as, we repeat, in itself a differential term (of the fundamental difference between the sexes) without any other mediation, doubling, or representation.

To comment now on the fact of "the inscription by one body on another body" would be to repeat word for word what we said about the creation of erotogenic zones, namely: concretely, an erotogenic zone is circumscribed on the target body, in this impact of the interval, by the vector of an erotogenic part of the other's body.²⁵ We would add merely, in the interest of greater precision, that this piece of the other's body can be conceived of only as differential term (letter) and, as such—that is, as piece of the body *and* differential term—it refers necessarily to the phallic term.

By contrast, a few complementary, although still summary remarks are required here concerning the fact of the erotogenization of the genital zones themselves, which brings us to distinguish at the outset the boy's destiny from the girl's. On the feminine side, the real absence of the differential term, which is correlative with its effective presence on the body of the other sex, constitutes a primary disposition that favors the reception of the erotogenic inscription, while offering itself, by reason of this precocious division, to the accumulation of effects of secondary repression. On the masculine side, the real presence of the penis on his own body seems to necessitate a supplementary period in which to realize the differential term as negative on the body of the other sex and, so as to do that, overcome the anxiety linked to the possible loss of the penis. In addition, the properly erotogenic inscription can occur, on the masculine side, only after a more or less long detour, which for this reason escapes most often from the accumulation of effects of secondary repression. From this more or less ancient erotogenic determination, genital *jouissance* seems to retain a profoundly different nature in the man and the woman, a difference which, according to legend, Tiresias could testify to from experience and render in arithmetic terms: "One day when Zeus and Hera were quarreling over whether the man or the woman experienced the greatest pleasure in love-making, they decided to consult Tiresias, the only individual to have experienced both. Without hesitating, Tiresias assured them that if the enjoyment of love was constituted out of ten parts, woman possessed nine and the man only one."²⁶

The structural point of view, we should note, is commonly sustained through an exclusion of any question relating to a genesis, in whatever form. Perhaps, therefore, one should recognize that the term *structure*, in its common use, is not altogether correct to describe what surfaces of the unconscious in the singularity of the cases with which the analyst is confronted. Doubtless it is possible, all the same, to describe a structure of the unconscious and that is what we have attempted to do in our own fashion. When approaching the problem of originary repression, however, one soon realizes that one stands at the limit of two modes of possible approach. On the one hand, since the unconscious order exists, one may consider that there is no need to ask why and how this originary division happens: the described structure exists and is articulated precisely to account for the division. But, on the other hand, the psychoanalyst cannot consider such a structural approach sufficient inasmuch as what is important for him or her, above all, is the renewal of this structure in every singular adventure. To retain the term *structural* and use it without reservation in referring to the unconscious and the whole of the psychic apparatus, it suffices obviously to declare that a correctly conceived structural approach intrinsically includes the study of this moment of engendering of *an* unconscious, analogous in its structure and different in its determinations. But one must also, then, draw the consequences from there and include in this point of view the study of the moment of renewal and engendering. This is what we have just done by investigating originary repression and the possibility that, in certain singular cases such as psychoses, the renewal of the structure is not accomplished, thereby engendering another structure—madness—or a psychotic structure in its many varieties.

We see how the study of originary repression, and hence of the function of the phallus, gives us access to what is most essential in the (psychic) structure. Only by accepting this implication of the term *structure* can one find an opening for the possibility of elaborating a theory of psychoanalysis, in other words, a true practice.

In the blocking of the letter or originary repression, which installs the order of desire, reality, and pleasure through the detour of the secondary formations, the unconscious order ensures, promotes, or sustains the possible repetition of *jouissance*. Yet, one must recognize that it also ensures the renewal, for each individual, of the elements that constitute him or her as *an* unconscious. The mechanism of this renewal—or engendering—must be distinguished from that of *repetition* of which the letter, as such, is the chosen means. We have seen that the essential moment in the engendering of a new unconscious is the moment of originary repression, and the description we have given of it made apparent the necessary conjunction of three types of interval: the separation of two bodies, the interval between two points in a sensitive zone of one body, and finally the erotogenic difference of

the other body. An encounter takes place here whose particular and, in some sense, unique nature has to do with this conjunction of three types of interval, conjunction being understood in the sense in which in astronomy it takes the conjunction of three terms to produce the phenomenon of an eclipse. If we continued in the register of this spatial and optical analogy, we could consider the three types of interval in play as so many more or less circular dehiscences, each one circumscribed by an opaque surface. The conjunction along a same axis of these three openings produces what one might call the contrary of an eclipse to the extent that what is eclipsed, hidden, or conjured away is precisely the hiding place or the customary occultation that sutures more or less every interval. It is not a question here, quite clearly, of a mechanism of repetition—although that is not necessarily excluded within such an encounter—but indeed of a *conjunction* in which the difference unveiled without mediation in the coincidence of the three intervals appears in its emptiness and seems, as such, to leave an ineradicable mark in a less than certain place, namely, in the interval of two sensitive points. This mechanism, which we will call the *conjunction of differences*, can be distinguished, on the one hand, by its singularity (there is no necessary repetition) and, on the other, by a kind of doubling or, better yet, double doubling of the levels (three levels). The stacking and opacity of these levels—to stay with our spatial and scopic metaphor—produce the conjunction of their dehiscences. The interval that gets “fixated” in this point of exquisite pleasure—the dimple in our example—fulfills its function of *opening* an erotogenic zone for the body that is marked in this way, at the same time that it attests to both the division of alterity and the erotogeneity of the other body.

We can recognize here the other aspect of the phallic function of engendering inasmuch as this “creation” of an erotogenic zone is the very model of the opening of a new chain that will develop in its formal singularity *an* unconscious, which, moreover, is constructed like every other unconscious.

We will add here merely that this aspect of doubling or double doubling, which we described as constitutive of the operation of conjunction, forms no doubt the structural model of all phenomena of duplication and doubling that the gamut of the most common psychopathology presents to everyday observation. Correlatively, this aspect must be invoked—and this time conjointly with mechanisms of repetition—in order to situate correctly normal and pathological phenomena of identification, that is, the process of assuming singularity in the order of the letter. In such a study, one would rediscover the varied play of the repetition of literal traits. Nothing, however, can account for the recognizable permanence of their networks in any one singular history except this moment of *conjunction of difference in which the process of fixation finds its most rigorous and most extensive definition*. In any case, the crucial fact of originary repression (and, therefore, of repression proper) cannot be conceived of unless one elucidates—according to Freud’s

indication and as we have just tried to do—the fact of “fixation” that constitutes it in the singular adventure of each unconscious.

Notes

- 1 See Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire, “L’Inconscient, une étude psychanalytique,” in *L’Inconscient* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1966), pp. 95–130 and 170–77.
- 2 The dream, which is the “guardian of sleep” in Freud’s phrase, does not altogether fulfill this function to the extent that the sleeper awakes anyway.
- 3 Philippe knew the series of six tapestries known as the *The Lady and the Unicorn* [*La Dame à la licorne*], which one can see at the Cluny Museum in Paris. But I cannot say whether he also knew the next series (likewise of six tapestries) called *The Hunt for the Unicorn*, which is on exhibit at the New York Metropolitan Museum (Cloisters). The second tapestry in this series, “The Unicorn at the Fountain,” represents a kneeling unicorn as it dips the tip of its horn into water flowing in a rivulet from a fountain.
- 4 In French, “real-nothing” is “le rien réel”; there would be at least three ways to translate this phrase: “the nothing real,” “the real nothing,” or “the real little almost-nothing (which is thus something).” I will adopt throughout the hyphenated *real-nothing* so as to signal when this phrase is being used. See also Chapter 3, n 25.—Trans.
- 5 On this subject, see Chapter 8.
- 6 *OP*, 30, 31, 33.
- 7 Alexandre (Serge) Stavisky, 1886–1934, whose name has remained associated with the “affair” of a financial swindle that brought down a government of the French Third Republic in the early 1930’s; Serge Lifar, 1905–86, was a highly acclaimed dancer with Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes and director and chief choreographer of the Paris Opera Ballet beginning in 1919. These references of the proper name *Serge*, in other words, situate the event from Philippe’s childhood in the early to mid-1930’s at the earliest.—Trans.
- 8 See Chapter 1.
- 9 One could observe here that “li-corne,” referring to the developed sequence of “Lili-corne,” reintroduces at the level of each of these terms the “echoes of meaning.” This is correct, and we will have occasion later to return to what seems to be an objection here.
- 10 The syncope refers to the mute *e* ending of *Philippe* when it is placed before *Georges*. In standard French prosody, this final *e* would be voiced or pronounced only when it falls before a voiced consonant. Other syllabic elements analyzed here carry semantic value, as will be brought out later: *je* (I) and *or* (gold).—Trans.
- 11 I.e., “lui tiennent au corps.” Another idiomatic expression is being detoured here: “tenir au coeur,” to be held dear, close to someone’s heart. The revision is motivated no doubt by the syllable *or* in “corps,” body.—Trans.
- 12 Let it be said that Philippe’s analysis occurred before Gilbert Bécaud’s song “L’important, c’est la rose” had become popular.
- 13 “Gorge,” which commonly means “throat,” is also a classic euphemism for a woman’s breasts.—Trans.
- 14 This name has also been transposed, according to the criteria already mentioned, so as to maintain both veiling and transgression.
- 15 This phrase includes an untranslatable pun: “qui ne trouve son repère que dans le nom.” The term “repère,” landmark, is here being recycled to indicate also a “re-father,” a repeat father.—Trans.

- 16 Freud, "On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement," *SE*14: 16; *GW* 10: 54.
- 17 See Chapter 3.
- 18 The expression "defile of the letter" echoes Lacan's use of the phrase "defile of the signifier" in several essays in the *Écrits*. These texts make apparent that, for Lacan, the expression "defile of the signifier" characterizes in an imagistic way the formative effect of the prevalence of the signifying order. For example: "Man is, already before his birth and beyond his death, caught in the symbolic chain . . . in the play of the signifier" ("Situation de la psychanalyse en 1956," *Écrits*, p. 468); "language and its structure exist prior to the moment at which each subject at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it" ("The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud," in *Écrits: A Selection*, p. 148); "the mother's omnipotence . . . not only suspends the satisfaction of needs from the signifying apparatus, but also . . . fragments them, filters them, models them upon the defiles of the structure of the signifier" ("The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power," in *Écrits: A Selection*, p. 255).
- The use I am making here of the metaphor of the defile with regard to the thetic function differs perceptibly from the Lacanian use in that it accentuates the other extreme of the defile: that point at which the trait regulates the flow of *jouissance*, or even dams it up.
- 19 The notion of an absent or weak conscious organization should not be assimilated too hastily to the classic notions in psychoanalysis of "strong ego" and "weak ego."
- 20 "We have reason to assume that there is a *primal repression*, a first phase of repression, which consists in the psychical (ideational) representative [*Vorstellungs-Repräsentanz*] of the instinct being denied entrance into the conscious. With this a *fixation* is established; the representative in question persists unaltered from then onwards and the instinct remains attached to it," *SE* 14: 148; *GW* 10: 250.
- 21 See Chapter 6.
- 22 This formula is given in the original as $F_u - F_a$, which would indicate "fossette de l'un et fossette de l'autre," that is, "dimple of the one and dimple of the other," which seems incorrect here.—Trans.
- 23 The original reads, once again: $F_u - F_a$ (see preceding note).—Trans.
- 24 *Infans* should be understood literally as "the one who does not speak."
- 25 See Chapter 3.
- 26 Pierre Grimal, *The Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, trans. A. R. Maxwell-Hyslop (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 456.

INTERPRETATION BETWEEN DETERMINISM AND HERMENEUTICS

A restatement of the problem

Jean Laplanche

Source. Jean Laplanche, *Essays on Otherness*, translated by Philip Slotkin, London: Routledge (1999), pp. 138–165.

The debate about interpretation in psychoanalysis is not of recent origin and it is by no means over. Ricoeur's great book, *Freud and Philosophy* (1965), represents an important stage in this controversy. The significance of this work, whose impact can still be felt today, should not be underestimated; it is one of the few to have truly overcome the language barriers to the spread of French psychoanalytic ideas, and also one of the few to be constantly quoted as a major philosophical disquisition on psychoanalysis.

It is no detraction from this monumental, profound work to say that it offers, not a prospect that extends beyond Freud, but an attempt to reconcile Freudianism with substantially earlier conceptions. More precisely, it marks a resurgence of the centuries if not millennia-old classical tradition of hermeneutics at the very center of the Freudian problematic of interpretation. A resurgence it may be, but it is not the first incursion of hermeneutics into psychoanalysis – that first incursion dates explicitly from Jung and Silberer and can, in its simplest terms, be accommodated under the banner of 'anagogic' interpretation, a form which is not content to describe what is or has been but denotes 'a state or process which is to be lived'. More than one passage in Ricoeur could be adduced in support of such a line of descent, which does not, in my sense, imply any disapprobation. While I am not claiming that Ricoeur's influence has been decisive in every respect, it may be convenient to regard the current debate as being conducted so to speak in a 'post-Ricoeur' situation.

In France, particular importance attaches to the discussion that has arisen concerning the writings and theses of Viderman, a discussion that ended on a sustained note with the colloquium organized by the Paris Psychoanalytical Society, published in 1974 under the title 'Constructions and reconstructions in psychoanalysis'.

The debate in other countries has been no less keen, even if it has been relatively disconnected from French psychoanalysis. A good example is the book by Spence (1982), the foreword to which by Robert S. Wallerstein (President of the IPA) is indicative of the capacity to call received ideas into question; further examples among many others are the textbook by Thomä & Kächele (1988), which explicitly places itself in the hermeneutic line, and, from another point of view, the entire work of Roy Schafer.

All these questionings of the conventional theory of analytic interpretation exhibit a subtly differentiated range of viewpoints. In particular, the challenge from the English-language authors is characterized by a radical critique of metapsychological thought as a whole, and is based on a theory of propositions and narrativity derived from the 'philosophy of logical analysis', which remains quite alien to French thought.

Ultimately, however, although the various protagonists' starting points and philosophico-epistemological foundations differ, we are left with two positions, nicely summed up by the antithetical terms of *reconstruction* and *construction*.

The first is a 'realistic' standpoint, which claims that neurosis is a 'disease of memory' and that only the recovery of the subject's *real* history (whether by a lifting of infantile amnesia or by a reconstruction) can allow the ego to detach itself from blind mechanisms and achieve some degree of freedom.¹

The second position is a 'creative hermeneutic' one, taking cognizance of the fact that every object is *constructed* by my aim and that the historical object cannot escape this relativism. The psychoanalytic approach to an individual's past cannot constitute an exception to this rule: there are no crude facts: 'there is no experience but that which is inquired into'. It is in this precise sense that Viderman speaks of the interpretation's invention and creativity. Ultimately, the approach of the psychoanalyst should not differ greatly from that of any scholar: he confronts the data, dreams, memories and associations with the aid of preconceptions without which he would simply see nothing at all. Never mind what Leonardo saw or said: 'What matters is that the analyst, without regard to reality, adjusts and assembles these materials to construct a coherent whole which does not reproduce a fantasy pre-existent in the subject's unconscious but causes it to exist by telling it' (Viderman, 1970, p. 164).² Analytic interpretation should then finally remember that it is *sovereign*, because any past is determined from my present, or even from my future, my project.

To intervene in a debate is, if possible, to cause another voice to be heard – not a conciliatory voice, nor yet a voice that embraces one of the positions against the other, but the voice of a third party.

However, as a measure of the temerity of my argument, I should like to point out that both of these voices are equally entitled to claim kinship in one way or another with Freud. They are, for example, the two alternating attitudes that lie behind the successive versions, the second thoughts, of the case-history of the 'Wolf Man'. One is the search for factual, detailed, chronological truth about the primal scene, while the other, at a stroke wholeheartedly embracing Jung's objections and abandoning almost all of the reality so painstakingly reconstructed, admits that all this may be nothing but retroactive fantasy, with only a few clues, if that, as foundation; but it must be added that for Freud such a fantasy in turn finds its full justification only in the existence of phylogenetic schemata, tantamount to categories which *a priori* inform every individual experience.³

How then are we to proceed, confronted as we are with two positions which at first sight appear equally Freudian? If we claim that the debate is spurious, we are so to speak trying to show that Freud himself became trapped in it, even if we have to go back with him to the point where he begins to go astray. To do this, however, we must at least specify what the trap is.

In simple terms, *the major illusion here is the comparison with the historians, historiography*. Rather than a comparison, it is an attempt to apply to psychoanalysis an epistemological model that belongs to an entirely different field.

And it is indeed the historian's history, historiography, that is constantly appealed to as a witness in this debate – whether it is rejected in its classical form as doomed to reflect a purely factual truth (Spence's 'historical truth'), or whether we follow Videman in embracing a modern historiography which has succeeded in going beyond a naive realism and draw all the consequences of the fact that the historical object, like any other, is constructed.

I am therefore unavoidably compelled to embark on a brief, non-specialized digression exploring the collective history of mankind. Before – radically, as we shall see – questioning the relevance of this paradigm to our discipline, I must say a few words about it.

What is forcing history to redefine itself is first and foremost the new awareness on the part of historians of the relativism of their science. It is not the absolute of the historians of the past, whether providentialists or positivists, but the product of a situation, of a history. This singularity of a science which has only one term for both its object and itself, which swings between history as lived and history as constructed, undergone and manufactured, compels historians, now that

they are conscious of this original relationship, to inquire again into the epistemological foundations of their discipline.

(Le Goff & Nora, 1974, vol. I, p. X)

This ambiguity can be illustrated by apportioning it – but is this always so easy? – between history that happens, the history that is narrated, and history as a discipline, or historiography. Historical positivism – which is perhaps somewhat too hastily caricatured and stigmatized – may be said to aim, in its naive realism, at a seamless reproduction of ‘the history that happens’ in historiography. Leopold von Ranke’s oft-quoted, notorious statement that the historian should merely show ‘what really happened’ has become virtually a scapegoat of the epistemology of history. Let us only recall two major stages in this criticism, at least in France: Aron on the one hand and the *Ecole des Annales* on the other.⁴

Aron’s *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (1938) presents a radical critique of positivism. Whereas the philosopher’s proclaimed intention is to stake out the limits and to find an acceptable position between a naive realism of the object and an absolute relativism, the main onslaught is against positivism, with the result that relativism in fact appears to prevail totally. Years later, Aron himself reacted against this, describing his old position, as it were in a new swing of the pendulum, as speculative and vigorously opposing the easy approaches of ‘perspectivism’: ‘In Parisian circles the formula “there are no facts” is totally in favour. Of course, I know that in a sense this formula is true: there are no facts that are not constructed . . . but ultimately, I am at times tempted to act the philistine’.⁵

While the ‘dissolution of the object’ proclaimed for a moment by Aron may have opened the way to the most subjectivistic interpretations and, at the limit, to the negation of all historical knowledge, the French school known as *la nouvelle histoire*, or the *École des Annales*, adopts a very different approach: its protagonists, as practitioners of the ‘historian’s profession’, take as their starting point this practice and the ‘new techniques’ offered by modern investigative methods, to define ‘new objects’, correlative with ‘new approaches’. These new approaches do indeed go hand in hand with a critique of conventionally accepted objects; this critique is levelled at the two traditional ‘atoms’ of conventional history: on the one hand, the historical individual and, in particular, the great man (to whom Freud devotes a chapter in his book on Moses), and, on the other, the ‘event’. However, their place is taken by new objects, which are no less credible or scientific for being constructed: ‘long-term’ history, sometimes extending to a history of climates, a history of social facts, up to and including a history of festivals, a history of mentalities, and even a history of death or a history of institutions, rather than of political facts; conversely, on the particular level, there are monographs on objects from which the individual is deliberately ousted from the central position: for instance, the famous ‘Montaillou, a village in

the *Occitan* region' usurps the 'history of the reign of Louis XIV' or the 'history of battles', of which the notorious 'Battle of Marignan in 1515' has become the paradigmatic object of derision.

However, beyond the espousal of positions that is essential to any innovation, what we are witnessing is an enrichment and not an arbitrary selection. Even this history of prominent figures emerges renewed rather than abolished by the intersecting approaches which here overlap. The event itself is rehabilitated when it is seen that, before it becomes an arbitrary creation of the chroniclers, it is constituted as such, at the very moment when it is lived. Not only elaborations improvised 'hot' but also successive re-elaborations form part of the historical object, and from this point of view we may agree with Pierre Nora (Ricoeur, 1983, vol. 1, pp. 210–28) that we are seeing 'a return of the event', albeit in completely renovated form, which attempts to take account simultaneously of the three aspects of the word 'history' which make up its entire specificity: history that happens, history that is narrated and the history of the historian. Such a synthesis may be possible or impossible – for example, one that aims to give an overall view of the history of the Vichy regime and of the history of the memory of the Vichy regime (cf. Rouso, 1987).

Can psychoanalysis take a historiography of this kind, which has undergone a profound renewal, as its inspiration? Or, conversely, might it be a fallacious model for our discipline – fallacious where it reduces Freud's search to a quest for a historical truth which would be that of the conventional historians (according to von Ranke's notorious formula: the event 'as it really happened')? However, the model would *also* be fallacious in attempting to set up against this positivism a pure construction of the historical object which would be valid for the psychoanalytic construction too.

As an indication of my meaning, I shall pause for a moment, as if at two *signs or clues*, at two paradoxical points where (so to speak) psychoanalysis and historiography run counter to each other.

The first point is *determinism*. Here I should like only to note that historians (whether 'old-fashioned' or 'modern') never make deterministic demands as rigorous as those in the psychoanalytic debate in the matter of the so called predictability of the present from the past. If determinism does exist for modern historiography, as well as, probably, for the vast majority of historians of the past, it can only amount to correlations valid for precise sequences, for short 'items' capable of being repeated; or, alternatively, in a completely different dimension, to long-term correlations, the actual events being made dependent on other factors such as, for example, geography, economics or even climate change.

Now it is really odd to see psychoanalysts fighting, pro or contra, over a conception of historical determinism which has never been that of the historians, and which invokes as its authority, in particular, Pascal's excursion on . . . the length of Cleopatra's nose. But this singularity of the deterministic

demand among the psychoanalysts is not a quirk, but is one of the most important documents in our case. We are entitled to wonder whether it has not been grafted, transposed, on to the diachronic sequence from the observation that is the daily stuff of psychoanalysis, that the length of Cleopatra's nose . . . may really be the strict determining *cause* of a symptom.

Its cause is by no means its law. It does not establish constant relations between phenomena but simply, almost magically or mechanically, exerts its effect. In this sense, it has been well and truly ousted from all sciences, including history, in favour of the establishment of correlations capable of being formulated as a function. Yet I should like to suggest that with psychoanalysis, the cause, however old-fashioned and archaic, has in effect rediscovered its true home in the deep sense in which metapsychology is the *repatriation* of metaphysics.

Perhaps *archaeology* has suffered the same fate as the concept of the cause: after some ill-treatment in certain quarters, we may wonder whether it does not assume a deeper sense again in psychoanalysis.

While modern history may in a way be regarded as a broadening, a perfecting or even a fulfilment of the historiography of all times, and while someone like Leroi Ladurie is not ashamed of his kinship with Thucydides or even Michelet, modern archaeology certainly tolls the death knell for its classical predecessor.

Archaeology has at least three ancestors, but, it might be said, it strongly repudiates this line of descent. The first ancestor is the lover of art and curiosities, the 'antiquary' in search of beautiful or curious objects: in this sense, Hadrian was already an 'antiquary', an enlightened collector. The second origin of archaeology is the traveller. Archaeology discovered its objects and sites in the great 'journeys' of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and in their painstaking and irreplaceable descriptions of monuments. And what is the third ancestor of the archaeologist? Well, it is something less commendable: the robber of graves and monuments.⁶

In any case, what our three characters, the traveller, the robber and the art lover, have in common is without any doubt love of *the object for itself*, an object which is at one and the same time beautiful, strange and lucrative. It is the search for the emotion connected with the object unearthed from the past, be it intact or partially reconstituted.

The whole of modern archaeology contrasts totally with this archaeology in search of the object or the city, an activity nowadays denounced as 'approximate' (Leroi Gourhan), or, even more often, roundly condemned as having irrevocably ruined important excavation sites.

Modern archaeology, for its part, is also aware that excavation constitutes irreparable destruction, but, in a sense, considers that it does not matter, once the essential has been extracted from the site: 'An archaeological stratum is like a book of which each page is destroyed as we read it, and which it must be possible to reconstitute later' (Duval, 1961, p. 226). Excavation is thus necessary destruction; it is irremediable, but, at the same time, it must

endeavour to preserve each stratum by a variety of different means (photographs, samples, analyses, card indexes, diagrams, etc.). But if methodical destruction is now coextensive with the work of the archaeologist, this is because he now seeks something other than material objects or even ruins: the search for connections, relations, has become more important than that for objects. We can say no more than that modern archaeology has become a mere service activity, a technique in thrall to the prehistorians or historians and subordinated to their aims: the most complete documentation, the tidiest possible indexing of human phenomena.⁷

Archaeology's sole value henceforth is through the mosaics of *historical* correlations which it helps to make more explicit. Its objects are now mere bundles of relations and techniques. The moment when they are reassembled, reconstituted and displayed is just a concession to popularization or, if it is preferred, to education.

Let us go into any archaeological exhibition. Ah! What we see is no longer the incredible Capernaum of the old Cairo Museum, still less the artistic jumble of the 'curiosity cabinet' of old, specifically designed to stimulate desire and to arouse wonder. Now, before we encounter the slightest object, we are assailed by huge panels bursting with maps, charts and diagrams, telling us all about population migrations, changes in customs and living conditions and the evolution of techniques. The vase or statue is meaningful only when 'didacticized', placed in relation, set in the context of the invention of the potter's wheel and the clay or tin trade. Held captive by the wish to learn, I am absorbed in the reading of one of these panels, from which I am only torn away when my wife impatiently exclaims: 'Just look at this extraordinary horse!'

Exhibition organizers are well aware of this temptation, and ultimately they always yield to it, while inwardly regretting their demagoguery. For this entire route, so well signposted by historical reason, is in fact completely 'magnetized' by one thing: the wonderful object of the exhibition. This unique object, isolated (and in this sense genuinely *archaeological*), displayed in a casket of light and, preferably, in a separate sanctuary draped in black velvet, this object usually made of an indestructible material, this gold object that constitutes the main draw of the posters (the gold of the Scythians, the gold of the Celts or the gold of the Incas), this timeless object – having journeyed through centuries and millennia to address itself direct to us – this mask of Agamemnon, what does it want from me? *Che vuoi?* to quote Lacan quoting Cazotte. This comeback, this return (a *Wiederkehr* which is perhaps also a *Heimkehr*) of archaeology will be one of the guiding threads in my examination of Freud.

Putting Freud to work, or, in other words, 'interpreting Freud with Freud' (Laplanche, 1968a), does not mean trying to find a lesson in him – still less an orthodoxy. Nor is it a matter of choosing one Freud against another, or

of 'fishing' here and there for a formulation which suits me. Putting Freud to work means demonstrating in him what I call an *exigency*, the exigency of a discovery which impels him without always showing him the way, and which may therefore lead him into dead ends or goings-astray. It means following in his footsteps, accompanying him but also criticizing him, seeking other ways – but impelled by an exigency similar to his.

To put it in more colloquial terms, what is it that makes Freud tick? My answer, my proposition, is this: *it is not history*. Or, to be less provocative, it is something that has nothing to do with the history of the historiographers.

On this route, I shall spare myself two detours, at least for the purposes of this paper. The first, which might be dubbed 'Freudological', would have examined in detail Freud's positions on the history of societies – on historiography.⁶ The second detour would have been a point-by-point comparison, showing the resemblances and differences between, and the possible transpositions of, the historiography of societies, with that of human individuals. However interesting it might be, such a comparison – which would be somewhat academic – would miss the essential point: what Freud is aiming at is not, transposed to the individual level, a life history or biography; nowhere in Freud is such a life history to be found, in any sense of the term – either a history of events or a history of the Ernest Jones type ('life and work'), or even a history tinged with psychoanalysis. He admittedly often applies the word history (*Geschichte*) to the individual, but the word *Lebensgeschichte* (life history or biography) is usually relegated to a subordinate position after the history of the disease or of the patient (*Krankheitsgeschichte* – *Krankengeschichte*). His 'historical' bravura piece, which still calls forth commentaries from the psychoanalytic community, is entitled: 'From the history of an infantile neurosis'. The word 'history' is certainly there, but accompanied oddly by the words *infantile* and *neurosis* and, even more strangely, preceded by '*aus*': 'from' or 'out of'.

When I reread the definition imposed by Viderman as a demand on the orthodox Freudian thesis which he opposes – 'restoration of the continuity of a broken historical pattern . . . reintegration of lost memories . . . access to the totality of the significant history, etc.' – I tell myself (and Viderman would, of course, agree) that this is not what Freud succeeds in achieving; contrary to Viderman, however, I claim that it was also not Freud's profound aim, even in the apparently 'historiographical' work on 'the Wolf Man'. What he is aiming at is a kind of history of the unconscious, or rather of its genesis; a history with discontinuities, in which the moments of burial and resurgence are the most important of all; a history, it might be said, of repression, in which the subterranean currents are described in as much detail as, if not in more detail than, the manifest character traits. Is this an account of events? It would be paradoxical to deny that moments in time, situated and dated, constitute essential reference points in the investigation.

But what are these 'events', which mark the transition from one age to another? Let us quote a passage on one of the most important:

The date of this transformation can be stated with certainty; it was immediately before his fourth birthday . . . But the event which makes this division possible was not an external trauma, but a dream . . .

(Freud, 1918b, p. 28)

What a strange history of events, in which one of the turning-points is a purely internal event!

But, I will be told, you are denying the obvious! What could be more obvious throughout this paper of Freud's than the almost forensic search, exploiting the slightest clue, for a primal scene which (in von Ranke's terms) 'actually happened' (*eigentlich geschehen*). However, since this statement is generally associated with the most decisive arguments of the commentators to show that the scene could neither have happened nor have been observed, and that it could not have been consigned to memory in this way, how can we fail to see this combination – imposition of a maximum positivist demand on Freud/proof of its minimum satisfaction – as a way of stifling Freud once and for all in the straitjacket of his realistic postulate?

The reference to a so-called Freudian orthodoxy seems to me here, as often, to be a trap: either it is adhered to blindly or else, more subtly, it is invoked in order to incarcerate Freud in it and condemn him. Our position should be one beyond, or rather short of, orthodoxy – specifically, in an interpretation of a large number of clues, incoherences, breaks, minor details, etc., which contradict the overall picture but, in accordance with our analytic method, trace out as many convergent tracks. To return again to von Ranke's term, which at the end of the day suits me well – *eigentlich*: 'actually' or 'in actual fact' – what Freud is seeking 'in actual fact' is not what 'actually happened', in the sense of the crude event or, as Raymond Aron put it, of the elusive 'John Lackland went that way'.

Among a thousand other clues in 'the Wolf Man' case is the fact (already mentioned) that he suddenly considers that the reality of the primal scene as an event can be 99 per cent swept away without *any* change in its traumatic effect; a mere mating of dogs is enough. Another clue is the statement that the relevant intercourse was 'three times repeated' . . . : what would be an actual memory of an event three times repeated if not the memory of a sequence of three events: 'John Lackland went that way on 9 April, and then on 10 May, and then on 15 August'? Here, however, in the primal scene 'reconstructed' by Freud, the 'three times' is *included in the content* as a detail among others. Surely this is what happens, for instance, in the logic of the dream, in which the 'three times', like any other comment on the account ('that is not clear' – 'that happens again and again', etc.), is to be taken as a part of the content and not as a characteristic extrinsic to the dream.

We are plainly shifting from the factual event to something other than that. However, I do not wish to move on too directly to the 'fantasy' because I am very well aware that, not finding its reason within itself, the fantasy would in turn be liable to lead us on to the archetypal – i.e. to an atavistic experience. Let us therefore say, more modestly, that we are moving from the event to the *scene*.

Event or scene: how are we to distinguish between them? Perhaps by the ways in which they are recorded, which we are too quick to combine under the single heading of a memory or the faculty of memory: conscious-preconscious on the one hand and unconscious on the other.

Here again, regarding memory, Freud is not unequivocal. His theory of memory, where it approaches a psychology of fixation, reshaping and evocation, is highly credible, as in the following quotation from 'Screen memories': 'It may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all *from* our childhood: memories *relating* to our childhood may be all that we possess' (Freud, 1899, p. 322).

So much for conscious memory. In contrast with this genuine but fairly trivial relativism, we may recall the grandiose image from *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930a). In mental life, Freud tells us, 'nothing which has once been formed can perish'. His well-known metaphor is that of an archaeological site, Ancient Rome, but it is chosen precisely to demonstrate the difference from real archaeology. In the Eternal City (the epithet is used not without irony), every new construction has obviously necessitated a prior destruction. The archaeological strata do not coexist in the intact state but only abraded, reduced to the condition of mere foundations. It is impossible to construct a monument without having in practice destroyed all the superstructures of what preceded it. However, the opposite is the case in that hyperarchaeological site that is a human being:

Now let us, by a flight of imagination, suppose that Rome is not a human habitation but a psychical entity with a similarly long and copious past – an entity, that is to say, in which nothing that has once come into existence will have passed away and all the earlier phases of development continue to exist alongside the latest one. This would mean that in Rome the palaces of the Caesars and the Septizonium of Septimius Severus would still be rising to their old height on the Palatine . . . But more than this. In the place occupied by the Palazzo Caffarelli would once more stand – without the Palazzo having to be removed – the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus; and this not only in its latest shape, as the Romans of the Empire saw it, but also in its earliest one, when it still showed Etruscan forms . . . On the Piazza of the Pantheon we should find not only the Pantheon of today, as it was bequeathed to us by Hadrian, but, on the same site, the original edifice erected by Agrippa; indeed, the same piece of ground would

be supporting the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva and the ancient temple over which it was built.

(Freud, 1930a, p. 70)

Two conceptions of 'memory', one historical and the other archaeological – one conscious-preconscious and the other unconscious: that is quickly said. But let us take a closer look.

This image of Rome, in which time is developed like a fourth dimension of space, could be made plausible as follows: an observer is looking at Rome from a distance of 2,700 light-years from Earth. What he sees is the Rome of Romulus, whose image reaches him at that instant. At the same time, carried by a continuous train of light waves, he receives the successive images of the same city, the combination of which really does constitute the kind of four-dimensional hologram described by Freud. The observer need only move along this hologram ('change the direction of his glance or his position', as Freud says), to concentrate on a particular image, monument or epoch.

Why do I find this rationalization only half-satisfying? It is because, in our train of waves travelling between Earth and Sirius, we shall never find this or that monument, taken in isolation and finished once and for all, but instead *all* stages, in each second, of its construction and destruction. Freud's image of unconscious memory therefore becomes strangely unrealistic compared with our physical model: it is neither a reshaping of living, conscious-preconscious memory nor a complete hologram of everything experienced (which would be an absolute jumble), but a succession and superimposition of fixed images, independent of each other; as Freud says of the unconscious, '[c]ontrary impulses exist side by side, without cancelling each other out or diminishing each other' (1933a, p. 73).

The imperceptible stages, the moments of transition, are abolished here, in favour of a succession of fixed archetypes, each forming a whole. To paraphrase what we said about the Wolf Man's 'three times', the 'three years' it took to build Nero's Domus Aurea are not represented by the memory of three years of works constituting a time sequence, but become a characteristic inherent in the Domus Aurea itself, in its representational content: 'The Domus Aurea, which was built in three years'.

It is therefore an odd coexistence, made up of fixity and manipulation, of veracity and artifice, that characterizes the singular archaeological field in which the 'psychical object' is considered to be preserved. We have no wish to deny that Freud sees in this a paradigm of memory, and the text of 'Constructions in analysis' does indeed begin under the combined banner of memory and archaeology. However, the addition of the word 'unconscious' – 'unconscious memory' – here changes everything, because what is then meant is not a trivial memorization, and not the trivial reshapings of memories by subsequent experiences, social contexts, ageing, etc. What is involved here is a psychical phenomenon which is at one and the same time a

cataclysm (like the engulfment of Pompeii) and a permanent preservation (like the burial of Tutankhamen's objects in his tomb).

Hence the image of archaeology, which dogs every psychoanalyst just as it dogged Freud from the letters to Fliess until his very last day, has by no means yet given up all its truth. If, like Suzanne Bernfeld (1951), we associate this 'dogging' with nostalgia for the golden age in Freiberg, with the wish for the intact object represented by the eternally young and beautiful mother, and with an atheistic sublimation of the infantile belief in immortality, we are surely magnifying one aspect out of all proportion, while invoking causes that exist in all human beings while most are heedless of the archaeological object, which, in fact, they blithely destroy in working their fields or building their motorways.

This Freudian archaeology ought to be described as *hyperarchaeological* or *hyperrealistic* – being even more fascinated by the *object* than was the archaeology of former days. It is an object which is not merely a thing but which contains within itself the phases of its construction, the affects to which it gave rise, and presumably even more, as we are beginning to suspect. It is an archaeology which is not subordinated to history, as modern science would have it, but which subordinates history solely to the revivifying of the object. So it is with Schliemann, Freud's hero and model: his entire knowledge of history – the poetic history of the Iliad or the history of the ancient historians – is used to one single end: the patient identification on the ground of the coordinates of the precise point to dig in order to unearth Troy.

This was an exciting model for Freud, and constitutes a major clue among others. Perhaps it is another sign, another line of association, to note his preference, in the matter of this unconscious preservation, for the term 'trace': traces in the memory (*Gedächtnisspuren*) or mnemonic traces (*Erinnerungsspuren*), as if the important thing were not memorization itself but the trace – which is so to speak secondary – left by the memory, and in fact the result of repression.

The term 'reminiscence' is equally evocative, even if no further notice was ultimately taken of it. It is, of course, a term that goes back to Plato, and may still signify a kind of memory – but a memory cut off from its origins and from its access routes, isolated and fixed, reduced to a trace. It is a trace which is not on that account necessarily more *false*, but which contains a 'kernel of truth' that is more essential than the trivial conscious memory.

We can now gauge the gulf between the formula that 'the hysteric suffers from reminiscences' and Videman's statement that neurosis (in Freud) is a 'disease of memory'. The unconscious, if the reader is prepared to follow us, is *not* memory; repression is not a particular modality of memorizing. Repression – cataclysm and burial in the unconscious – is as different from memorization as the engulfment of Pompeii is from Joinville's Chronicle of the Seventh Crusade of Louis IX, perhaps even more different. This is why

we hazard the term 'hyperarchaeology', even if we must then discover in this the deep roots of our fascination for archaeology.

Hyperarchaeology = *hyperreality*. This is the locus of another demand – and another aporia – of Freud's search, the one called 'psychical reality'.

Let us state the problem from the outset: the existence, the postulate, of a third domain, which is not material, factual, perceptual reality, but which is also not subjectivity, that which is 'merely a presentation' (*das bloss Vor-gestellte*, [Freud, 1925h, p. 237]).

Whether we are to attribute *reality* to unconscious wishes, I cannot say. It must be denied, of course, to any transitional or intermediate thoughts. If we look at unconscious wishes reduced to their most fundamental and truest shape, we shall have to conclude, no doubt, that *psychical* reality is a particular form of existence not to be confused with *material* reality.

(Freud, 1900a, p. 620)⁹

Freud was never to fulfil what he describes here, that intentional aim (to put it in phenomenological terms), or else he was to find only substitutes (*Ersatz*). The first *Ersatz* is to reduce psychical reality to psychological reality, and this is the entire trend of the *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1916–17, chapter XXIII): under the cloak of the fundamental rule and of the 'absence of any indication of reality in the unconscious',¹⁰ all transitional thoughts (associations) and intermediate thoughts (fantasies) should strictly speaking be placed on the same level as, for instance, memories. After all, they are all part of the 'real', being as real as the material world, and it is their combination which, from a purely subjectivist point of view, is now called 'psychical reality'; but Freud has shifted from one sense of this term to the other: from a particular psychical entity that would be reality, a *thing* in the unconscious, to the finding, trivial as it is, that any thought, even if it is fiction, is a psychical *phenomenon* among others, worthy of consideration and study as such.

There are other returns (distorted like a 'return of the repressed'), of that entity whose existence Freud suspected and which he constantly tried to grasp, that psychical entity that is as hard as iron, and perhaps stronger than the perceptual fact itself; one of these returns is called 'primal fantasy' and the other, still in Freud, the primordial 'id' anchored in the biological; in Lacan, however, we may detect in the guise of structuralism a derivative of the same exigency, something that would like to occupy the same position: 'the symbolic'. I do not have the space for a critique of these here.

Let us return to *reminiscences* and their principal form, *scenes*.

Throughout the discussion about the famous scenes – their reality, their improbability and the possibility of remembering them – it seems to me that we have confined ourselves to two antithetical elements which oppose each

other as would the crude physical fact and the theorization of the physicist (in what would actually be a highly debatable epistemology). So it is, since Viderman helps us to clarify matters, with the Grusha scene in 'the Wolf Man' case:

It is a historical scene, in the sense that it is a matter of a real, dated event – it is not history – any more than 'Caesar crossed the Rubicon' . . . These are objective facts, comparable for historians with the trajectory of a body in the physical world . . . In order for this scene to be animated, to come alive and to speak to us, it is first necessary for Freud himself to speak.

(Viderman, 1970, p. 343)

Two points are ignored here (not only by Viderman but also by his contraditors, and presumably by Freud himself): (1) that Freud's interpretation is preceded by a proto-interpretation by the subject himself, so that the psychoanalytic interpretation always only comes second; (2) even more importantly, what is to be interpreted is not crude factual material, or even historical fact, in the sense of the banal 'John Lackland went that way'. However, my objection is not that, as has been demonstrated to excess, 'human facts are not things' and, in the most general sense, that they 'have a meaning', but that *infantile scenes – the ones with which psychoanalysis is concerned – are first and foremost messages*.

Here I shall rest my case on a Freud paper which seems to me exemplary from more than one viewpoint. It is exemplary in showing a process of repression at work; and it is exemplary in demonstrating that the memory is very different from the unconscious fantasy that has arisen from it, and, incidentally, from the conscious fantasy derived from the former. The paper is 'A child is being beaten' (Freud, 1919e). I commented some years ago on this paper, when I made use in particular of the concept of 'leaning-on' (Laplanche, 1970, chapter V).¹¹ I return to it today with a conceptual arsenal more directly derived from the generalized seduction theory: message, translation and partial failure of translation.

I should therefore like to recall the three formulations proposed by Freud as a chronological sequence, derived, he tells us, from several analyses (four female patients):

1. My father is beating a child (a little brother-or-sister).¹²
2. I am being beaten by my father.
3. A child is being beaten.

Regarding the third stage, I have nothing to add to Freud's description and perfect explanation: we have to do with a perverse conscious fantasy accompanying masturbation and culminating in orgasm. This fantasy is a

derivative of the unconscious fantasy (No. 2), and it is derived from it by a number of routes: neutralization, compromise between the sadistic form of the fantasy and the masochistic type of its satisfaction, displacement of guilt, masculinity complex, etc.

Let us concentrate on Stages 1 and 2. Freud sometimes describes them as two stages of one and the same fantasy, but, if we look at them closely, how can the same type of reality be attributed to each?

Stage 2 really is what we call an unconscious fantasy. It has the fixed and stereotyped character of such a fantasy; and being inaccessible to any reshaping, it is all the more fixed and stereotyped because it can never become conscious. It is constructed only by the analysis:

This second phase is the most important and the most momentous of all. But we may say of it in a certain sense that it has never had a real existence. It is never remembered, it has never succeeded in becoming conscious. It is a construction of analysis, but is no less a necessity on that account.

(Freud, 1919e, p. 185)

On the other hand, Freud hesitates openly about the first phase and inclines towards deeming it real:

One may hesitate to say whether the characteristics of a 'phantasy' can yet be ascribed to this first step towards the later beating-phantasy. It is perhaps rather a question of recollections of events which have been witnessed, or of desires which have arisen on various occasions. But these doubts are of no importance.

(p. 185)

This last quotation betrays a very different position from that adopted in the case of 'the Wolf Man'. The real scene is variable, its details are of little importance, and it is perhaps this very variability that bears witness to its having been lived. Different circumstances, we shall say, have been able to convey one and the same message, and it has been possible for this to be repeated in different ways . . . 'These doubts are of no importance', Freud concludes.

A significant qualification is that the second scene, which is unconscious, is described as the 'original phantasy' (*ursprüngliche Phantasie*) (Freud, 1919e, p. 199); on the one hand, this shows that the fantasy proper only begins with it, but, on the other, such a formulation as it were competes with and even invalidates the conception of 'primal fantasies' of phylogenetic origin, formulated two or three years earlier. An unconscious fantasy may thus be '*original*' without ceasing to be the product of an individual process and without any need to refer to the archetypal and the unconscious of the species.

Another important point is that the unconscious fantasy is not a copy of the conscious scene, a faithful memory that has simply succumbed to infantile amnesia. *Repression is something quite different from a memorization.*

It is time to attempt a different description of the process whose stages are so well marked out by Freud.

In the first stage, the real events that have taken place between the family protagonists are something quite different from mere material sequences. It seems to me obvious that, in one way or another, they are *presented* to the child. If a little brother-or-sister is beaten in the presence of the child, it is not like beating an egg white in a kitchen. Nor is it neutral and innocent (in Grusha's unconscious) to scrub the floor in front of the child with her buttocks projecting.

The fact that the father is addressing himself to the spectator of the scene is illustrated in Freud in his addition to the initial formulation: 'My father is beating the child [brother-or-sister]/whom I hate'.

This 'whom I hate' is not a factual, perceptual component of the scene. It is a *contextual* component. It does not belong to one or other of the protagonists, but is their secret or common possession. If I hate the little brother-or-sister and, knowing this, my father beats him or her in front of me, this confirms that he is addressing a message to me.

I now come to a second addition, which Freud wishes to make to what he calls the first stage: 'My father is beating the child [brother-or-sister]/whom I hate/he loves only me'.

This addition belongs even less than the first to the perceived. We are perfectly safe in proposing that it constitutes an interpretation or, more precisely, a *translation*, made in the past by the child and reconstructed in the analysis. I shall now develop the sequence, following Freud very closely: 'My father is beating [in front of me] the child [little brother-or-sister] whom I hate'. 'It means [*das heisst*]: "My father does not love this other child, he loves only me"' (Freud, 1919e, p. 187).

In passing, lest anyone consider the process of translation to be something purely 'intellectual', note the major role of the affect, which here appears both in the source context and in the target translation.

It now remains for me to justify thoroughly this translation theory of repression; its original formulation is to be found in Freud's letter to Fliess (6 Dec. 1896):

Thus an anachronism persists: in a particular province, *fueros*¹³ are still in force; we are in the presence of 'survivals'. A failure of translation – this is what is known clinically as 'repression'.

Why *translation* and not interpretation? It is because the latter word, while roughly correct, is insufficient. It is too general, and also lends itself too readily to the facile explanations of hermeneutics. Admittedly I interpret a

discourse (and a translator is also called an 'interpreter'), but I also interpret the storming of the Bastille as a sign of a weakening of the nobility and a precursor of the guillotine.

What is *translated*, specifically, is not a natural, or even an historical sign, but a message, a signifier or a sequence of signifiers. In order for there to be translation, someone must have meant something.

It will be seen that I am again resorting to the category of the *message* or enigmatic *signifier*. The term 'message' insists on the fact that the signifier represents someone (Lacan says 'the subject') to another; it is what may also be called the 'address' aspect of the signifier.¹⁴

Whether signifier or message, I qualify it as 'enigmatic'. However, I immediately reject the idea that every signifier is enigmatic, if that is understood to mean – a trivial enough statement – that it is polysemous.¹⁵ If I had to give up the term 'enigmatic' to my objectors, I should then coin the expression 'compromised signifier', in the dual sense that it is a compromise, like the symptom, as well as being *compromised by the unconscious* of its originator. After all – and one is slightly ashamed to say so – psychoanalysis with and since Freud has omitted to note that repression and the unconscious exist in the other before being present in the child: in the Wolf Man's parents, in Grusha and in the beating father.

The father who 'is beating the child' *says* more than he consciously means. He means to say, for example: 'Disobedient children must be punished to teach them how to behave'. More directly, addressing himself to the child: 'so you see you are better behaved than he is . . . you are not the one that deserves such a spanking . . .'

Yet this father barely knows that he means something like: 'Spare the rod and spoil the child' [in French: *Qui aime bien, chatie bien*, who loves well, punishes well]. This expression is ambiguous, because, consciously, loving and punishing are the two poles of any good upbringing, but, unconsciously, they tend to merge.

Finally, the father has no idea at all that he is saying a whole lot of other things, such as: 'Loving means beating, sexually assaulting, and having intercourse, as, for example, I do with your mother . . . and furthermore, not only genitally but also anally – for how else could one assault a little "brother-or-sister", etc., etc.'

Confronted with this enigmatic message, a message compromised by any number of unconscious resurgences, the child translates it as best he can, with the language at his disposal.¹⁶ This translation coincides precisely with the words that are spoken/lived/felt: 'My father does not love this other child, he loves only me'.

What is lost in this translation is the obscure aspect of the message, to the effect that, from the sexual point of view, loving involves beating and violent attack. It is this *fuero*, this 'survival' (*Überlebsel*) which forms precisely the unconscious fantasy, a fixed and immutable fantasy, not historicized but

designified, senseless and inaccessible directly – a truly original fantasy, which can only be identified by the perverse derivatives with which we are all familiar.¹⁷

In order to discuss psychoanalytic interpretation and its status between determinism and hermeneutics, I could not avoid this long introduction to the third category, which I suggest locating in the position postulated by Freud when he speaks of 'psychical reality'. Alongside perceptual reality and psychological reality – of which conscious-preconscious fantasy constitutes a major sector – we should place a third reality, that of the message, i.e. of the signifier in so far as it is addressed by someone to someone. If we say that this category is practically absent from Freud's thought, we are also saying that the other, the human other, is also absent from it, as a source of messages. The other – in particular, the parental other – is barely present at all, and then only as an abstract protagonist of a scene or a support for projections; this is the case with Freud, but also, and to an even greater extent, with Klein.

Interpretation therefore finds itself trapped in the unresolvable dualism of pure factuality on the one hand and a creative imagination on the other: in the one case, it patiently reconstitutes 'facts' which it hopes will prove to be the source of a determinism, explaining the present by the past.¹⁸ It is an explanation that will always fall into the famous parody of psychoanalysis, brilliantly anticipated by Molière: 'And that is why your daughter is dumb'.

In the second case, the interpretation notes that human facts always have 'a sense', but it adds too quickly that this sense is imposed on an inert datum by the individual – an infantile subject, and then the subject of the treatment, conceived as a kind of collective interpreting entity. However, the creativist hypothesis, the conferring of sense whose action is retroactive,¹⁹ cannot remain suspended in mid-air: when Freud himself ventures to do this with Little Hans, so to speak injecting the Oedipus complex into the situation, he immediately draws down on himself the question: 'Does the Professor talk to God . . . as he can tell all that beforehand?' (Freud, 1909b, pp. 42–3). Similarly, Jungian or Ricoeurian hermeneutics – 'incorporation of a discourse in another discourse' – barely attempts to conceal its normative aims and theological reference points.

Between determinism and hermeneutics, what is the contribution of the concept of the enigmatic message and the correlative concept of translation? With the *message*, there is the idea that an existing, pre-existing sense is offered to the subject, of which, however, he is not the master and of which he can become the master only by submitting to it. With the concept of *enigma*, a break in determinism appears: to the extent that the originator of the enigmatic message is unaware of most of what he means, and to the extent that the child possesses only inadequate and imperfect ways to

configure or theorize about what is communicated to him, there can be no linear causality between the parental unconscious and discourse on the one hand and what the child does with these on the other. All the Lacanian formulae on the unconscious as 'discourse of the Other', or the child as 'symptom of the parents', disregard the break, the profound reshaping, which occurs between the two, and which may be likened to a metabolism that breaks down food into its constituent parts and reassembles them into a completely different entity.

Metabolism – *metabole* – why, for that matter, speak of translation? Mainly because (as I have tried to show elsewhere [Laplanche, 1988]) every authentic translation presupposes a detranslation, i.e. postulates that what is presented to it is already in some way a translation. The translator is the human individual. He has been translating since early infancy, but it would be a misunderstanding of the word to regard it as a merely ideational process. The infantile sexual theories, which are one of the prototypes of this 'translation', imply the adoption of a comprehensive position – at one and the same time affective, imaginative, intellectual and active – relative to the adult message.

The individual will certainly not subsequently stop translating, as long as he lives. Usually, however, unlike the child, the adult merely translates his old translations, so to speak, turning out 'rehashes' of them. The comparison with translation, in the technical sense of the term, however imperfect it may be, can help us: the individual thinks he is translating Freud, but he is actually translating Strachey.

Yet we do not insist on a monopoly for this term and are quite ready to allow some equivalents to be added to it: construction (or self-construction), ideologization, or self-theorization (theory here being used in the sense of 'infantile sexual theories').

How, in relation to a process as old as Man himself, are we to place psychoanalysis, its unprecedented discovery and the dynamic it introduces – in other words, how are we to allow a more all-embracing self-construction, less subject to the dictates of the 'untranslated'? The answer is not by means of a lifting of amnesia but by a deconstruction of old constructions, concomitant with a (partial) lifting of repressions.

'What sort of material does he (the patient) put at our disposal . . . ?' asks Freud in 'Constructions in Analysis' (Freud, 1937d, p. 258). We may answer this question by organizing this material in a slightly different way from Freud:

- 1 Memories or fragments of memories, admittedly distorted and ideologized to a greater or lesser extent, but which it would be futile and hypocritical to place on the same level as fantasies, as this would be to deny that they are intentionally and irreducibly directed towards an actual past. It is within these memories that the major scenes are to be found,

scattered and often fragmented or repeated – the scenes that are in effect shot through with the enigmatic parental messages.

- 2 Constructions or ideologies or theories representing the way the individual synthesizes *his* existence *for himself*: approximately but also compulsively.
- 3 Derivatives of the original repressed, which is in itself inaccessible: what we call ‘unconscious formations’.

It is only for the sake of convenience that we distinguish these three types of material, because obviously they are constantly mingled, in a wide variety of compromises.

What is the contribution of Freud’s discovery? Is it tautologous – or simply a reaffirmation of something that has been substantially forgotten – to say that it is primarily . . . *analysis*: primarily, as Freud insists, a method? It could be defined as follows: ‘a method of free associations polarized by the transference’. Since I cannot here develop a conception of the transference (as transference of the enigmatic original-address situation), I must simply emphasize that psychoanalysis, along the chains of free association, analyses – that is to say, it breaks down material and reduces it to discrete components.

This is my view is the significance of the terminological changes introduced in ‘Constructions in Analysis’: it is a reaffirmation of the fact that the analyst’s interpretation correlates exactly with the free associations, whose course it merely punctuates by emphasizing their overlaps or nodal points. So there is nothing to add to Freud’s redefinition: “Interpretation” applies to something that one does to some single element of the material, such as an association or a parapraxis’ (1937d, p. 261). The German *deuten*, *Deutung*, is here much more eloquent, and much less ‘hermeneutic’ than our word ‘interpretation’: *deuten auf* means to indicate with a finger or with the eyes – ‘to point’ as the Lacanians would say.²⁰ We must never cease to emphasize the unprecedented, revolutionary and, at the same time, scientific character of the Freudian method. Even if this method appears to be something acquired once and for all, it must be continuously reconquered against the ever-recurring facile temptations, even in our circles, of an interpretation which ‘is its own sole authority’.²¹ The ‘revolution’ brought about by the Freudian method is constantly on the wane: a ‘permanent revolution’ is essential.

Let us proceed further in our assignment of positions to the different activities in analysis, following Freud very closely as we do so. What then is to be said of *construction*? Can we take the paper so entitled as justification for claiming that the analysis, and the analyst, ‘construct’ a new fate? Two points seem to us obvious in Freud’s thought as a whole: (1) what he means by the term ‘construction’ is always a *reconstruction* of the past²² and (2) the construction of a new fate for the subject, from the analysis, cannot be a task of the analyst. The one who translates his primal messages, who constructs

his fate, in analysis just as in childhood, is the analysand and only the analysand. When Freud is accused of not undertaking a 'psychosynthesis' and not helping the subject to construct himself, we must hear him thundering that synthesis, or the compulsion to synthesise, is so dominant (at least in the normal or neurotic subject) that 'whenever we succeed in analysing a symptom into its elements, in freeing an instinctual impulse from one nexus, it does not remain in isolation, but immediately enters into a new one' (Freud, 1919a, p. 161).

It would be too easy to show how this opposition of principle to any demiurgic manipulation is sometimes contradicted by the founder of psychoanalysis in his own practice. Here, however, we hold fast to the distinction between *reconstruction* in the analysis (a joint task of the analysand and the analyst) and *construction*, or a 'new version' of self which may result from the analysis, but is an operation of the analysand alone.

What is it that can be *reconstructed* in the analysis? In terms of our idea that the *original* repressed is not a forgotten memory, the reconstruction will not be essentially that of historical events of the past considered to have succumbed to amnesia. To be sure, we do not deny that fragments of memory, as well as less temporal elements, are drawn as such into the unconscious by secondary repression. The forgetting of the name 'Signorelli' remains a paradigm of this process (Freud, 1901b, chapter 1). However, the phrase emphasized by Freud, 'I have always known that', when placed in dialectical relation with that other phrase, 'I would never have thought of that', surely means that the reconstruction relates to something other than a history of pure events. It is a kind of reordering of elements supplied by the method, many of which are already within reach. In a nutshell (the demonstration would be by way of the example of reconstruction given by Freud in his 1937 paper), let us say that what is reconstructed is a certain process including the message, the attempt to translate the message, and what was lost in this translation: it is essentially the reconstruction of a defence or a repression.²³ The aim here is not to restore a more intact past (*whatever would one do with that?*) but to allow in turn a deconstruction of the old, insufficient, partial and erroneous construction, and hence to open the way to the new translation which the patient, in his compulsion to synthesize (or, as the German Romantics might have put it, in his 'drive to translate'), will not fail to produce.

In conclusion, the work of the analysand in the analysis is both determined and free.

It is *determined* first by the force which moves it: this driving force (*Triebkraft*) which impels the subject to translate has its origin in the forcible entry of the other and in the need to bind this forcible entry: the other (*der Andere*) of the enigmatic message in infancy, and then that internal 'other thing' (*das Andere*) that is the unconscious, and finally, the representative of the other that is the analyst.

However, it is *free* in that the other's messages, being enigmatic, will never yield up all their sense in a 'revelation' sufficient unto itself.

It is also *determined* by the work of association, which compels it again and again to pass through 'nodal points' which are not inventions of the analyst but derivatives of 'psychical reality', and to go back over the compulsory routes of old translations and repressions.

Yet it is *free* – and this point is basic – in that the repressed no longer acts completely blindly and mechanically but can be reintegrated in a wider and more significant context.

It is *free* in that this new translation is in the most favourable case a new formulation, richer and more all-embracing, precisely because it is preceded by a detranslation.

But it is *determined* in that the binding schemata are (or, if it is preferred, the subject's 'target language' is) not invented out of the blue: they are supplied to the analysand by an entire social and cultural environment, so that, like any discovery, every fate, however singular, is never more than half as new as it appears at first sight.

Summary

I have opposed the two principal conceptions of interpretation: the *determinist* conception predominant in Freud, in which the present is determined by the subject's actual past; and the *creative hermeneutic* conception which traces its origins back not only to Heidegger and Ricoeur but also to Jung; in the latter view, interpretation cannot but be retroactive, assigning significance to a meaningless past.

The author shows that Freud, in exactly the same way as the hermeneuts in the opposing camp, remains the prisoner of the antithesis of *factual reality* and a purely subjective interpretation close to *fantasy*. He lacks a third category, that of the *message* whose meaning is immanent, in particular taking the form of the mostly non-verbal sexual messages conveyed by the adult to the small child.

The development of the human individual is to be understood as an attempt to master, to translate, these enigmatic, traumatizing messages.

Analysis is first and foremost a method of deconstruction (ana-lysis), with the aim of clearing the way for a new construction, which is the task of the analysand.

Notes

- 1 Thus Viderman summarizes 'the historicist conception and its justifying postulate, that of determinism' as follows: 'In Freud, neurosis was a disease of memory; and the recovery of the subject's history, the re-establishment of a historical pattern broken by the effect of defences, followed by reintegration into a consciousness which had lost essentially traumatic memories or guilty wishes, were required to

prove by the effect of interpretational construction that access to the totality of the significant history is not only possible but also within the reach of psychoanalytic technique, and that once this task has been accomplished, we have completed the *restitutio ad integrum* that is the fundamental aim of analytic treatment' (Viderman, 1974, p. 350).

- 2 Such deliberately provocative formulations were bound to call down on Viderman the qualification of analyst-as-demiurge, if not the charge of so being. However, his reply or defence, the second stage of his argument, may well surprise: the analyst's interpretation, while it must be 'inventive', 'plural' and often even 'arbitrary', is nonetheless definitely guided by the hypothesis of a primordial biological id and innate primal schemata or fantasies: 'It is upon the deep, fundamental form of the primal fantasy that the modulations of the events which singularize the subject's history and which historicize him act'. Thus, in Ricoeur's rather than Viderman's terms, the *telos* of the interpretation is not arbitrary but in effect coincides with what constitutes each individual's *arche*: his primordial, hereditary and – why not? – phylogenetic id. Whatever he may say, Viderman is therefore contrasting one Freud with another, a Freud-as-historian with a Freud who could be described as a Kantian, in that he postulates *a priori* categories, the common heritage of all men which regulates their apprehension, their 'construction', of the real. And indeed, if the primal fantasies are so to speak the entities that control the whole of the subject's imagination, why should they not also, as it were homothetically, guide the 'poietic' activity of the analyst?
- 3 When Pontalis and myself rescued 'primal fantasies' from the total oblivion into which they had fallen in the analytical community, we certainly had no idea of the grandiose fate that was in store for them, in particular in the French analytical community. Such is the destiny of the exegete or the critic: because we rediscovered this concept and demonstrated its importance in the Freudian system, we virtually of necessity became its champions. Twenty-five years later, people are dumbfounded and incredulous when I affirm my steadfast opposition to the fable of fantasies transmitted phylogenetically from the father of the primal horde.
- 4 On this point as on many others, see Ricoeur's valuable study (Ricoeur, 1983–5) – in particular, volume I.
- 5 Aron, 1968, p. 124 (quoted by Sylvie Mesure on p. viii of the 1986 edition of Aron, 1938). Where historical relativism is accorded a definite place, nothing can stop it. Thus, in a way, certain formulae from the 'Introduction' could be wielded to justify the negation of the 'fact' of the gas chambers by an author such as Faurisson, or Maître Verges's relativization of the massacres of the Khmers Rouges. This is a use of relativism which Raymond Aron would, of course, have scorned.
- 6 However, it would be wrong to be over-fastidious by accepting only the first two, the traveller and the art lover, because all three are interdependent. The art lover has always obtained his supplies from the grave robber, and sometimes the traveller is all three in one: traveller, art lover and pillager. For instance, Lord Elgin completely stripped the Parthenon of its famous sculptures and took them away to the British Museum. Was this action harmful? We may still ask ourselves this question today when we see the destruction wrought in Athens by modern pollution. Might he not be said to have rescued the representations of the Panathenaea?
- 7 The two recent excavation sites in the two courtyards of the Louvre illustrate this antithesis, both of methods and between those implementing them: in the Cour Carrée, traditional archaeology for a moment regained its splendour, in unearthing the magnificent palace of Philippe Auguste and the helmet of Charles VI. By contrast, in the Cour Napoléon III, a *chantier du Président* par excellence, the daily life, craft techniques and socio-economic relations of olden times were

documented by painstaking work with the scraper and brush, chemical analysis and photography.

- 8 Among many others, the repeated reference to Livy's distortion of the Rome of the kings would show that Freud was no stranger to a relativistic questioning of historical objectivity – a questioning which antedates Raymond Aron's thesis by many years.
- 9 Note in passing the terms 'transitional or intermediate thoughts'. It is everything that is *relation* – in particular, that is history – that is devalued, derealized, in comparison with the supreme 'psychical reality' that is archaeological reality.
- 10 Letter to Fliess (21 Sept. 1897), Freud, 1985, p. 264.
- 11 [The French term *étayage* translates Freud's *Anlehnung* for which Laplanche suggests 'leaning-on' in English rather than Strachey's 'anaclisis'. In Laplanche's *Life and Death* (1970) Jeffrey Mehlman has translated it as 'propping'. See my commentary fn. 29, 'Introduction' to this volume, p. 25. Editor's note.]
- 12 *Geschwisterchen*: the German does not specify the sex of the sibling; *Kind* [child] is also neuter in German.
- 13 Masson the editor comments: 'A *fuero* was an ancient Spanish law still in effect in some particular city or province, guaranteeing that region's immemorial privileges' (Freud, 1985, p. 208).
- 14 The concept of an 'address' is essential for understanding works of culture, as well as for restoration of the junction between these works and the 'transference'. See below, pp. 221ff.
- 15 There is no doubt that Freud, and Jones after him, use the word 'symbol' in the psychoanalytic sense to denote not any indirect and polysemous representation, but only ones in which what is symbolized is unconscious. In this way the symbol is directly linked to the old formulation dating from 1895: it is the symptom as a production of the unconscious, which is a 'mnemonic symbol'.
- 16 I am, of course, here using the word 'language' exactly as Freud does, to denote any kind of expression of psychical life, and not just verbal language (cf. Freud, 1913j).
- 17 'My father is beating me.' Is this unconscious fantasy a buried individual memory, or is it not? Is it or is it not an archaic schema, handed down by heredity, a kind of fifth 'primal fantasy' to be added to the other four? If one's answer to these two questions is no, as ours is, why should we not once and for all cast doubt on the idea that the representational contents of the id are, on the one hand, hereditary schemata of memory and, on the other, repressed memories?
- 18 That is the usual sense of 'afterwardsness' in Freud (*Nachträglichkeit*): an action deferred from the past to the present. (see Laplanche, 1991b, pp. 338–9, for an explanation of the use of 'afterwardsness' and 'Notes on Afterwardsness' in this volume, pp. 260–5).
- 19 This is the sense which the hermeneuts attribute to Freud's afterwardsness: a retroaction of the present on the past, reversing the arrow of time (cf. Thomä & Kächele, 1988, pp. 111–15).
- 20 I know that *deuten* is connected by etymology with an ancient root (from which *deutsch* is also derived) meaning to make popular or public. However, there is nothing to suggest any communication between etymology and present-day connotations.
- 21 In my 1968 paper (Laplanche, 1968a) I dwell at length, in connection with the works of Ricoeur, on the opposition between the Freudian method and all forms of hermeneutics. Guardian and guarantor of the method, guardian and guarantor of the transference (in my sense of the term): the 'function' or 'task' of the analyst could be redefined from these two points of view.

- 22 'his work of construction, or, if it is preferred, of reconstruction' (Freud, 1937d, p. 259)
- 23 It is in the reconstruction that some reference to theory can – albeit in great moderation – be introduced. This will be the theory of repression (and, more generally, of defence) on the one hand, but also, on the other, a knowledge of the ideologies which served as the individual's translational framework. Foremost among these ideological systems is the Oedipus complex itself. A compilation of the 'levels of theory' and their involvement in the treatment remains to be made. For instance, we might ask whether an injection of Kleinianism is of the same order as a use of the Oedipal reference, in so far as the latter (but not the former) merely retraces the paths of a structure of family relations offered culturally to the individual since childhood as a privileged system of self-theorization (for material that could be used to help answer this question, see Société Psychanalytique de Paris, 1989).

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THE END OF ANALYSIS

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Source. Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink and Maire Jaanus (eds), *Reading Seminar XI*. Albany: SUNY Press 1995, pp. 243–256.

I

In my first talk here I will speak of the end of analysis. I will try to show how Lacan conceived of this moment of treatment at the time of Seminar XI.

In my second talk I will discuss the various transformations in Lacan's view of the end of analysis, and the final view evident in his teaching and writing. The very fact that Seminar XI was published in 1973 shows that its author still thought valid what he had outlined ten years earlier, and it is true that, in Seminar XI, Lacan took the first steps regarding the end of analysis that led to his later invention of the "pass" and the positing of the requirements of the final stages of analysis. If there is such a thing as the end of treatment, if analysis is not interminable, if a point can be reached where it can be described as an irreversible process, then its structure has to be defined, and what is expected has to be outlined and specified.

I would like to point out that the continuity from Seminar XI to Lacan's later writings can be seen in the preface, written in 1976, to Seminar XI. There one finds the word "pass" and its connections with Lacan's work. (ix) The "Founding Act of the School," in *Television, a Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, was written at the same time as the last chapter of the seminar. In 1967, Lacan wrote "The October 9 Proposition Regarding the Psychoanalyst of the School." In this text, not yet available in English, he states his view of analysis. He invents a procedure to permit a kind of test or testimony. I will not go into that in any detail today because I would rather concentrate first on the pages in Seminar XI where he talks more specifically about the end of analysis. He does so in chapter 1, "Excommunication," and in chapter 20, "In You More Than You." I find it remarkable that Seminar XI is fraught with and framed by, opens with and closes with, notions of what should happen towards the end of analysis. This points out that the

unfolding of analysis cannot be detached from the way an analyst has to posit him or herself in relation to the analysand, in accordance with what is to be aimed at, i.e., what is to be done in view of its termination. The very concepts Lacan considers to be fundamental in psychoanalysis are caught up in this framework and in his definition of the end of analysis.

Something to be kept in mind when reading Seminar XI is that in the fall of 1963, Lacan announced he would give a seminar on "The Names of the Father." He gave only one lecture on this subject in November 1963 (cf. *Television*). He never adopted that title again for a seminar. Instead, a few months later, in January 1964, he started the seminar on *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. It has been suggested that Seminar XI should be read in light of the missing seminar on "The Names of the Father." In the meantime, Lacan had taken a radical stand against the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA). He was forced to leave it, or "excommunicated" as he puts it. But I think of Lacan as having resigned from the IPA because it is quite clear he would have been kept on as a member if he had agreed to modify his way of analyzing and teaching. I think this is a capital point, because it shows he would not compromise on his method of analyzing and teaching, and the main difference between him and the members of the IPA was that he did not accept identification with the analyst as either a means or an end in analytic treatment.

There is an other important issue in Seminar XI and that is that Lacan distances himself from Freud's position. We see an instance of this structural disagreement with Freud when Lacan stresses that Freud is concerned with desire as an object. (13) There Lacan is referring to one of his own earlier conceptions of desire, for he first states that the subject's desire is for the Other's desire. He does not eliminate this view altogether, but certainly modulates its meaning. What an analyst has to bring forth in analysis is the object as cause of desire.

The analyst's position is completely transformed if s/he no longer occupies the place of the desired object but rather the place of the object that causes desire. The encounter with the object is always missed, always fails, and one must separate from the object as cause. As long as the analyst serves as the object of desire, or acts as if s/he were that object, transference can only be a repetition of past events and the end of analysis can only be prepared in terms of identification. But if the analyst occupies the place of the object that causes desire, the aim of analysis is no longer a renewed alienation due to the adoption of an ideal object; it becomes detached from ideals, and leads—via separation—to a detachment from the object. I will not go any further into the subject of alienation and separation here because Éric Laurent is devoting two lectures to it.

In the first chapter of Seminar XI, Lacan refers to himself as having been made the object of a deal. He reduces the IPA's antagonism towards him by framing the problem that is really at stake: "What can, what must be

expected of psychoanalysis, and what if this expectation proves to be a hindrance, to what extent does it lead to some kind of failure?" (6) What we might ask regarding the word "failure" here is, "What is it that has to fail?" If the analyst's role (e.g., Lacan's) is to occupy the place of object *a*, what has to fail is the maintenance of the analyst in the position of an ideal. This is why Lacan creates a structure for his school that eliminates such idealization, and when he explicitly compares the IPA to the Church he denounces the religious structure of past psychoanalytic communities. His strivings to construct another basis for psychoanalytic praxis are linked to his desire to create a purely lay group, not only attracting people who are not medical doctors, as Freud had tried to do, but also introducing people who do not practice analysis as a profession, non-analysts.

"If the praxis of analysis does not belong to the religious domain, can it be instated in the scientific field?" (7) Lacan answers that question in very elaborate terms, but his main concern is to raise another question: "What is the analyst's desire?" While this question is left out of science, it is of the utmost importance in analysis. It is because of his desire that Freud was able to create psychoanalysis and encounter the unconscious. And yet this desire has to find its expression and use strictly in language.

The tension between language and the object is developed in these first pages that introduce the four fundamental concepts, as the core of the transmission of psychoanalysis from the analyst to the analysand. What is the analyst's desire, and what does the transmission of psychoanalysis from the analyst to the analysand involve? What does transmission actually effect through the analysis of a subject, if it is not the particular tension between object and language, where a subject has to take a stand at a certain point?

The training of an analyst has nothing to do with age, experience, or a certain number of successful cases. Lacan states that training is complete only when a subject emerges as the agent of a particular desire, the analyst's desire. This has to take place at the end of the treatment.

In the last chapter of Seminar XI one finds a series of queries, one of which is: how can the love object become the object of desire? Such a transformation has to take place during analysis, because the love object is identified with, whereas the object of desire has to emerge as such. A similar point is made in Seminar XX, and I would suggest that in Seminar XI we see some of the main lines Lacan develops later.

What, Lacan asks at the beginning of the last chapter of Seminar XI, is the peculiar truth the praxis of psychoanalysis brings to light? Is the psychoanalyst an impostor? How can object *a* be the equivalent of the search for truth in science, but on a subjective and not on a universal level? How can psychoanalysis have any bearing on sexuality, since it deals with drives only to the extent that they are present in words or propositions? How does one get rid of transference? Does the expression "liquidation of transference" have any real meaning? Does it mean that, at the end of an analysis, there is

no unconscious any more, since transference is the enactment of the reality of the unconscious? (146) Or is it the subject-supposed-to-know that must be liquidated as such? (264) Is there a type of transference that does not effectuate this stitching up of the unconscious? What is left over from transference onto the analyst?

To get an idea of what Lacan is aiming at, we have to note that in this chapter there are two definitions of love. One refers to narcissistic love: "as a specular mirage, love is essentially a deception." And at the end we have another definition of love as limitless, because it is outside the limits of the law. As a phenomenon, love, whether narcissistic or not, is always experienced as boundless. Therefore the distinction Lacan makes is difficult to grasp. But, perhaps we can, through an analogy, distinguish two types of satisfaction. In one case, the subject sees him or herself in relation to his or her ideals, and manages to satisfy those ideal images. In analysis, the analyst is at first put in the place of the ideal, and the subject loves the analyst and him or herself, as the ideal ego relates to the ego-ideal. But the subject does not obtain satisfaction in analysis at that level. The analyst has to situate him or herself and regulate transference in such a way that the greatest possible distance is maintained between the ideal and object *a*. No identification with the analyst is thus possible, and the subject experiences a gap; s/he misses the object, becoming the lack thereof. Thus love as narcissistic is watered down.

As an example of an object Lacan chooses the gaze; it is important to note that he states that the gaze is already there, just as he states that the symbolic is already there, determining the subject, subjecting him to the Other's signifiers. Likewise, the subject is also captured by the object of an Other that is already there, that s/he is bent on incarnating.

Going back to Freud's view of hypnosis (in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*) as a process of putting a shining object in the place of an ideal, a lot was discovered about the unconscious. But it was only by renouncing hypnosis that analysis could truly get underway, i.e., by not putting object *a* in the place of the ego-ideal, but by separating from object *a*. I would like to emphasize this because a number of people think their analysis is over once they have instated object *a* in the place of their ideal. They cleave to this representation, which is tantamount to putting a negative sign in front of the ideal and acting accordingly, as if they were the cause of their analyst's desire, until they realize that this belief in impersonating the cause of desire is of no substance. In such a case, nothing has really changed: the analyst still embodies object *a*, embodying the patient's object in an inverted hypnosis, to permit the patient to enact his or her relation to such an object. Fantasy has by no means been traversed.

The traversing or crossing of the fundamental fantasy means that object *a* has to be separated either from the patient, or from the analyst where it is first located temporarily. The drive is written $S \diamond D$, and while Freud describes it as a grammatical structure, Lacan reduces it to a formal

structure, accurately expressed by silence. It is Lacan's way of describing the drive as a revolving around the object, ever missing its aim, but nevertheless repeating its trajectory in order to obtain satisfaction.

Fantasy is the subject's only way of grasping onto reality. But the drive, embodied in object *a*, is the only extra-analytic access thereto. To make this clear we have to stress the difference between what is achieved by the drive and what is achieved by fantasy. Fantasy is a means of deriving satisfaction from any situation whatsoever, no matter how. The drive is not such a construction, because it is blind and knows not what it seeks. Lacan speaks of its opacity (273). And yet, once the traversing or crossing of the plane of identification has occurred, the fundamental fantasy becomes the drive.

We can see how the end of analysis, in order to fit in with the distinction between the real and reality, must needs be an end without identification: the unconscious can be interminably interpreted, for it is words, words, words. The drive, on the other hand, has to be experienced as an encounter with the real; but in analysis this encounter cannot be just a reminder that a drive exists. It has to be told. It must be signified by an interruption of the session or a sign of acknowledgment by the analyst, consequently creating the subject's question: "Now what? How can I speak of the unspeakable?" One cannot identify with the object; one can only space it out with signifiers around the gap. And this has to be worked through, several times, for, according to Lacan, it is not a mirage or mere illusion, it is the cause of desire. That is the only way of crossing the plane of identification. The analyst cannot be absorbed in the identification.

Furthermore, we must remember that the analyst only holds the place of object *a*, as a semblance of object *a*, modeled on object *a*. Object *a* is not a substance—as is clear in the case of the gaze, for instance, or of no-thing, nothing as an object—it is a logical consistency. The patient always has a tendency to think that the analyst is impersonating demand, which helps him or her materialize the Other's demand and the drive, and to clothe demand with the illusion that what the analyst wants is the subject's castration. It is true that the patient cannot realize what is going on until s/he recognizes his or her own castration (§). There is a difficult point in this operation where the subject is no longer represented by a signifier, but is a void; and where the analyst is just as much of a void, since the subject realizes s/he is nothing but a place holder.

An experience of the loss of all ideals goes hand in hand with the experience of the loss of all desire, since the terms do not hold anything but emptiness. However, from a phenomenological standpoint, desire is represented by anxiety.

Fortunately, as Hume would have put it, habit takes the brunt of this depersonalization, and is helped by a kind of curiosity or "wait and see" approach, that comes with the knowledge that one is hitting on some kind of

truth. The drive is not reduced to just staying alive, even if it becomes a very obscure function.

Now when the subject is out of touch with desire, s/he tries to find evidence of desire in the Other, and to understand it as the required sacrifice of a life. This passage—about which Lacan speaks in Seminar XI when he takes the example of the Holocaust, the horror of the concentration camps, as the offering of a sacrifice to some obscure divinity—is immediately followed by a categorization of three kinds of love: one (derived from Spinoza), *amor intellectualis dei*, the intellectual love of God, founds love as one man's desire, as being his essence. But it is dependent on signifiers: the divine attributes of God. This cannot be the way out for analysis, for we cannot be satisfied with a belief or reference to a proposition based on a negative fact.

The second kind of love is linked to the desire to sacrifice all that is "pathological," i.e., to suppress the object and even murder it. However, Lacan refers to Kant and Sade to show us that this gives the object, inasmuch as it is mettle with the superego or ideal, an outcome that is not ethical but that merely embraces the body of moral laws, forever destined to annihilate the drive; it is a kind of built-in turning around against the object.

Lacan points to another way out: a third kind of love that has renounced its object. A love that carries through what had already started with the paternal metaphor, a first step in the renunciation of jouissance. We can only interpret it as one specific type of sacrifice, that of the previous way of getting some pleasure or jouissance out of the relation that the subject held fast to in fantasy. The subject can then be prepared for another kind of alienation, reversing the former S_1 over $\$$, into $\$$ over S_1 , producing the signifier that has led him so far through the deadlock of analysis.

This Lacan terms new-found knowledge, the discovery and exploration of the limits of desire, and the land of limitless love. It is the logical moment where the choice of becoming an analyst can be posited; it is also the moment at which the problem of transmission comes in. What can a subject say of such an experience? Lacan provided a certain number of tools or devices to express it.

In "Analysis Terminable and Interminable," Freud views the end of analysis pessimistically. He suggests that there is nothing that can be done to diminish the length of the process. He gives several examples, one being that of the "Wolf Man" to whom, after a long stalemate in the treatment, he had given one year to terminate; the other being that of Ferenczi, who thought analysis could be made irreversible and definitive, if one had previously analyzed negative transference, by provoking it in analysis itself.

In the case of the Wolf Man, Freud's setting of a deadline suddenly provoked memories, including the famous dream that gave the Wolf Man his name. But, as Freud notes, although the patient got better and was readier to confront difficulties and hardships later on in life, a paranoid fragment of the neurosis was left untouched. In other words, something of the unconscious

was unveiled, but a fragment of the real, the core of the unconscious as it were (what Lacanians call object *a*), remained disturbingly active.

As for Ferenczi, Freud stated that, based on his own practice and experience, it was not possible to bring into the transference something that was not there and that the patient never alluded to. Here again we can measure the Lacanian venture against these odds: by impersonating object *a*, the analyst brings into the transference something quite alien to the patient's stream of thoughts, be it conscious or unconscious.

Lastly, Freud warns us that something remains forever out of the reach of analysis, the bedrock of castration, as he calls it. Lacan overrides this objection by setting as a necessary condition the subjectifying of castration. Freud's recommendation to analysts was to go through another round of analysis every five years. What has all of this led up to nowadays? To the setting up of the analyst as a model. Lacan points out this deviation and explains its origin in Freud's view of desire as an object to be attained. Lacan's answer to this is that the analyst must aim at achieving absolute difference, as he puts it in the last paragraph of Seminar XI.

This is what makes the transmission of analytic experience and praxis so difficult. How is one to discern this difference, if it is absolute, i.e., incommensurate with any other experience? How is one to describe it or sketch it as a fact to be contemplated by anyone else?

II

Strictly speaking, Lacan does not mention the "pass" in Seminar XI; it comes later in his work. Yet, as I pointed out in my talk last week, he was aware of the need to create such a procedure for his school, the *École freudienne de Paris*. In Seminar XI, Lacan alludes to this need: "The context is an urgent one." (31) Urgent in terms of redefining the aims and praxis of psychoanalysis, but also in rediscovering the concepts it cannot do without.

Lacan notes that two different possibilities exist after one has "obtained the satisfaction that marks the end of one's analysis" (viii): (1) A need to grant someone else's urgent request to begin analysis; (2) A choice to run "the risk of attesting to the lying truth."

In the first case, Lacan disconnects the offer of analysis from the offer of Samaritan aid. It does not spring from compassion but from a request, which has to be duly weighed, to encounter truth. What the analysand is offered is an encounter with "the real, [that] shows its antimony to all verisimilitude" (ix), an encounter with that which he has in every way avoided thus far.

In the second case, Lacan refers to another kind of request, which may sound absurd at first, since it is tied up with a pack of lies, "the mirage of truth." (viii)

It is the second task that concerns me here. There would be no "Lacan Seminar in English," and no school for that matter, if we ignored

transmission, if we believed that what happens in an analysis were not transmissible, or if we contented ourselves with discovering the difference between meaning and knowledge, knowledge by acquaintance, as Bertrand Russell defines it (to translate *connaissance*), and refused to reduce it to knowledge by description (to translate *savoir*).

There would also be no recounting of clinical cases, regarding particular phases of an individual's analysis in which something changes. People do not change because they are given loads of explanations or interpretations; this merely adds to what they already know without fostering any fundamental changes. People change under the impact of the real, which dislocates the chains of associations they have built around this real. Clinical cases are interesting only inasmuch as they describe the change that occurs in the subject through his or her encounter with *jouissance* as real.

What can be transmitted if this aspect of psychoanalysis is left out? Psychoanalysis has at least one point in common with culture: if it is not transmitted it ceases to exist. When Lacan laid down the foundations of the pass, he termed the driving force behind such a wish "enthusiasm." The desire to undergo the pass is not pure, just as the analyst's desire is not pure. It doesn't have much to do with the scientific desire to discover the real as written with symbols. Yet it is something of a scientific calling, particularly when it finds its roots in the wish to convey to others how psychoanalysis worked for one individual.

There is a sense of novelty at first, and the freshness of this surprise can be just as exciting as the discovery of a new gene, or of an unknown star. Something prompts us to tell the world about such discoveries. For an individual, analysis presents a wealth of such discoveries, and the world is not the same once they have been revealed. The individual may easily find him or herself in the position of a scientific researcher when s/he tries to add his or her own stone to the edifice of knowledge.

Then why does Lacan situate psychoanalysis outside of science, and why does he, a number of years later, declare that the pass was a failure? How come most of the schools that consider Lacan their founder have so many quarrels over the pass? Why has it become such a sore point, dividing analysts into irreconcilable groups? Some supposedly Lacanian schools have discarded it altogether, while others have suppressed its consequence, namely the nomination for three years of those who undergo the pass to the post of Analyst of the School, with an obligation during that period to account for their experience.

Let us take a close look at what the pass consists of. As proposed in 1967, it does not require the analyst to report on his or her analysands, as is the case in other psychoanalytic schools. On the contrary, the analysand is asked to report on his or her own analysis; s/he has to give an account of the analyst's interventions, handling of the transference, silences, and words, and of how this affected the analysand's relation to his or her unconscious and

jouissance. The analysand has to acknowledge the analyst's skill or assess his or her failures, according to his or her own judgment.

The analysand who wishes to go through the pass reports this to a "*pass-seur*," a term I have chosen to translate into English by the compound word "pass-bearer," because this particular subject has been designated by his or her analyst as being in the pass at that particular moment; Lacan says that s/he *is* the pass. His or her role is to carry the message s/he has been entrusted with. S/he discloses this message to a group of people, the "Cartel of the Pass." But, in fact, there are two pass-bearers, and they give conflicting or at least dissimilar accounts, since they cannot but filter what has been told them according to their own interests and structures.

The Cartel of the Pass, made up of five persons chosen according to certain criteria that I will not go into now, listens to the pass-bearers' accounts but not the candidate's. I have chosen to translate into English the word *passant* with the word "pass-farer," rather than go on using the word "candidate," because I think it is important to stress not the nomination as Analyst of the School, but the fact that the pass-farer has to reconstruct the pass as a sort of journey. This focuses attention far more on the recollection of the moments of his analysis that have been significant.

So much for a very brief account of the procedure of the pass.

Now let us turn to the operations that have to be accomplished prior to the pass:

- 1) Traversing or crossing of fantasy.
- 2) Identification with the symptom.
- 3) Destitution of the subject.

I will limit myself to these operations here, even though I am aware that they do not exhaust the subject.

1) Traversing or crossing of fantasy

"The truth of the subject," states Lacan in the first chapter of Seminar XI (5), "does not reside in himself, but, as analysis shows, in an object that is of its nature concealed." The subject cannot be identified except by his or her particular link to the object. The so-called crossing of fantasy can be the awareness that such an indispensable object necessarily exists, for its existence determines the subject in his or her relation to jouissance and to language. This object is the only attribute of the subject that s/he unconsciously recognizes as such and that determines his or her attitude towards reality. Such an object is a factor of inertia and causes the subject to interpret or even anticipate whatever happens to him or her in the same monotonous way. It is a prefabricated mold that gives all events the same shape.

Fantasy is constructed in such a way as to protect the subject from the Other's desire, and subsequently robs him or her of whatever s/he might experience that does not fit into this mold.

To put it simply, fantasy says, "I know what the Other wants, and I can provide it." For instance, if you take Freud's article, "A Child is Being Beaten," the fantasy, after having been worked through, gradually appears to the subject's mind as stating, "The Other's wish, his desire as far as I am concerned, is to beat me." It is restated by Lacan as the barring of the subject by the chain of signifiers, but what is left out of such a chain is an unfulfilled desire. Object *a* comes to stand for that unfulfilled desire. Having to part from it, when the subject realizes the analyst is only conforming to this pattern, does not mean the subject is deprived of this pattern, but merely that s/he recognizes that all his or her strivings to get hold of such an object are useless; the object is then understood as a lure to keep desire from failing, a gap in meaning filled in with an erroneous interpretation on the subject's part.

I think that we may safely say that, in Lacan's work, "castration" refers to the absence of symbolic inscription of a sexual relationship. There is no guarantee of a sexual relationship with the Other. The Other is barred or doesn't exist as such, and is, consequently, a lacking, desiring Other. Fantasy is a means of stopping up that lack or gap.

The crossing of fantasy can be reduced to discovering that: recognizing the lack in the Other. It brings a subject to realize that the Other, albeit non-existent, requires his or her jouissance. The latter has to be sacrificed as "a thing of nothing," calculated in terms of time and work, and not necessarily a pound of flesh or the sacrifice of a life.

2) *Identification with the symptom*

Here we have to distinguish carefully between symptoms—such as agoraphobia, anorexia, and sadistic or masochistic traits—and the psychoanalytic symptom as a basic structure. The symptom in the latter sense is a clinical category, whereas the fantasy is a trans-clinical category.

Identification with the symptom (valid for obsession and hysteria, though not for perversion or psychosis) requires one to be attentive to how one always manages to obtain the same perception of the real, regardless of the guises in which it presents itself. The symptom is as systematic as Descartes' systematic doubt; it is a method, more so than Descartes', because it is at first unconscious. Being attentive to how it functions on the basis of the intertwining of a certain type of jouissance and certain master signifiers means figuring out retroactively what one had understood or done and being able to anticipate a good deal as well. Since one realizes one is incurable at that level, one learns to make do with it.

Nevertheless, it is not sufficient to say, as a pass-farer to a pass-bearer, "I am an obsessive neurotic," or "I am basically an hysteric." One has to be able

to gauge the effect it has on one's perception and, especially in one's role as analyst, how it can limit one's possibilities as far as analytic action is concerned.

3) *Destitution of the subject*

If it is a necessity to be able, at a certain point in analysis, to recognize one's particular relation to castration, it is just as necessary to let go of the particular jouissance castration produces. It is probably the most difficult aim to achieve, since jouissance from castration is a protection against any possible form of castration. In analysis, the subject first has to be instituted, just as the symptom has to emerge and the fantasy has to be constructed. At the end, the subject has to bring about his or her own destitution, and his or her castration really derives from the fact that the Other is barred (what Freud described as the mother's castration). This amounts to the destitution of the subject-supposed-to-know, and it also goes against the satisfaction stemming from transference; it deprives the subject of finding him or herself lovable as an ideal ego contemplated by the ego-ideal.

But it is not the same as narcissistic deflation; it goes much further, entailing a loss of fundamental references. At this stage, ethical principles have to be reconsidered, since they were, up until then, just another way of finding approval or love as compensation for whatever renunciations the subject had imposed upon him or herself. When a subject reaches this boundary s/he can no longer ask him or herself what his or her analyst's desire is, but what range is left to his or her own desire.

In Seminar XI, Lacan emphasizes that desire is not boundless, for it finds its limit somewhere, even though it crosses the threshold of pleasure; the pleasure principle is a principle of homeostasis, limiting the range of human possibilities. (30–31)

Desire, as you know, is indestructible; pleasure is just a child of fortune. Like happiness, it happens or it doesn't. On the other hand, "after the mapping of the subject in relation to object *a*, the experience of fantasy becomes the drive." One may ask oneself how, at the end of analysis, desire and the drive can beget the idea to practice analysis, since they do not blend; rather they maintain an antagonistic relationship to one another. They aim at different levels of the good.

Can we define the particular blend of desire that emerges after analysis? We have a number of paths to follow in Seminar XI: desire for absolute difference, desire akin to the slave's desire, desire of the analyst as a pivotal point in analysis, desire as related to the Other's desire, and the desire of different psychoanalysts to become the unbarred Other (e.g., Abraham's wish to play the part of the perfect mother, and Ferenczi's to become the son and father at the same time).

THE END OF ANALYSIS

Inasmuch as desire is framed by words, it is related to the drive—that is the logical structure of demand. (164) Both are related to language, and the drive is a “*konstante Kraft*,” a constant force.

The main difference between these two threads of human life is perhaps the following: the drive achieves satisfaction taking no heed of repression; it mocks repression, as Freud says. Desire is essentially dissatisfaction enjoyed. But neither of these refers to the subject's own good. This stands out even better when we consider the drive, because the object, as far as the drive is concerned, is “strictly speaking, of no importance. It is a matter of indifference.” (168)

Desire for an object is conditioned by the object's attributes. Yet it cannot be said that the analyst's desire concerns any particular object in that sense. Should we then consider the analyst's desire as having no object? Lacan designated this desire as a desire to obtain absolute difference, as addressed, as it were, to alterity as such. We can perceive it, using Freud's terms, as one of the features of anaclitic love, where what is sought, as opposed to the case of narcissistic love, is love for something unknown or radically other (“On Narcissism,” S.E. XIV, 69). This love of the unknown is radically different from the love addressed to the subject-supposed-to-know. It goes from what is known and has been experienced to love for what is still unknown. It is that kind of love that is at the origin of science. But the subject of desire is evacuated from science, whereas it is the main protagonist in psychoanalysis.

We can attempt to forge a sort of amalgamation between love for what we do not know—the desire for otherness, for what is not yet part of knowledge em;and the drive that can exert itself in revolving around any kind of object. We may solder them together; that is the word used by Freud to describe the stuff the drive is made of: the “soldering” together of an object and a drive (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, S.E. VII, 125).

THE CAUSE OF THE SUBJECT AS AN ILL-TIMED ACCIDENT

Lacan, Sartre and Aristotle

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The concept of *the subject* does not occur in Freud's texts. It is first and foremost a philosophical concept. In philosophy, the subject is traditionally defined as foundation or ground, a ground that can have many names (the Idea, God)—which implies that, as a concept, the subject is not and never has been identical with the ego. The modern (i.e., starting in the Renaissance) association of the subject with the empirical ego in philosophy is always problematic, never presupposed. The subject in Lacan is neither philosophical foundation nor psychological ego. The Lacanian subject is not an answer to the question of what the ground or foundation of being or of cognition might be: to answer this philosophical question via psychoanalysis one should rather look to its concept of fantasy.¹ But why, then, keep the concept of subject, and how can the Lacanian subject be understood? Understanding, to be precise, is not an issue as far as the subject is concerned; the subject does not make sense—in at least two senses of the expression. The subject is, rather, what resists sense, what resists being reduced to other founding conditions like “language,” “discourses,” “structures,” “historically variable discursive practices.”

The subject constitutes an anti-reductionist concept.

Concerning sense, the subject poses the same problem we are faced with when we expound the various fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, namely the traditional question of their reference. What do the real, the drive, the unconscious refer to? They constitute negative concepts. The fact that they do not refer to or constitute entities or essences is the point. They are comparable to what Sartre, in *Being and Nothingness*, called *négatités*.²

The anthropological question of man's being is classically formulated as the question of whether everything can be explained by and reduced to teleological finality or the causality of modern sciences. The correlative concepts—determinism and freedom—constitute one of the eternal and undecidable questions of philosophy. If man's being cannot be conceived of as essentially different from organic and inorganic beings, if man's being is reducible to determining and causal factors, then it would be out of the question to talk about concepts like freedom, choice, and responsibility. To claim that responsibility, choice, and freedom never occur in psychoanalytic literature would be imprudent, but it would not be imprudent to claim that they are rare. The simple, trivial, explanation goes that the meaning of the subject, which freedom, choice and responsibility usually imply, indicates a concept that psychoanalysis tackles: the subject would be subject "for" in the sense of being the foundation of cognition, sense, and acts. The well-rehearsed counterpoint could be repeated yet again: that, on the contrary, in psychoanalysis the subject is represented by signifiers, subject to and product of the symbolic order, language, historically variable discursive practices . . . and therefore anything but free and responsible.

A slightly less trivial way to put this would be to ask whether the use of the concept of drive and the unconscious in psychoanalysis makes the subject reducible to a deterministic construction of man's being and thus renders the concept of freedom meaningless. Put this way, the question is, of course, rhetorical, since I intend here to show how the Freudian concept of the unconscious and the Lacanian concept of "the real" form an unexpected alliance with Sartre's concepts of freedom, choice and responsibility—against variations on reductionism and determinism.

Lacan agrees with the phenomenological rejection of what Sartre calls "the serious man's" reduction of man's being to "interior" psychological or "exterior" sociological determining factors (which today goes by the name of "discursive constructions"). The idea of the real is what makes Lacanian psychoanalysis resistant to a historicist, discursive interpretation of any issue, be it the question of the body, sex, subjectivity, or the social.³

The argument or discussion is as old as psychoanalysis itself. A conflict between the proponents of biologism on the one hand and culturalism on the other has haunted psychoanalysis since its beginning. Freud was careful and explicit in distancing himself from both positions. To make a very long story short, his fundamental concept of the drive makes him resistant to both biologicistic and culturalist reductionism. The enigmatic status of this drive as a concept, its baffling of clear, univocal interpretations testifies to its resistance to well-known reductions. Freud himself did not make things easier for us when he called the theory of the drives "our mythology."⁴

Once the fundamental concept of *drive* is mentioned, the concept of the unconscious follows in turn. And didn't Lacan define the unconscious as "structured like a language" and as being "the discourse of the Other"? So,

are we not buried in discourses? No doubt. Apparently, Sartre proudly pronounced that "he did not have an unconscious." And is Sartre not right when he criticizes Freud and psychoanalysis for being just another variation on reductionism, which his programme of "existential psychoanalysis" is supposed to reform?

Freedom

When we read Sartre's extremely rich *Being and Nothingness* and his related exposition of freedom, his trouble defining this concept exhibits more or less the same difficulties we are faced with when we expound Lacan's interpretation of the Freudian concept of the unconscious.

Freedom to Sartre has to be understood in opposition to determinism. And what matters for him is to avoid "tedious discussion between determinists and the proponents of free will." [*liberté d'indifférence*]. To be brief, Sartre's concept of freedom is not a question of voluntarism, of whether man has a free will or not. What matters is to define freedom in a way that does not make it reducible to any variation on determinism. If freedom is presented as a question of voluntarism, as the free choice between alternatives, one has to look for the motive, for the interest which has determined the actual choice. If the motive is understood as cause, determinism is preserved. When freedom is a question of free will it becomes a question of whether it is "me" and "my" decisions that determine the act or a question of "me" being driven by external motives—maybe even "unconscious drives."

Sartre presents two examples to support his point. The first belongs to the repertoire of existentialism, namely the example of the man standing in front of the abyss and deliberating the possibility of suicide. Sartre's conclusion is that nothing prevents the man from jumping and nothing prevents him from not jumping. Whether he jumps or does not jump is caused by nothing. It is a question of anxiety confronted with the future, since nothing can either prevent or provoke the suicide. What you are not yet does not determine what you are. I am free to throw myself into the abyss and I am free not to do so. This is indeed a well-worn example and can lead to a lot of humanistic talk about freedom and choice, taken as a question of voluntarism.

But Sartre's next example ought to have immunized him against such an interpretation. The compulsive gambler is a responsible person who has decided to stop gambling, as social ruin is threatening. He is determined not to give in to his hitherto irresistible inclination. He has made a decision; he is motivated—as the therapists claim one has to be; he has all the best intentions. And then, he just has to approach the gambling joint and put down a bet or throw the dice. The very moment when his commonsensical motive and his idea of having a free will are suspended, is the precise moment where his freedom shows itself. Freedom is the very negation of determinism. Nothing prevents him from approaching the gambling joint, not even his motives,

intentions, deliberations, decisions, and will. In this example, it is thus a question of anxiety towards the past, as prior motives, intentions, decisions, deliberations collapse and show themselves to be impotent. What you were does not determine what you are (not yet).

The important point, as far as compulsion is concerned—be it gambling, smoking, alcoholism, and drug addiction—is not to start asking whether it is all a matter of psychological, “psychogenic” compulsion of mysterious character or—in the case of compulsory smokers, alcoholics, addicts—a physiological addiction to nicotine, alcohol, and heroin. Nor is it a question of the pluralistic answers common today (nobody gives univocal explanations; “cause” is usually a combination of several factors, we are told; a bit of child psychology and a bit of biology, usually going under the name of “genes”). Sartre’s point stresses that it is exactly Nothing that makes the gambler, the smoker, the drug addict continue their fatal addiction. And here Sartre would catch you off guard, since the talk of fatality is yet another attempt to restore causality, by easing the kind of determinism called fatalism in through the backdoor.

Usually “moralists” try to explain the situation as a struggle between common sense and passions—pathological interests—and claim that anxiety is just another not-wanting-to-know about monstrous unconscious motives: anxiety is really unacknowledged fear. But Sartre’s point is rather that the gambler, smoker, and drug addict’s experience is the “nothing” that separates his being. Anxiety has got everything to do with freedom.⁵

The for-itself is defined ontologically as a lack-of-being [*manqué d’être*], and possibility belongs to the for-itself as that which it lacks . . . What we have expressed in Part Two in terms of lack can be just as well expressed in terms of freedom. The for-itself chooses because it is lack; freedom is really synonymous with lack. Freedom is the concrete mode of being of the lack of being. (BN: 565: FR: 624)

Anyone familiar with Lacan will recognize this definition of the subject as *manque-d’être*, lack-of-being which in Lacan more often is written “*manque à être*,” lack toward (a future) being.

Sartre’s famous concept, “bad faith”—that you are what you are not and are not what you are—is, in short, equivalent to Lacan’s concept of “*méconnaissance*,” misrecognition. Any identification of man’s being is a misrecognition or an example of bad faith. Negativity and negation are the concepts that define man’s being. The subject is always in relation to future possibilities, which again means that the subject is what it is not yet, in order not to be what it is. When one identifies oneself, the subject makes an object of the subject. To objectify is a negating activity, implying that the subject is not what is objectified; you are not what you are. An example of this mechanism: The alcoholic in Alcoholics Anonymous starts out by identifying himself as

an alcoholic—in order not to be one. To avert alcoholism and stay sober he identifies himself as what he is not—an alcoholic—to be not what he is. Sartre's case is that of "the evil man," who confesses to be characterized by all sorts of unpleasant traits of character—he is unfaithful, a lying cheat etc. By this confession his evilness has been objectified, that is, it has become something that he is not. He can thereby continue to be what he is not, an evil man. This is bad faith; this is misrecognition.

The concept of freedom seems equivalent to the concept of the unconscious. Freedom is "a hole in being" [*trou d'être*] comparable to the effects of the unconscious, "Freudian slips"—those moments when well ordered chains of speech acts are broken into by something alien. Something is heard as holes and lacks in speech, something shows itself in inappropriate acts. The unconscious reveals itself in a singular (speech) act, and by singular is meant an act that takes place as if by chance and as if repetition were out of the question.

The unconscious does not consist of a repertoire of contents. It is not a storehouse or repository of dream-like images which may at times surface, or a sort of image bank. In this sense, the unconscious "is" not, and Sartre's claim—that he does not have an unconscious—is justifiable, since the unconscious is not an entity, a latent being. It is rather a negativity, a *négativité*. The unconscious is a lack of being, a hole in chains of signifiers, a singular, seemingly non-repetitive event. Lacan calls it "pre-ontolgoical." Strictly speaking, the unconscious cannot be defined, in the sense of being delimited.

One response to this could be Sartre's: he remarked that this should not "deter us." If the concept of freedom in the following quotation is swapped with the concept of the unconscious we find the latter clarified:

The very use of the term "freedom" is dangerous if it is to imply that the word refers to a concept as words ordinarily do. Indefinable and unnameable, is freedom also indescribable? Earlier when we wanted to describe nothingness and the being of the phenomenon we encountered comparable difficulties. Yet they did not deter us. This is because there are descriptions which do not aim at the essence but at the existent itself in its particularity [*singularité*]. (BN: 438; FR: 492)

The psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious shows itself as a negativity, as what distorts and breaks down discursive continuities. In these moments of breakdown, in these moments when "something" can neither be admitted nor abolished from the discourse, the subject shows itself in its singularity. The subject is freedom, lack of determinable essence. The subject is not reducible to a "structure" or to a "discourse." The subject and its radical singularity "is" in these moments of pure negativity. The unconscious is performative, it does something. The unconscious is that which could, if

recognized, break down, show bad faith, and misrecognition—which could be the very reason why Lacan kept using the concept of subject.

Tyché and automaton

In Lacan's *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*⁶ drive is one of the "fundamentals." In connection with drive, Lacan makes use of two Aristotelian concepts for accidental occurrences: *tyché* and *automaton*.⁷ These have to do with the contingent, in contrast to that which happens through and repeats itself with necessity. Perhaps the reason these Aristotelian concepts came in handy for Lacan was that he could thereby express the cause of the subject as an accident or an ill-timed coincidence.

The subject is a matter of bad timing. As long as we stay within chains of causes and effects, everything makes sense; but the subject (in the psychoanalytical sense) is rather what resists sense. Its place is where chains of cause and effect are accidentally disrupted. To be more precise, the subject's place is both where chains of causes and effects are broken and where there is a continuous and precarious effort to deal with and make sense of this nonsensical, inassimilable real.

The point is, however, not that the subject is without cause, but that its cause is placed in "another scene," the scene of the drives. And this other kind of causality is the reason Aristotle can be of use to Lacan.

In Aristotle *tyché* and *automaton* designate causes which cannot immediately be understood within the ancient four-dimensional conception of causality (*causa efficiens*, *causa formalis*, *causa materialis* and *causa finalis*). *Tyché* and *automaton* differ in that *automaton* is the more general term that includes *tyché* as a special class. *Automaton* is reserved for accidental occurrences in nature. A stone falls and accidentally hits someone, but it does not fall in order to hit him—unless, of course, it has been dropped by someone for the express purpose of hitting the other. (197b) The horse that escapes danger by accidentally coming to a place of safety is another example. The horse does not run from one place to another on purpose to avoid danger; but, fortunately, the horse actually does do this and thereby avoids the accident.

Tyché, on the other hand, requires in Aristotle a being that acts with consciousness and purpose—which thus excludes plants, animals and children. *Tyché* happens unpredictably when we plan on saying or doing something meaningful and purposeful. To any act a motive may be attributed an intention, a future finality, a future purpose, lying in the background behind factual circumstances. But accidents—fortunate or unfortunate ones—raise the problem of what kind of causality is at play.

For instance, if a man comes to market and there chances on someone he has been wishing to meet but was not expecting to meet there, the reason of his meeting him was that he wanted to go marketing; and so too in all other

cases when we allege chance as the cause, there is always some other cause to be found, and it is never really chance. (196a)

The cause of the accidental is, according to Aristotle, of the efficient kind (*causa efficiens*, 198a), which implies that the problem first and foremost is a question of the *causa finalis*, of finding a purpose. This ought to ring a bell. Freudian slips are accidents in speech and act, seemingly senseless events without evident purpose. The traditional Freudian analytic interpretation has thus to do with restoring the idea that everything has a cause, the efficient and the final kind both: the satisfaction of an unconscious wish. The drive is at work here—seemingly by accident. The “other scene” or “other reality” of the drives shows itself in such accidental occurrences.

In Lacan (FFC: 53–64) the *automaton* designates the network of signifiers (“réseau de signifiants”): the return, the coming-back, the insistence of signs. *Tyché*, however, concerns “the encounter with the real.” (FFC: 53) It is something that happens by chance, as if repetition were not an issue. It is a singular encounter with the real, in distinction to the *automaton* which was a repetitive insistence of signs.

The real may be represented by the accident, the noise, the small element of reality, which is evidence that we are not dreaming. But, on the other hand, this reality is not small, for what wakes us is the other reality hidden behind the lack of that which takes the place of representation—this, says Freud is the *Trieb*. (FFC: 60; FR: 59)

This “other reality” is what shows itself in Aristotle’s *tyché*. The scene of the drives is “another scene” that disrupts the scene of wishes, purposes, and intentions.

We know from Freud that this other scene does not respect the fundamental laws of non-contradiction and of time—the idea of a cause preceding its effect and of things happening in some kind of temporal order. The other scene is essentially bad timing or ill-timed. Drive can thus be distinguished from the non-Freudian concept of desire which is “timed” by being a metonymic slide from one signifier to the other.

The return of teleology

The traditional way of telling the story of the origin of modern sciences goes that they are constituted by a break with a teleological idea of causality, in an effort to eliminate sense and purpose: only causality of the efficient kind reigns. Natural sciences have to do with functions, meaningless relations between quantifiable variables. Modern science eliminates sense. As an ideal, that is. Teleology seems to crop up like a return of the repressed. Biology, especially, has trouble getting rid of the teleological perspective due to the fact that one of its fundamental assumptions is that biological organisms, as systems, are organized towards reproductive fitness.⁸ Sexuality, defined as reproductive sexuality, has as its ultimate goal the transference of the

individual's genes and the survival of the species. What makes psychoanalysis extraordinary is not just that it reintroduces sense despite Freud's neuro-biological training (dreams, slips of the tongue, jokes all have a meaning, they serve the purpose of satisfying an unconscious wish), but rather that this sense goes hand in hand with sexuality, which represents a conflict in its very purposefulness.

Two competing forms of teleology are at play, since drive and sexuality cannot be explained within a horizon that posits the survival of the fittest as its ultimate purpose; given its autoerotic and polymorphous perverse foundations sexuality cannot explain the survival of the species. In Freud, one always finds a conflict—between the principles of pleasure and reality and later between life and death. Lacan makes the opposite move. From his structural inheritance he eliminates sense. Roughly speaking, analysis once again has to do with senseless forms and the disruption of these forms. The cause of the accidental has again become restricted to the efficient kind.

The senseless accident keeps returning. The foundation of the subject is a trauma, an accidental event, a mishap, even *dystychia*. ("Tough luck" would be a colloquial translation of *dystychia*.) No immediate and evident reason or cause for the subject can be pinpointed. A trauma is understood as an event without necessity; a cause for the subject as an accidental, contingent event; an event without immediate purpose; an event that does not make sense, or rather a senseless event that has to be made sense of, an event that hereafter will be the foundation of sense.

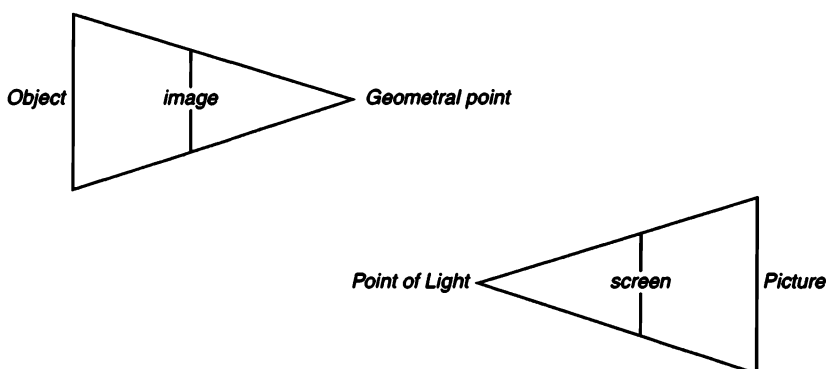
The cause of a trauma can only be the cause by occurring either too early or too late, as Lacan states. The trauma is in-assimilable by being ill-timed. The traumatic experience crucially consists in its never just being a fatal experience—an occurrence to be understood as something that came from the exterior and made a wound, a physical or psychological trauma. The accident, the tough luck, needs a "choice" of interpretation in order to become traumatic. So sense is yet again an issue. And the subject is "responsible" for this "original choice" of interpretation. (Sartre)

One can not get rid of sense. To have a traumatic effect an event has to be interpreted. This corresponds to Aristotle's point about the senseless *tyché*: it is only seemingly accidental, it is always subordinated to sense, to the meaningful. In a psychoanalytic connection it is meaningful in two senses: the accidental event is an effect of a cause in another scene; and it is a cause of an effect that is integrated into a horizon where it is made sense of. The idea of the drive as being on the border between the somatic and the psychic, of the drive as being a psychic representation of an *innersomatischen Reizquelle*, never laid to rest, never at ease, could be understood as both a senseless and at the same time a "represented" event.

Aristotle offers another possible solution to the situation that the accidental is only seemingly without purpose:

Some, moreover, hold that fortune [*tyché*] is a genuine cause of things, but one that has a something divine and mysterious about it, that makes it inscrutable to the human intelligence. (196b)

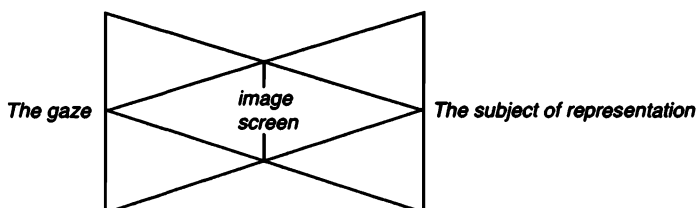
Aristotle is not willing to take responsibility for such a hypothesis—it is only “some” who think this—and God knows what the purpose is. It is the task of mortal psychoanalysts to bring to light this divine, mysterious and unintelligible purpose of the accidental. As we know, the positions taken by the psychoanalyst and the “analytic” towards a case are some of the least self-evident matters in the theoretical debate.



The other's gaze

The concept of *tyché* as the senseless encounter with the real crops up in Lacan's discussion of perception and “the eye and the gaze.” The real resists sense, but it can nonetheless never be thought of without the symbolic, which gives order to the world, which makes the world a world, an oriented, ordered whole. The world is anything but a senseless chaos. *Tyché*, however, is that which disrupts this order, that which disorganizes the perceptual field.

In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (FFC: 91 & 106) there are two schemata of perception. On page 106, Lacan lets them overlap.



The question is why? The first triangle schematizes the subject of cognition, a detached spectator, a purely formal pole, a subject without a body, a

subject which is not a *res extensa* but rather a geometrical point (which by definition is without extension, without dimensions) outside the world: it is the subject of linear perspective. Here it is a question of "representations"—an "image"—a screen of pictures behind which the real world, the *Ding an sich*, the *chose en soi* is supposed to be. The relation between the subject and the world is not immediate but rather mediated by images.

The second triangle presents the opposite point: behind the screen we do not find things in themselves but the "point of light." The laws of perspective dictate that the eye is the physical point towards which the rays of light converge. To see is to be seen. To see presupposes a bodily presence—as phenomenology teaches us. The subject is here a visible, bodily object, caught and manipulated in the visual field. The subject is created in the image of the world, the subject is a tableau. The subject poses, "has got an attitude," just like the ambassadors in Holbein's painting.⁹ Man's being is a portrait. To be is to be seen, to be is to pose. Thus, the second schema presents the idea that just as the subject is not a subject in the philosophical sense of being the foundation of meaning; that the subject is not someone who "uses" language but is rather constructed in and represented by language; in the same way, the subject is not the subject of visual experience.

The point of the overlapping two triangles, however, is to show that the subject which psychoanalysis speaks about is neither the transcendental, universal subject of philosophy nor a subject that is reducible to a product of representations (historically, variable constructions).

The eye and the gaze—this is for us the split in which the drive is manifested at the level of the scopic field. (FFC: 73; FR: 70)

The question of *tyché* in the visual field can make this point explicit. But to expound the point about "the split between the eye and the gaze" it would be useful to draw in Sartre's famous passage about *le regard*, the gaze, from *Being and Nothingness*, a passage Lacan quite rightly calls "brilliant."

Sartre's description of the Other's gaze in *Being and Nothingness* can furthermore serve as an exposition of the need to distinguish between the other as Other (i.e., in Sartre the other as subject of the gaze), and the other as other (i.e. the other as object). According to Sartre, the other is an object who (in distinction to all other objects in the world) is the permanent possibility of turning the situation upside down (of creating a "haemorrhage") by making the subject into an object of the Other's gaze (*regard*). The Other as gaze is not necessarily represented by another concrete object, a particular other; he is rather a mere possibility, a supposition. The sound of footsteps that stop in the hallway or the slight movement of curtains might represent the possibility of an Other's looking at the subject, of making the subject into an object. The Other's being subject of the gaze can never be a question of knowledge, as this would imply an object. Knowledge concerns objects.

The Other is an immediate experience rather than a question of cognition—as in the famous example of the shame experienced when you look through the keyhole. It is the experience without distance of being an object to the Other. The Other's gaze is "an intermediary which refers from me to myself."¹⁰ The Other's gaze creates the recognition of being what the Other might see in you, this shameful, jealous lover bending over the keyhole or this shameful creature caught with his fingers in the candy box. Shame is the definition of being human, shame is the original experience of being an object for the Other, as in *Genesis*, when Adam and Eve see and realize that they are naked.

Being an object, however, does not constitute the subject as an object for himself, but only for the Other.

In other words he does not serve as a regulative or constitutive concept for the pieces of knowledge which I may have of myself. . . . Thus myself-as-object is neither knowledge nor a unity of knowledge but an uneasiness, a lived wrenching away from the ekstatic unity of the for-itself, a limit which I cannot reach and which yet I am. The Other through whom this Me comes to me is neither knowledge nor category but the fact of a strange freedom. (BN: 275; FR: 321–322)

This could be interpreted as a variation on the Lacanian theme of the Other's not "existing." Being an object to the Other is experienced with immediate evidence, but the question of whether the Other's gaze is supported by actual eyes, by an actual, particular, objective presence can only be a mere possibility, a question of "uneasy indetermination," never of certainty. Knowledge about objects in the world can only be probable, in contrast to the evident experience of the Other. The subject cannot know whether the moving curtain represents somebody actually looking; whereas the experience of the possibility of somebody looking is beyond doubt.

The experience of the Other is nevertheless always as a concrete, particular other in a concrete, particular situation, not as "a unifying regulative category of my experience since he comes to me through an encounter?" (BN: 269; FR: 315) The Other is not a formal condition of possibility for being in the world. The relation to the Other is fundamentally asymmetrical, it is not a question of intersubjectivity, a question that always presupposes symmetry and reciprocity. In other words, the Other is not equivalent to the phenomenological thesis that truth and cognition are intersubjective, i.e., that the Other is what the subject can refer to as a guarantee for the objectivity of his cognition. Rather, the Other is that which makes the world disappear by making the subject into an object. Sartre stresses that the Other is not a matter of plurality, since plurality belongs only to objects, either as the multiplicity of objects or as the purely formal concept of God

[. . .] as the omnipresent, infinite subject for whom I exist. But these two objectifications, the concrete, enumerating objectification and the unifying, abstract objectification, both lack proved reality—that is, the prenumerical presence of the Other.” (BN: 281; FR: 328)

The Other is an immediate experience of malaise, an “uneasy indetermin-ation” in a concrete meeting.¹¹ Sartre’s exposition of the Other’s not being a formal condition of possibility for knowledge—as the concept of intersubjectivity implies—might be a description of a neurotic structure as the basis of man’s being. The neurotic, that is, does not know what the Other wants and what he is, if anything, to the Other.

The Other’s gaze is both what makes the subject into an object that is seen and what, as such, disrupts the visual field. It is something experienced as an accident, like Sartre’s *‘voyeur,’* accidentally caught *in flagranti*. Another example is the famous kissing scene in Roman Polanski’s *Chinatown* (1974). Mrs. Mulwray (Faye Dunaway) has taken J. J. Gittes (Jack Nicholson) to the bathroom in order to clean a cut on his nose. His nose is an object to her eye. Suddenly he begins to talk about the colors around her pupil and she answers after a slight hesitation that, “There is a flaw in my iris.” She, too, has a “flaw.” Until then she had been in the position of looking at the object, a distanceless relation to and manipulation of the object; but when Gittes focuses on the flaw, it creates the above-mentioned “haemorrhage.” It is understood that this inversion of her eyes on him in favor of his gaze on her intimidates and momentarily discomposes her. He has “stolen” the world from her, and time stands still, as they say. To repeat: “The eye and the gaze—this is for us the split in which the drive is manifested at the level of the scopic field.” The already eroticized scene must, due to this split, lead to a kiss performed with the perfect timing that probably only exists on film. In this, as in all famous kissing scenes in the movies, we can escape from two variations on the bad timing of the drive, hysterical forced precipitation or obsessional delayed, deferred action.

When Lacan lets the two schemata overlap each other it implies that the subject is indeed a picture, a photograph: the subject is the “subject of representation.” The subject does pose for the Other’s gaze—*regard*—which, in the schema, is now placed both on plane of the object and on the plane of the point of light. If we forget the traditional etiquette of not staring at others in public places, something about the object has captivated one, the subject has turned into an object of the Other’s gaze. It is on the object’s plane that the gaze resides. The world is watching the subject, the subject is visible. But it is in the split second when the subject wakes up and realizes his or her impolite staring; in this particular split second of realizing that one is an object for the Other’s gaze; in this very moment of moral reflection and uneasy shame, that the drive manifests itself.

Reflection in general puts the subject in the position of the object. According to Sartre the ego is an object. Being "self-conscious" or "self-reflective" is to be in a state of uneasy indetermination regarding what one is to the Other. Lacan points out, adding to Sartre's scenario, that it takes desire to be captivated—by what the subject can see through the famous key hole—desire must contribute in order to make intelligible that the subject is captivated by the (gaze of the) object. . . . the subject in question is not that of reflexive consciousness, but that of desire." (FEC: 89) But the drive manifests itself in this disruption of the desire to be lost in the object.

The subject is not an empty, passive canvas for the brushstrokes of the Other's gaze, the subject is not reducible to being made in the image of the world. The concept of scopic drive makes such a reduction impossible. The subject is the neither-nor of the two first schemata. This is probably also the reason why it seems to be unproblematic for Lacan to draw on two traditions that are typically presented as irreconcilable: on the one hand, the subject-centered phenomenology that does not recognize that representations or images should be a screen between the subject and the world, a world that is supposed to be "out there" in the exterior world. On the other hand, the formalism or structuralism that insists on the subject's status as represented, produced and constructed, a tradition that will not recognize what they consider a postulate of immediate continuity between experience and reality or the real. To the phenomenologist, a phenomenon is such because it appears immediately, without representations as a middleman. Perception is "situated," determined by future possibilities, motives, intentions, purposes of one's acts on the foundation of tradition and factual circumstances. The perception, meaning and interpretation of any situation is created between what is seen as future possibilities in the background of a past that is interpreted retroactively. Perception is oriented, the world is in order, one element refers to the next, *ad infinitum*. Then, suddenly, something catches one's eye, something disturbs the visual field, the continuity is breached. The drive manifests itself as bad timing. The very foundation of the subject, the trauma, is such a fundamental breach.

The place of the real, which stretches from the trauma to the phantasy—in so far the phantasy is never anything more than the screen that conceals something quite primary, something determinant in the function of repetition. . . . (FEC: 60; FR: 58–59)

This making sense of the meaningless and accidental is the *Urphantasie* that becomes like "a philosophical category," as Freud puts it in *The Wolfman*. Fantasy can be understood as the unconscious response, the unconscious interpretation of this "primitive scene," this accidental, contingent event; it is an original choice of interpretation that has become the screen through which the world is perceived, a screen that shows itself in the way the subject

poses—his or her attitude. It is the screen through which the subject perceives the world and is interpreted by the world. To perceive anything presupposes that some kind of sense is made of it. To conclude: if it were not for drive and the function of the *tyché* perception and being-in-the-world would form a peaceful co-existence between a world that gave itself to be seen and a subject that “had an attitude,” just like the ambassadors in Holbein’s picture and all their vain “*vanitas*.”

Notes

- 1 Apart from in Lacan himself this point is presented in J.-A. Miller’s unpublished seminars, *Du symptôme au fantasme et retour*, lectures from 1982–1983, and *Extimité*, lectures from 1985–1986. Slavoj Žižek is no doubt the one that throughout his work has given this philosophical point its most powerful exposition.
- 2 “There is an infinite number of realities which are not only objects of judgment, but which are experienced, opposed, feared, etc., by the human being and which in their inner structure are inhabited by negation, as by a necessary condition of their existence. We shall call them *négarités*.” Jean Paul-Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, London, Routledge 1998:2. Hereinafter: BN. [The original French is *L’être et le néant*, Paris: Gallimard, 1943:58. Hereinafter FR]
- 3 For an important discussion of the anti-historicism of psychoanalysis, see Joan Copjec’s *Read My Desire. Lacan Against the Historicists*, Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1994.
- 4 Sigmund Freud, *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse. Gesammelte Werke XV*: London, Imago Publishing Co., 1940–101.
- 5 “This freedom which reveals itself to us in anguish can be characterized by the existence of that nothing which insinuates itself between motives and act. It is not because I am free that my act is not subject to the determination of motives; on the contrary, the structure of motives as ineffective is the condition of my freedom. If someone asks what this nothing is which provides a foundation for freedom, we shall reply that we can not describe it since it is not, but we can at least hint at its meaning by saying that this nothing is made-to-be by the human being in his relation with himself.” Sartre, BN: 34 [FR: 69–70]
- 6 Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1978. Hereinafter FFC. [Original French: *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, Seuil, Paris 1973. Hereinafter FR.]
- 7 From Aristotle, *The Physics, Book II*, 192b, tr. Philip H. Wicksteed and Francis M. Comford, London: William Heineman LTD, 1929. See also Joan Copjec’s exposition of this issue, *op. cit.*:47–50.
- 8 Cf. Colin Allen, Marc Bekoff, and George Lauder, *Nature’s Purposes. Analysis of Function and Design in Biology*, Cambridge, Mass. and London: The MIT Press, 1998; especially Francisco J Ayala, “Teleological Explanations in Evolutionary Biology,” 44–45.
- 9 On the cover of the original French version of *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*.
- 10 BN: 259 [FR: 305]. In the English translation “*regard*” is translated by “look.” It has, however, become customary to translate the look of the Other with “gaze” and the look of the subject with “vision” and “look.”
- 11 Sartre, BN: 275 and 281 [FR: 322 and 328]. It is therefore problematic when Kaja Silverman in *Th Threshold of the Visible World*, New York and London: Routledge, 1996:164ff, interprets Sartre’s concept of the gaze as a “transcendental

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eye," "a pure and absolute subject," if by "transcendental" is meant a formal condition of possibility for cognition of entities as entities, as empirical objects. First, the Other does not concern the world but as already stated the immediate experience of being an object to the Other. Second, the Other is a concrete and particular condition for the subject being an object for the Other. Third, the Other may be "transcendent" in the sense of being that which is beyond any possible cognition. To interpret Sartre's Other as a transcendental eye would be to make it "exist," to make it into a concept of God, i.e. enlist it in the set of that which can be counted.

THE SUBJECT AND THE OTHER'S DESIRE

Bruce Fink

Source: Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink and Maire Jaanus (eds), *Reading Seminars I and II*. Albany: SUNY Press (1996), pp. 76–97.

You have already heard many lecturers here speak in very general terms about our alienation in and by language, language preceding our birth, flowing into us via the discourse that surrounds us as infants and children, and shaping our wants and fantasies. Without language there would be no desire as we know it—exhilarating, and yet contorted, contradictory, and loath to be satisfied—nor would there be any subject as such.

In this talk, I will outline Lacan's view of the advent of the subject in more theoretical terms. I will begin with a general discussion of the two processes Lacan refers to as "alienation" and "separation."¹ I will then present alienation and separation, operations which can be characterized and formalized in logico-mathematical terms, more discursively in terms of the Other's desire. After that, I will turn to the operation Lacan conceives as a further separation, or a going beyond of separation: the traversing of the fundamental fantasy. At the end, I will illustrate the workings of these three operations in the analytic setting.

Alienation and separation

Hegel's concept of alienation, according to Lacan, evokes a struggle to the death between two parties, master and slave, that leaves only one party alive—but it could be either of them. In Lacan's version, the two parties, the child² and the Other, are very unevenly matched and the child almost inevitably loses. By losing and submitting to the Other, the child nevertheless gains something: he or she becomes one of language's subjects, in a sense, a subject "of language" or "in language." Schematically represented, the child, submitting to the Other, allows the signifier to stand in for him or her.

Other
child

The child, coming to be as a divided subject, disappears beneath or behind the signifier, S.

$\frac{S}{s}$

The child need not absolutely be vanquished in his or her "struggle" with the Other, and psychosis can be understood as a form of victory by the child over the Other, the child *foregoing* his or her advent as a divided subject so as not to submit to the Other as language. Freud speaks of the *choice* or *election* of neurosis,³ and Lacan suggests that a choice of some kind is involved in the child's accepting to submit to this Other—a "forced choice," as he calls it (which is something of an oxymoron), the decision not to allow oneself to be subdued by the Other entailing the loss of oneself. That decision forecloses the possibility of one's advent as a subject. The choice of submission is necessary *if* one is to come to be as a subject, but it maintains its status as a choice since it is nevertheless possible to refuse subjectivity.

Thus, in Lacan's version of alienation, the child can be understood to in some sense choose to submit to language, to agree to express his or her needs through the distorting medium or straightjacket of language, and to allow him or herself to be represented by words.

Lacan's second operation, *separation*, involves the alienated subject's confrontation with the Other, not as language this time, but as desire.

The cause of the subject's physical presence in the world was a desire for something (pleasure, revenge, fulfillment, power, eternal life, etc.) on the part of the child's parents. One or both of them wanted something, and the child results from that wanting. People's motivations for having children are often very complex and multilayered, and a child's parents may be very much at odds concerning their motives. One or both parents may have not even wanted to have a child, or only a child of one particular gender.

Whatever their complex motives, they function in a very straightforward way as a cause of the child's physical presence in the world, and their motives continue to act upon the child after his or her birth, being responsible, to a great extent, for his or her advent as a subject within language. In this sense, *the subject is caused by the Other's desire*. This can be understood as a description of alienation in terms of desire, not simply in terms of language, though they are clearly but warp and woof of the same fabric, language being ridden with desire, and desire being inconceivable without language, being made of the very stuff of language.

If, then, alienation consists in the subject's causation by the Other's desire which preceded his or her birth, by some desire not of the subject's own making, separation consists in the attempt by the alienated subject to come to grips with that Other's desire as it manifests itself in the subject's world. As a child tries to fathom its mOther's desire—which is ever in motion, desire being essentially desire for something else—the child is forced to come to terms with the fact that it is not her sole interest (in most cases, at least), not her be-all and end-all. There is rarely, if ever, a total mother-child unity, whereby the child can fulfill all of the mother's wants in life, and vice versa. Indeed, the mother is often led to momentarily neglect her child's wants precisely because her attention is drawn to other centers of interest; a child is often obliged to await its mother's return, not only because of the demands of reality (she must procure food and other necessities for her child, not to mention the money with which to buy them), but also because of her own priorities and desires which do not involve her child. The child's unsuccessful attempt to perfectly complement its mother leads to an expulsion of the subject from the position of wanting-to-be and yet failing-to-be the Other's sole object of desire. The why and wherefore of this expulsion—this separation—will be described at some length further on.

The vel of alienation

Alienation is not a permanent state of affairs, though it may have seemed that way in my earlier discussion; rather it is a process, an operation which takes place at certain times. This particular operation lends itself to formalization, and Lacan begins to formalize it in 1964. Rather than trace the historical development of his concept of alienation throughout his writings—it is already there is his 1936/1949 article on the mirror stage—I will present it here in terms of what Lacan calls the “vel of alienation.”

Lacan's classic example of his vel of alienation is the mugger's threat: “Your money or your life!” (Seminar XI, p. 212). As soon as you hear those words pronounced, it is clear that your money is as good as gone. Should you be so foolhardy as to try to hold onto your money, your trustworthy mugger will unburden you of your life, proceeding, no doubt, to unburden you of your money as well shortly thereafter. (And even if he doesn't, you won't be around to spend it.) You'll thus, no doubt, be more prudent and hand over your wallet or purse; but you'll nonetheless suffer a restriction of your enjoyment, as a life in this world without money is not much of a life. Uncertainty only really remains around the question of whether you'll struggle with him and perhaps get yourself killed in the bargain.

The parties to the vel of alienation that concern us here are not, however, your money and your life, but the subject and the Other, the subject being assigned the losing position (that of money in the previous example, which you had no choice but to lose). In Lacan's reading of Hegel's version of

alienation, the subject and the other are on more of an equal logical footing in that they both have a chance of surviving. In Lacan's version of alienation, the sides are by no means even: in his or her confrontation with the Other, the subject immediately *drops out* of the picture. If alienation is the necessary "first step" in acceding to subjectivity, we must take into account the fact that this step involves choosing one's own disappearance.

Lacan's concept of the subject as "*manque-à-être*" is useful here: the subject fails to come forth as a someone, as a particular being; in the most radical sense, he or she is not: he or she has no being. The subject *exists*—insofar as the word has wrought him or her from nothingness, and he or she can be spoken of, talked about, and discoursed upon—yet remains beingless. Prior to the onset of alienation there was not the slightest question of being: "It's the subject himself who is not there to begin with" (Seminar XIV, *The Logic of Fantasy*, November 16, 1966); afterward, his or her being is strictly potential. *Alienation gives rise to a pure possibility of being*, a place where one expects to find a subject, but which nevertheless remains empty. Alienation engenders, in a sense, a place in which it is clear that there is, as of yet, no subject: a place where something is conspicuously lacking. *The subject's first guise is this very lack itself.*

Lack in Lacan has, to a certain extent, an ontological status⁴—it is the first step beyond nothingness. To qualify something as empty is to use a spatial metaphor implying that it could alternatively be full, that it has some sort of existence above and beyond its being full or empty. A metaphor often used by Lacan is that of something "*qui manque à sa place*," which is out of place, not where it should be or usually is, that is, of something which is missing. Now for something to be missing, it must first have been present and localized; it must first have had a place. And something only has a place within an ordered system—space-time coordinates or a Dewey decimal book classification, for example—that is, within some sort of symbolic structure.

Alienation represents the instituting of the symbolic order—which must be realized anew for each new subject—and *the subject's assignation of a place therein*. A place he or she does not "hold" as of yet, but a place designated for him or her, and for him or her alone. When Lacan says (in Seminar XI) that the subject's being is eclipsed by language, that the subject here slips under or behind the signifier, it is in part because the subject is completely submerged by language, his or her only trace being a place-marker or place-holder in the symbolic order.

J.-A. Miller suggests that the process of alienation may be viewed as yielding the subject as empty set, $\{\emptyset\}$, that is, a *set* which has no elements, a symbol which transforms nothingness into something by *marking* or *representing* it. Set theory generates its whole domain on the basis of this one symbol and a certain number of axioms. Lacan's subject, analogously, is grounded in the naming of the void. The signifier is what founds the subject—the signifier is what wields ontic clout, wresting existence from the real that it

marks and annuls. What it forges is, however, in no sense substantial or material.

The empty set as the subject's place-holder within the symbolic order is not unrelated to the subject's proper name. That name, for example, is a signifier which has often been selected long before the child's birth, and which inscribes the child in the symbolic. A priori, this name has absolutely nothing to do with the subject—it is as foreign to him or her as any other signifier. But in time this signifier—more, perhaps, than any other—will go to the root of his or her being and become inextricably tied to his or her subjectivity. It will become the signifier of his or her very absence as subject, standing in for him or her.⁵

Alienation thus marks the institution of the subject through the primal repression of a first signifier, founding the unconscious and creating the precondition of the possibility of subjectivity as such.

Alienation is essentially characterized by a "forced" choice which rules out *being* for the subject, instituting instead the symbolic order and relegating the subject to mere *existence* as a place-holder therein. Separation, on the other hand, gives rise to being, but that being is of an eminently evanescent and elusive ilk. While alienation is based on a very specific sort of *either/or*, separation is based on a *neither/nor*.

Desire and lack in separation

One of the essential ideas involved in separation seems clear enough: that of a *juxtaposition, overlapping, or coincidence of two lacks*. This is not to be confused with a lack of lack: a situation in which lack is lacking. Consider the following passage from Seminar X, *Angst*:

What provokes anxiety? Contrary to what people say, it is neither the rhythm nor the alternation of the mother's presence-absence. What proves this is that the child indulges in repeating presence-absence games: security of presence is found in the possibility of absence. What is most anxiety-producing for the child is when the relationship through which he comes to be—on the basis of lack which makes him desire—is most perturbed: when there is no possibility of lack, when his mother is constantly on his back (December 5, 1962).

This example fails to conform to Lacan's notion of separation, for the negatives here (the lacks) both apply to the same term—the mother, that is, the Other. The mOther must show some sign of incompleteness, fallibility, or deficiency for separation to obtain and for the subject to come to be as $\$$; in other words, the mOther must demonstrate that she is a desiring (and thus also a lacking and alienated) subject, that she too has submitted to the

splitting/barring action of language, in order for us to witness the subject's advent. The mother, in the above example from Seminar X, monopolizes the field: it is not clear whether she is alienated, whether her field or domain has been encroached upon and decompleted through an encounter with the Other.

In separation we start from a barred Other, a parent who is him or herself divided—not always aware (conscious) of what he or she wants (unconscious) and whose desire is ambiguous, contradictory, and in flux. The subject has—to change metaphors somewhat—gained, via alienation, a foothold within that divided parent: *the subject has lodged his or her lack of being (manque-à-être) in that "place" where the Other was lacking*. In separation, the subject attempts to fill the mOther's lack—demonstrated by the various manifestations of her desire for something else—with his or her own lack of being, his or her not yet extant self or being. The subject tries to excavate, explore, align, and conjoin these two lacks, seeking out the precise boundaries of the Other's lack in order to fill it with him or herself.

The child latches onto what is indecipherable in what his or her parent says. He or she is interested in that certain something which lies in the interval between the parent's words—the child tries to read between the lines to decipher *why*: she *says* X, but why is she telling me that? what does she want from me? what does she want in general? Children's endless *why*'s are not, to Lacan's mind, the sign of an insatiable curiosity as to *how* things work but rather of a concern with where they fit in, what importance they have to their parents. They are concerned to secure (themselves) a place, to try to be the object of their parents' desire—to occupy that between-the-lines "space" where desire shows its face, words being used in the attempt to express desire, and yet ever failing to do so adequately.

Lack and desire are coextensive for Lacan. The child devotes considerable effort to filling up the whole of the mother's lack, her whole space of desire—the child wants to be everything to her, her be-all and end-all. Children set themselves the task of excavating the site of their mother's desire, aligning themselves with her every whim and fancy. Her wish is their command, her desire their demand.⁶ Their desire is born in complete subordination to hers: *"le désir de l'homme, c'est le désir de l'Autre"* Lacan reiterates again and again. Taking the *"de"* as a subjective genitive⁷ for the moment, the following translations are possible here: "man's desire is the Other's desire," "man's desire is the same as the Other's desire," and "man desires what the Other desires," all of which convey part of the meaning. For man not only desires *what* the Other desires, but he desires it *in the same way*, that is, his desire is structured exactly like the Other's. Man learns to desire *as an other*, as if he were some other person.⁸

What is posited here is a tendency to totally superimpose the mother's lack and the child's, which is to say that an attempt is made to make their desires completely coincide.

This must, however, be recognized as a chimerical, unrealizable moment. For the fact is, try as he or she might, a child can rarely and is rarely allowed (or forced) to completely monopolize the space of his or her mother's desire. The child is rarely her only interest and the two lacks can thus never entirely overlap—the subject is prevented or barred from holding at least part of that space.

The introduction of a third term

Separation may be seen here as involving an attempt by the subject to make these two lacks thoroughly coincide, that attempt being abruptly thwarted. We can begin to understand how and why that occurs by examining Lacan's reconceptualization of psychosis in Seminar III, *The Psychoses*, and "On a Question Preliminary to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis" in *Écrits*, for it seems to me that separation, as formulated in 1964, is in some respects equivalent to what Lacan in 1956 referred to as the operation of the "paternal metaphor" or "paternal function."

Psychosis, according to Lacan, results from a child's failure to assimilate a "primordial" signifier which would otherwise structure the child's symbolic universe, that failure leaving the child unanchored in language, without a compass reading on the basis of which to adopt an orientation. A psychotic child may very well *assimilate* language, but cannot come to be in language in the same way as a neurotic child. Lacking that fundamental anchoring point, the remainder of the signifiers assimilated are condemned to drift.

This "primordial" signifier is instated through the operation of what Lacan calls the paternal metaphor or paternal function. If we hypothesize an initial child-mother unity (as a logical, that is, structural, moment if not a temporal one), the father, in a Western unclear family, typically acts in such a way as to disrupt that unity, intervening therein as a third term—often perceived as foreign and even undesirable. The child, as yet a sort of undifferentiated bundle of sensations, lacking in sensory-motor coordination and all sense of self, is not yet distinguishable from its mother, taking the mother's body as a simple extension of its own, being in "direct, unmediated contact" with it. And the mother may, if unopposed by some other member of the household or some other desire of her own, devote virtually all of her attention to the child, anticipate its every need, and make herself one hundred percent accessible to the child. In such a situation, the father or some other member of the household, or that other desire of the mother's, can serve a very specific function: that of annulling the mother-child unity, creating an essential space or gap between mother and child. Should the mother pay no attention to the father or other member of the household, granting him or her no importance, the mother-child relationship may never become triangulated. Or should the father or other member of the household be

unconcerned, tacitly allowing the unity to go undisrupted, a third term may never be introduced.

Lacan called this third term the Name-of-the-Father or the Father's Name, but by formalizing its action in the form of the paternal metaphor or function, he made it clear that it was not inescapably tied to either biological or de facto fathers, or, for that matter, to their proper names. In Seminar IV, Lacan goes so far as to suggest that the only signifier that is able to serve a paternal function in the case of Freud's "little Hans" is the signifier "horse." "Horse" is, clearly in little Hans' case, a name for the father, but certainly not his "proper" name. It stands in for Hans' father who is unable to serve a paternal function, because he is incapable of separating his son from his wife.⁹

The symbolic order serves to cancel out the real, to transform it into a social, if not socially acceptable, reality, and here the name that serves the paternal function bars and transforms the real, undifferentiated, mother-child unity. It bars the child's direct access to pleasurable contact with its mother, requiring it to pursue pleasure through avenues more acceptable to the father figure and/or mOther (insofar as it is only by her granting of importance to the father that the father can serve that paternal function). In Freudian terms, it is correlated with the reality principle, which does not so much negate the aims of the pleasure principle as channel them into socially designated pathways.

The paternal function leads to the assimilation or instating of a name (which, as we shall see, is not yet a "full-fledged signifier," as it is not displaceable) which neutralizes the Other's desire, viewed by Lacan as potentially very dangerous to the child, threatening to engulf it or swallow it up. In a striking passage in Seminar XVII, Lacan sums up in very schematic terms what he had been saying for years:

The mother's role is her desire. That is of capital importance. Her desire is not something you can bear easily, as if it were a matter of indifference to you. It always leads to problems. The mother is a big crocodile and you find yourself in her mouth. You never know what may set her off suddenly, making those jaws clamp down. That is the mother's desire.

So I tried to explain that there was something reassuring. I am telling you simple things—indeed, I am improvising. There is a roller, made of stone, of course, which is potentially there at the level of the trap, and that holds and jams it open. That is what we call the phallus. It is a roller which protects you, should the jaws suddenly close (p. 129).

It should be kept in mind that the French words I am translating by mother's desire (*désir de la mère*) are inescapably ambiguous, suggesting both the child's desire for the mother and the mother's desire per se. Whichever of the

two we choose to dwell on, or whether we prefer to view the situation as a whole, the point is the same: language protects the child from a potentially dangerous dyadic situation, and the way this comes about is through the substitution of a name for the mother's desire.

Name-of-the-Father

Mother's Desire

Read quite literally, this kind of formulation (*Écrits*, p. 200) suggests that the mother's desire is for the father (or whatever may be standing in for him in the family), and that it is thus his name which serves this protective paternal function by naming the Other's desire.

Now a name is, according to Saul Kripke,¹⁰ a rigid designator, that is, it always and inflexibly designates the same thing. We might refer to a name as a signifier, but only with the caveat that it is an unusual kind of signifier, a "primordial" signifier. A further step is required for that which replaces or stands in for the mother's desire to function as a "full-fledged" signifier: it must become part and parcel of the dialectical movement of signifiers, that is, become displaceable, occupying a signifying position that can be filled with a series of different signifiers over time. This requires a "further separation" of the kind discussed below, and it is only that further separation that allows Lacan to variously refer to the symbolic element operative in the paternal function as the Father's Name (*le nom du père*), the father's no-saying (*le non du père*), the phallus (the signifier of desire), and the *signifier* of the Other's desire, *S(A)*.

Signifier

Mother's Desire

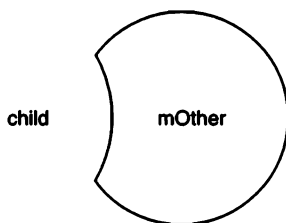
The substitution implied by the paternal metaphor is only made possible by language, and thus it is only insofar as a "second" signifier, *S₂*, is instated (the Father's Name, at the outset, and then more generally the signifier of the Other's desire) that the mother's desire is retroactively symbolized or transformed into a "first" signifier (*S₁*):

$$\frac{S_2}{S_1}$$

S₂ here is thus a signifier which plays a very precise role: it symbolizes the mother's desire, transforming it into signifiers. By doing so, it creates a rift in the mother-child unity, and allows the child a space in which to breathe easy, a space of its own. It is through language that a child can attempt to mediate the Other's desire, keeping it at bay, and symbolizing it ever more completely. While in the 1950s, Lacan spoke of the *S₂* involved here as the

Name-of-the-Father, and in the 1960s as the phallus, we can understand it most generally as the signifier that comes to signify (to wit, replace, symbolize, neutralize) the Other's desire. The symbol Lacan provides us for it (see Seminars VI and XX) is $S(A)$, which is usually read "the signifier of the lack in the Other," but, as lack and desire are coextensive, can also be read "the signifier of the Other's desire."

The result of this substitution or metaphor is the advent of the subject as such, the subject as no longer just a potentiality, a mere place-holder in the symbolic waiting to be filled out, but a desiring subject.¹¹ Graphically speaking, separation leads to the subject's expulsion from the Other, in which he or she was still nothing. Simplistically described, this can be associated with the outcome of the Oedipal complex (at least for boys) whereby the father's castration threats—"Stay away from Mom or else!"—eventually bring about a breaking away of the child from the mOther. In such a scenario, the child is, in a sense, kicked out of the mOther.



This logically discernable moment (which is generally quite difficult to isolate at any particular chronological moment of an individual's history, and is likely to require many such moments to come about, each building on the ones before) is a momentous one in Lacan's metapsychology, all of the crucial elements of his algebra— S_1 , S_2 , \mathcal{S} , and a —arising simultaneously here. As S_2 is instated, S_1 is retroactively determined, \mathcal{S} is precipitated, and the Other's desire takes on a new role: that of object a .

Object a : the other's desire

In the child's attempt to grasp what remains essentially indecipherable in the Other's desire—what Lacan calls the X , the variable, or better, the unknown—the child's own desire is founded; the Other's desire begins to function as the cause of the child's desire. That cause is, on the one hand, the Other's desire (based on lack) for the subject—and here we encounter the other meaning of Lacan's dictum "*le désir de l'homme, c'est le désir de l'Autre*," which we can translate here as, for example, "man's desire is for the Other to desire him" and "man desires the Other's desire for him." His desire's cause can take the form of someone's voice, or of a look someone gives him. But its cause also originates in that part of the mOther's desire which seems to have nothing to

do with him, which takes her away from him (physically or otherwise), leading her to give her precious attention to others.

In a sense, we can say that it is the mother's very desirousness that the child finds desirable. In Seminar VIII, *Transference*, Lacan points to Alcibiades' fascination with "a certain something" in Socrates which Plato (in the *Symposium*) terms "agalma": a precious, shiny, gleaming something which is interpreted by Lacan to be Socrates' desire itself, Socrates' desiring or desirousness. This highly valued "agalma"—inspiring desire in its detectors—can serve us here as an approach to what Lacan calls object *a*, the cause of desire.

This second formulation of Lacan's dictum, involving man's desire to be desired by the Other, exposes the Other's desire *as* object *a*. The child would like to be the sole object of the mother's affections, but her desire almost always goes beyond the child: there is something about her desire which escapes the child, which is beyond his or her control. A strict identity between the child's desire and hers cannot be maintained—her desire's independence from the child's creates a rift between them, a gap in which her desire, unfathomable to the child, functions in a unique way.

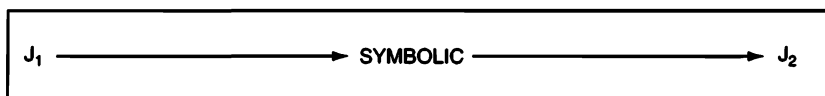
This approximative gloss on separation thus suggests that a rift is induced in the hypothetical mother-child unity due to the very nature of desire, leading to the advent of object *a*.¹² Object *a* can be understood here as the *remainder* produced when that hypothetical unity breaks down, as a last trace of that unity, a last *reminder* thereof. By cleaving to that rem(a)inder, the split subject, though expelled from the Other, can sustain the illusion of wholeness; by clinging to object *a*, the subject is able to ignore his or her division. That is precisely what Lacan means by fantasy, which he formalizes with the matheme $\$ \diamond a$, to be read: the divided subject in relation to object *a*. It is in the subject's complex relation to object *a* (Lacan describes this relation as one of "envelopment-development-conjunction-disjunction," *Écrits*, p. 280) that he or she achieves a phantasmatic sense of wholeness, completeness, fulfillment, and well-being.

When analysands recount fantasies to their analyst, they are informing the analyst about the way in which they want to be related to object *a*, that is, the way they would like to be positioned with respect to the Other's desire. Object *a*, as it enters into their fantasies, is an instrument or plaything with which subjects do as they like, manipulating it as it pleases them, orchestrating things in the fantasy scenario in such a way as to derive a maximum of pleasure therefrom.

Given, however, that the subject casts the Other's desire in the role most exciting to the subject, that pleasure may turn to disgust and even to horror, there being no guarantee that what is most exciting to the subject is also most pleasurable. That excitement, whether correlated with a conscious feeling of pleasure or pain, is what the French call "jouissance." Freud detected it on the face of his Rat Man, interpreting it as "*horror at pleasure of his own of which he himself was unaware.*"¹³ And Freud states in no uncertain terms that

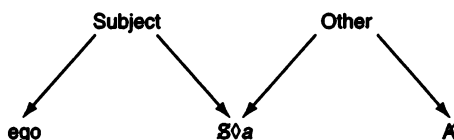
“patients derive a certain satisfaction from their sufferings.”¹⁴ This pleasure—this excitation due to sex, vision, and/or violence, whether positively or negatively connoted by conscience, whether considered innocently pleasurable or disgustingly repulsive—is termed *jouissance*, and that is what the subject orchestrates for him or herself in fantasy.

Jouissance is thus what comes to substitute for the lost “mother-child unity,” a unity which was perhaps never as united as all that since it was a unity owing only to the child’s sacrifice or foregoing of subjectivity. We can imagine a kind of *jouissance* before the letter, before the institution of the symbolic order (J_1)—corresponding to an unmediated relation between mother and child, a *real* connection between them—which gives way before the signifier, being canceled out by the operation of the paternal function. Some modicum or portion of that real connection (a *jouissance* after the letter, J_2) is refound in fantasy, in the subject’s relation to the byproduct of symbolization: object *a*, that which is produced as S_2 retroactively determines S_1 and precipitates out a subject.



This second order *jouissance* takes the place of the former “wholeness” or “completeness,” and fantasy—which stages this second order *jouissance*—takes the subject beyond his or her nothingness, his or her mere existence as a marker at the level of alienation, supplying a sense of being. It is thus only through fantasy, made possible by separation, that the subject can procure him or herself some modicum of what Lacan calls “being.” While existence is granted only through the symbolic order (the alienated subject being assigned a place therein), being is supplied only by cleaving to the real.

Thus we see how it is that separation, a neither/nor operator applied to the subject and the Other, brings forth being: creating a rift in the subject-Other whole, the Other’s desire escapes the subject—ever seeking, as it does, something else—yet the subject is able to recover a rem(a)inder thereof by which to sustain him or herself in being, as a *being of desire*, a *desiring being*. Object *a* is the subject’s complement, a phantasmatic partner that ever arouses the subject’s desire. Separation results in the splitting of the subject into ego and unconscious, and in a corresponding splitting of the Other into lacking Other (\bar{A}) and object *a*. None of these “parties” were there at the outset, and yet separation results in a kind of intersection whereby something of the Other (the Other’s desire in this account) that the subject considers his or her own, essential to his or her existence, is ripped away from the Other and retained by the now divided subject in fantasy.



A further separation: the traversing of fantasy

Lacan's notion of separation largely disappears from his work after 1964, giving way in the later 1960s to a more elaborate theory of the effect of analysis. By Seminars XIV and XV, the term "alienation" comes to signify both alienation and separation as elaborated in 1960–1964, and a new dynamic notion is added: "*la traversée du fantasme*."

This reformulation begins, in a sense, with Lacan's elaboration of the notion that the analyst must play the role of object *a*, the Other as desire, not as language. The analyst must steer clear of the role in which analysands often cast him or her—that of an all-knowing and all-seeing Other who is the ultimate judge of the analysand's value as a human being, and the final authority on all questions of truth. The analyst must maneuver away from serving the analysand as an Other to imitate, to try to be like, to desire like (desire's tendency being to model itself on the Other's desire), in short, an Other with whom to identify, whose ideals one can adopt, whose views one can make one's own. Instead, the analyst must endeavor to embody desirousness, revealing as few personal likes and dislikes, ideals and opinions as possible, providing the analysand as little concrete information about his or her character, aspirations, and tastes as possible, as they all furnish such fertile ground in which identification can take root.

Identification with the analyst's ideals and desires is a solution to neurosis advanced by certain analysts of the Anglo-American tradition: the analysand is to take the analyst's strong ego as a model by which to shore up his or her own weak ego, an analysis coming to a successful end if the analysand is able to sufficiently identify with the analyst. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, identification with the analyst is considered a trap, leading the analysand, as it does, to still more alienation within the Other as language and as desire. Maintaining his or her constant enigmatic desire for something else, the Lacanian analyst aims, not at modeling the analysand's desire on his or her own, but rather at shaking up the configuration of the analysand's fantasy, changing the subject's relation to the cause of desire: object *a*.

This reconfiguration of fantasy is known as the "traversing" or "crossing over" of fantasy, and implies a number of different things: the construction in the course of analysis of a new "fundamental fantasy" (the latter being that which underlies an analysand's various individual fantasies, constituting the subject's most profound relation to the Other's desire); the traversing of the square, in the graph of the split subject provided in Seminar XIV, to the

lower left-hand corner; and a "crossing over" or switching of positions within the fundamental fantasy whereby the divided subject assumes the place of the cause, subjectifies the traumatic cause of his or her own advent as subject, coming to be in the place where the Other's desire had been.



The traversing of fantasy involves the subject's assumption of a new position with respect to the Other as language and the Other as desire. A move is made to invest or inhabit that which brought him or her into existence as split subject, to become that which *caused* him or her. There where it—the Other's discourse, ridden with the Other's desire—was, the subject is able to say "I." Not "it happened to me," or "they did this to me," or "fate had it in store for me," but "I was," "I did," "I saw," "I cried out."

This "further" separation consists in the temporally paradoxical move by the alienated subject to become his or her own cause, to come to be as subject in the place of the cause. The foreign cause—that Other desire that brought him or her into the world—is internalized, in a sense, taken responsibility for, assumed (in the sense of the French word "*assomption*"), subjectified, made "one's own."

If we think of trauma as the child's encounter with the Other's desire—and so many of Freud's cases support this view (consider, to suggest but one example, little Hans' traumatic encounter with his mother's desire)—trauma functions as the child's cause: the cause of his or her advent as subject and of the position the child adopts as subject in relation to the Other's desire (the encounter with the Other's desire constituting a traumatic experience of pleasure/pain or *jouissance*).

The traversing of fantasy is the process by which the subject subjectifies trauma, takes the traumatic event upon him or herself, and assumes responsibility for that *jouissance*.

Subjectifying the cause: A temporal conundrum

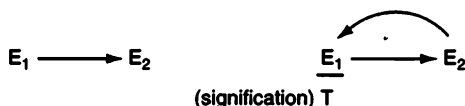
Temporally speaking, this operation of *putting the I back in the traumatic cause* is paradoxical. Was there subjective involvement at the outset which the subject must come to recognize and take responsibility for? Yes, in some sense. And yet subjective involvement is also brought about after the fact. Such a view necessarily contradicts the timeline of classical logic, whereby effect follows cause in a nice, orderly fashion. Separation nevertheless obeys the workings of the signifier whereby the effect of the first word in a sentence can be brought out only after the last word in the sentence has been heard or read, and whereby its meaning is only constituted retroactively by a semantic context provided after its utterance, its "full" meaning being an historical product. Just as Plato's dialogues take on a first meaning for students new to

philosophy, acquiring multiple meanings as they deepen their study of them, Plato's *Symposium* has been shown to mean something else since Lacan's reading of it in Seminar VIII, and will continue to take on new meanings as it is interpreted and reinterpreted in the centuries and millennia to come. Meaning is not created instantaneously, but only *ex post facto*: after the event in question. Such is the temporal logic—anathema to classical logic—at work in psychoanalytic processes and theory.

Lacan never pinpoints the subject's chronological appearance on the scene: he or she is always either *about to arrive*—is on the verge of arriving—or *will have already arrived* by some later moment in time. Lacan uses the ambiguous French imperfect tense to illustrate the subject's temporal status. He gives as an example the sentence, "*deux secondes plus tard, la bombe éclatait*" which can either mean "two seconds later, the bomb exploded," or "the bomb would have gone off two seconds later," there being a possibly implicit "if, and, or but": it would have gone off two seconds later if the fuse had not been cut. A similar ambiguity is suggested by the following English wording: "The bomb was to go off two seconds later."

Applied to the subject, the imperfect tense leaves us uncertain as to whether the subject has emerged or not. His or her ever so fleeting existence remains in suspense or in abeyance. Here there seems to be no way of really determining whether the subject has been or not.

Lacan more commonly uses the future anterior (also known as the future perfect) in discussing the subject's temporal status. "By the time you get back, I will have already left": such a statement tells us that at a certain future moment, something will have already taken place, without specifying exactly when. This grammatical tense is related to Freud's *Nachträglichkeit*, deferred action, retroaction, or *ex post facto* action: a first event (E_1) occurs, but does not bear fruit until a second event (E_2) occurs. Retroactively, E_1 is constituted, for example, as a trauma, that is, it takes on the significance of a trauma (T)—it comes to signify something that it in no way signified before. Its meaning has changed.



In the statement, "By the time you get back, I'll have already left," my departure is retroactively determined as prior. Without your return, it would have no such status. It takes two moments to create a before and after. The signification of the first moment changes in accordance with what comes afterward.

Similarly, a first signifier does not, as we shall see below, suffice to create an effect of subjectification until a second signifier has appeared on the scene. A relation between two signifiers proves to us that a subject has passed

that way, and yet we can in no sense pinpoint the subject in either time or space.



Lacan's article on "Logical Time"¹⁵ sets out to pinpoint the emergence of the subject in a very precise situation with a series of explicit constraints. The moments elaborated in that paper—the instant of the glance, the time for comprehending, and the moment of concluding—were later referred by Lacan to the moments of the analytic process itself.

Just as the time for comprehending is indeterminate for an outsider in the three-prisoner problem expounded in that article, the time necessary for comprehending in analysis is indeterminate—that is, it is not calculable a priori. Yet in associating the end of analysis with the prisoners' moment of concluding (Seminar XX, *Encore*), Lacan suggests a final moment of subjectification which can be forced to occur through a propitious combination of logical and/or analytic conditions.

Thus, while seemingly forever suspended in a future anterior, Lacan nevertheless holds out for us the prospect of a subjectification of the cause at a logically specific, but chronometrically incalculable, moment. We may, in a sense, think of alienation as opening up that possibility, and of this "further separation" as marking the end of the process. Separation can, nevertheless, be fostered, as we shall see, in certain situations, for example, at the moment of the cut or scansion of an analytic session, a moment which is both logical and chronological.

The traversing of fantasy can, not surprisingly, also be formulated in terms of increasing "signifierization"—a turning into signifiers—of the Other's desire. Insofar as the subject finds, in this further separation, a new position in relation to object *a* (the Other's desire), the Other's desire is no longer simply named, as it was through the action of the paternal metaphor. As the cause is subjectified, the Other's desire is simultaneously fully brought into the movement of signifiers; as Lacan can be seen to be saying in his discussion of Hamlet in Seminar VI, it is at that point that the subject finally gains access to the *signifier* of the Other's desire, $S(A)$. In other words, whereas the Other's desire had simply been named through separation, that name was fixed, static, and thing-like in its unchanging effect, rigid in its limited power of designation.

In neurosis, the name generally remains to be adequately separated from the Other's desire. The name is not the death of the thing—the signifier is. As long as a rigid connection subsists between the Other's desire and a name of the father, the subject is unable to act: Hamlet, according to Lacan, has no access to the phallic *signifier* prior to his duel with Laertes at the end of

Shakespeare's play, and that is why he is incapable of taking any action. It is only during the duel that he is able to discern "the phallus behind the king," to realize that the king is but a stand-in for the phallus (the phallus being the signifier of desire,¹⁶ that is, of the Other's desire), and can be struck without throwing the phallus into question. Until Hamlet could finally dissociate the king and the phallus ("the king is a thing of nothing"), action was impossible, for to take revenge on the king would have threatened to make Hamlet's whole world collapse. It is only when the king (the object of the Queen's desire) is signified that a power can be discerned beyond the king, a legitimacy or authority which is not embodied in the king alone, but which subsists in the symbolic order above and beyond the king.

The name of the Other's desire must be set into motion—from the mother's partner, to teacher, to school, to police officer, to civil law, to religion, to moral law, etc.—and give way before the *signifier* of the Other's desire if subjectification is to take place, that is, if the subject is to become the Other's desire, leaving the signifier to its own devices. In that sense, traversing fantasy entails a separation from language itself, a separation of the subject—who will have become the cause—from his or her own discourse about his or her problem with the Other's desire, inability to deal with the lack detected in the Other, lack of success in maintaining the right distance from and relation to the Other, etc.

Neurosis is maintained in discourse, and we see in Lacan's notion of traversing fantasy the suggestion of a kind of beyond of neurosis¹⁷ in which the subject is able to act (as cause, as desirousness), and is at least momentarily out of discourse, split off from discourse: free from the weight of the Other. This is not the freedom of the psychotic Lacan mentions in his early paper, "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis" (*Écrits*, pp. 8–29); it is not a freedom "before" the letter but "after" it.

Alienation, separation, and the traversing of fantasy in the analytic setting

Imagine, for a moment, an analysand—ensconced upon the analyst's couch, talking about his or her dream from the night before, filling the room with his or her discourse, hoping that it will be interesting and satisfying to the analyst, thus in a fantasy mode ($\$ \diamond a$)—being suddenly interrupted with a word uttered by the analyst (not by the Other of knowledge to whom that discourse was in some sense addressed), a word which the analysand may have hurriedly glossed over or thought of no importance or interest either to him or herself or the analyst. Analysands often tailor their discourse, due to transference love, hoping to say what their analysts want them to say, what they think their analysts want to hear, and until such an interruption comes—whether with a cough, a grunt, a word, or the termination of the session—they can go on believing that they are achieving their purpose. Such

interruptions often serve to jolt analysands, suddenly bringing them back to the realization that they know not what their analysts want or mean, that the latter are looking for *something else* in their discourse than what the analysands intended, that they want something else from it, something more.

It is in that sense that the Lacanian practice of "punctuating" and "scand-ing"¹⁸ the analysand's discourse serves to disconnect the analysand from his or her discourse, confronting the analysand with the enigma of the analyst's desire. It is insofar as that desire remains enigmatic, never being precisely where the analysand believes it to be—and analysands devote considerable effort to divining and second-guessing that desire—that the analysand's fantasy is repeatedly shaken up in the analytic situation.¹⁹ The Other's desire, in the guise of object *a*, is never precisely where the analysand thinks it is, or wants it to be in his or her fantasy. The analyst—serving as a "make-believe" object *a*, as a stand-in for or semblance of object *a*—introduces a further gap between *S* and *a*, disrupting the fantasized relationship, $\hat{\phi}$. The analyst makes *that* relationship untenable, inducing a change therein.

Alienation and separation are involved at all times in the analytic situation, the analysand alienating him or herself as he or she tries to speak coherently, that is, in a way which will "make sense" to the analyst, the analyst taken here to be the locus of all meaning: the Other that knows the meaning of all utterances. In the attempt to make sense, the analysand slips away or fades behind the words he or she utters. Those words—due to the very nature of language—always and inescapably say more or less than the analysand consciously intends to say in selecting them. Meaning is always ambiguous, polyvalent, betraying something one wanted to remain hidden, hiding something one intended to express.

This attempt to make sense situates the analysand in the register of the Other as meaning: the analysand fades behind a discourse whose "true meaning" can only be determined and judged by the Other (whether parent, analyst, or god). That kind of alienation is unavoidable and is not (unlike alienation as understood by Marxists and critical theorists) connoted negatively in Lacanian analysis.

Nevertheless, the analyst is enjoined not to indefinitely foster this kind of alienation. Though the analyst, in his or her work with neurotics, attempts to bring into focus the analysand's relation to the Other, clearing away in the process the "interference" stemming from the analysand's imaginary relations with others like him or herself, that is by no means the end of the process, and could lead, if left at that, to a kind of solution *à la* American ego psychology, the analysand identifying with the analyst as Other.

The Lacanian analyst adopts a discourse radically different from that of the analysand—a discourse of separation. If the analyst offers something along the lines of meaning to the analysand, he or she nevertheless aims at something capable of exploding the "analyst-provides-the-meaning-of-the-analysand's-discourse" matrix by speaking ambiguously, at several levels at

once, using terms which lead in a number of different directions. By intimating several, if not a never ending panorama of successive meanings, the register of meaning is itself problematized. As the analysand attempts to fathom the import of the analyst's polyvalent words or the reason why he or she terminated the session at that precise moment, the analysand is separated from meaning and confronted with the enigma of the analyst's desire. That enigma has an effect on the analysand's deep-rooted fantasy relation to the Other's desire. While the fundamental rule of free association requires the analysand to try to ever further articulate, put into words, symbolize, signify that relation to the Other's desire, the analyst's action serves to separate the subject to an ever greater extent from the very discourse he or she is required to forge about it.

One is the subject of a particular fate, a fate one has not chosen, but which—however random or accidental it may seem at the outset—one *must* nevertheless subjectify; one must, in Freud's view, become its subject. Primal repression is, in a sense, the roll of the dice at the beginning of one's universe which creates a split and sets the structure in motion. An individual has to come to grips with that random toss—that particular configuration of his or her parents' desire—and somehow become its subject. "*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden.*" I must come to be where foreign forces—the Other as language and the Other as desire—once dominated. I must subjectify that otherness.

It is for that reason that we can say that the Lacanian subject is ethically motivated, based as it is on this Freudian injunction so often repeated in Lacan's work. Freud's injunction is inherently paradoxical, enjoining us as it does to put the I (back) in the cause, to become our own cause; but instead of dismissing this paradox, Lacan attempted to theorize the movement implied therein and find techniques by which to induce it. The I is not already in the unconscious. It may be everywhere presupposed there, but it has to be made to appear. It may always already be there in a sense, in that its advent always comes about through a retroactive motion, but it must still be made to appear there "before."

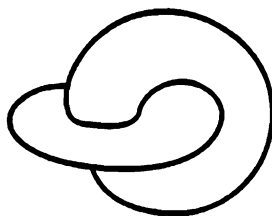
Notes

- 1 Jacques-Alain Miller has extensively developed Lacan's notions of alienation and separation in his ongoing seminar, *Orientation lacanienne*, given under the auspices of the University of Paris VIII, Saint-Denis. I rely here, above all, on his classes given on March 9, 16, and 23, 1983, and on November 21 and 28, 1984, but his seminar forms the backdrop of much of what I present here.
- 2 I am using the term "child" here instead of subject since it does not presuppose subjectivity on the child's part, subjectivity being a result of alienation and separation. "Child" has the disadvantage of suggesting a strictly developmental stage here, which I qualify below.
- 3 In "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning" (1911), Standard

Edition (hereafter SE) XII, p. 224. The same expression is found in the case of the Rat Man, SE X.

- 4 Akin to that assigned $\{\emptyset\}$ in set theory.
- 5 The subject is called upon to assume or subjectify that name, make it his or her own; the frequency with which people fail to do so is witnessed by the large number of people who change their names (when this is not done for strictly political or commercial purposes).
- 6 Lacan exemplifies the intrication of demand and desire with two intertwined toruses in Seminar IX, *Identification*, where a circle drawn around the tube-like surface of one torus (the circle of demand) coincides with the smallest circle around the central void in the other (the circle of desire).

Toruses:



- 7 See "Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire," *Écrits*, p. 814.
- 8 This implies alienation—in the more usual sense of the term—at the very heart of separation.
- 9 In the case of single parents, a lover (past or present) or even a friend or relative can, at times, fill the father's "shoes," signifying that part of the parent's desire that goes beyond the child. It is certainly *conceivable* that one of the partners in a homosexual couple might fill this role as well, one of the partners adopting the more nurturing role, the other intervening in the parent-child relationship as third term. In "heterosexual" couples, one occasionally finds biological males playing the maternal role and biological females representing the law, but it is clear that social norms do not currently foster the effectiveness of such reversals in replacing the Name-of-the-Father or paternal function.
- 10 See his book *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), which Lacan discusses in Seminar XXI.
- 11 As I have indicated in my discussion of substitutional metaphors in "The Subject As Metaphor" (*Newsletter of the Freudian Field*, 5, 1991), every metaphor has a similar effect of subjectification.
- 12 One cannot help but be reminded here of the father's role in the breakup of the mother-child dyad. I have mentioned the introduction of a *third* element, but that element is in fact always already there, structuring the apparent privacy of the initial relationship. The infant experiences an *intrusion* from the outside, an intrusion—effected by what one can variously characterize as the father, the Father's Name, the phallus, and object *a*—ousting him from the space of his intersection with his mother, impeding a total overlap.

The intrusion may take the form of a prohibition of his monopoly rights to his mother, which forces his interest to seek beyond her the source of the prohibition, the source of his mother's fascination—her boyfriend, lover, husband, family, neighbors, state, law, religion, God: something which may be totally undefinable and yet quintessentially fascinating.

- 13 SE VII, p. 167.

- 14 SE VII, p. 183. Today I would articulate the relations between desire, fantasy, and jouissance rather differently. Fantasy is a veil that allows the subject to overlook the fact that he or she is caused by object *a*, the latter being the cause of the subject's being and jouissance; "fantasy provides the pleasure peculiar to desire" (*Écrits* 1966, p. 773) while serving as a defense against jouissance—that satisfaction beyond pleasure, beyond the pleasure principle. Whereas desire is sustained in or by fantasy, both desire and fantasy serve, in certain respects, as barriers against jouissance.
- 15 Pleasurable conscious or preconscious fantasies, in which the subject stages or orchestrates the desired relationship to an object, may veer towards horror or displeasure as the object shows its true colors as that which satisfies the drives in total disregard for the social veneer provided by desire (associated here with the Other). A dream becomes a nightmare when the drives assert their priority over the unconscious desire (the Other's desire) that seemed to have served as the mainspring of the dream. On these and related points, see Jacques-Alain Miller's "Commentary on Lacan's Text" further on in this collection.
- 16 *Écrits* 1966; English translation by Bruce Fink and Marc Silver in *Newsletter of the Freudian Field*, 2, 1988.
- 17 *Écrits*, p. 289.
- 18 We can, of course, situate what I am referring to here as separation and a "further separation" in terms of Lacan's 1964 articulation of alienation and separation. Rather than saying that the neurotic is in need of a further separation—that is, needs to traverse fantasy—in the late 1950s and early 1960s Lacan says that the neurotic "identifies the Other's lack [i.e., desire] with the Other's demand . . . [T]he Other's demand takes on the function of the object in the neurotic's fantasy" (*Écrits*, p. 321). The idea here is that the subject, in the neurotic's fantasy, ($\$ \diamond D$), adopts as his or her "partner" the Other's demand—that is, something that is static, unchanging, ever revolving around the same thing (love)—instead of the Other's desire, which is fundamentally in motion, ever seeking something else. That essentially means that the subject does not have full access to a third term, to a point outside of the mother-child dyadic relation. Separation would then be understood as the process whereby the Other's demand (D) is replaced in the neurotic's fantasy by the Other's desire (object *a*). The neurotic subject would have already come into being, in some sense, in his or her truncated fantasy ($\$ \diamond D$), but would achieve a greater degree of subjectivity through separation.
- 19 I prefer to use the neologistic "scansion" as the verb form of scansion since "scanning," the accepted verb form, has rather different connotations which could lead to considerable confusion here. On "scansion," "punctuation," and Lacanian clinical practice in general, see my *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).
- 20 See chapter 17 and 18 of Seminar XI on this point.

THE DOCTRINE OF SCIENCE

Jean-Claude Milner

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1 The equation of subjects and science¹

Lacan poses an equation: “the subject upon which we operate in psychoanalysis can only be the subject of science.”² This equation of subjects is based on three affirmations: (1) that psychoanalysis operates on a subject (and not for example on an ego); (2) that there is a subject of science; (3) that these two subjects are one and the same. What is common to the three affirmations is that they speak of the *subject* and what is understood by this depends on what can be termed the *axiom of the subject*:

- There is some subject distinct from any form of empirical individuality.³

This axiom of existence makes use of a term and a distinction that are entirely homologous with propositions arising from Kantian and post-Kantian metaphysics; whether they are synonymous is a question that for the moment will remain in suspense.

The third affirmation constitutes the equation as such; it is based on historical correlations but not founded upon them. The first affirmation concerns analytic practice (this is what the verb *to operate* indicates). This is in no way trivial; its validity is conferred by the authority of an enunciator supposed to know at what point he is in relation to psychoanalysis, and specifically in relation to what Freud made of it. The second affirmation sets a concept to work, that of the “subject of science,” which Lacan uses in a precise sense but which is only in part Lacanian. The definition of science that is invoked is not Lacan’s—he excuses himself sufficiently there—but what is credited to Lacan is rather the affirmation that this definition of science induces a particular figure of the subject (the existence of which is posed by the axiom of the subject). And what one has there, strictly speaking, is a hypothesis.

Therefore one can and must consider that the equation of subjects depends on this hypothesis, which from now on will be termed *the hypothesis of the subject of science*:

- Modern science, as modern and as science, determines a mode of constitution of the subject.

From this the definition of the subject of science is drawn:

- The subject of science is nothing outside the name of the subject insofar as, by hypothesis, modern science determines a mode of its constitution.

Note that the equation of subjects says nothing about psychoanalysis as *theory*. In particular, it is in no way affirmed that psychoanalysis itself is a science. Lacan is explicit on this point: the fact that "its *praxis* implies no other subject than that of science" is "to be distinguished from the question of knowing whether psychoanalysis is a science (i.e., whether its field is scientific)."⁴ The word *praxis* is explicit. It ineluctably invokes the figure of *theoria*. It then appears remarkable that Lacan does not say that the equation of subjects concerns the *theoria* of psychoanalysis. This does not mean that the equation is not a proposition of *theoria*; it means that it is situated at the point of passage from *praxis* to *theoria*. It could be said that it articulates a *theoria* in a nascent state, grasped in the movement of a reflection initiated on *praxis*. On this basis one would conclude that all the propositions of the Lacanian *theoria* suppose the equation of subjects because they suppose the accomplishment of the movement of reflection on *praxis*. The equation thus ensures a seminal function.

This highlights how important it is that the equation is not void. And it only escapes being void on one condition: that the hypothesis of the subject of science itself is not void. This supposes two things: that the notion of science is the object of a sufficiently determined theory and, once this theory is admitted, that one can link to it a certain constitution of the subject.

There is effectively a theory of science in Lacan's work. It is quite complete and not trivial.⁵ To reconstitute its coherency, one can first establish what it isn't, starting from the difference that separates Freud from Lacan. For in Freud's work there is also a theory of science. It is very brief and if one asks why it is there the answer is simple. It resides in what is called Freud's scientism and, in his work, is nothing other than a consent to the ideal of science.⁶ This ideal is enough to found the wish that psychoanalysis be a science. I must emphasize *ideal of science*. What is at stake is an ideal point—exterior or infinitely distant—toward which the plan's lines all tend and which at the same time belongs to all yet never meets up with any of them. This is not the *ideal science*, which "incarnates" in a variable manner

the ideal of science: a strictly imaginary determination, required for representations to be possible.⁷

It is true that humanity has always had need of representations. In particular, when claiming the ideal of science as one's own (as Freud did), it is difficult to avoid giving a representation of what science *must* be, and that is the ideal science. In general, characteristics are borrowed from a science that is constituted at the time of speaking and then one asks, "what must psychoanalysis be in order to be a science in conformity with the model?" From that moment the characteristics have been transformed into criteria. At the same time the way is opened to another scientism, not that of the ideal of science but that of the ideal science. Freud gave himself over to this, taking up a physiognomy of the ideal science generated by others, more qualified in his eyes than Freud himself: Helmholtz, Mach and Boltzmann can be cited, to name merely the greats.⁸

It is true that there is also a transversal theory of science that can be reconstituted from the thread of the Freudian texts, which is not only a theory of what science should be, but an answer to the question, "Why is there some science rather than no science at all?" But this theory remains dispersed and it is not evident that Freud would have consented to its being reassembled as he did regarding his theory of religion.

On the question of the why of science, Lacan did nothing other than repeat Freud's aphorisms, which he summarized in this way: science, at its birth, is a sexual technique.⁹ He proceeds with some caution in this matter just as he does in responding to the question "Why is there some psychoanalysis rather than no psychoanalysis at all?" In any case, one does not find a fully constituted body of doctrine on these questions about origins. The Lacanian theory of science is concerned with other things.

Faithful to Freud on the previous point, Lacan goes his own way on the question of the ideal of science: he does not believe in it. To be exact, he doesn't believe in it *for psychoanalysis*. Contrary to what may be supposed, this is what ensues from the foundational equation. With regard to the analytic operation, science does not play the role of an ideal—possibly infinitely distant—point; strictly speaking, science is not exterior to psychoanalysis, it structures in an internal manner the very matter of the object of psychoanalysis. If one sticks with the language of geometry, the field of psychoanalysis can be conceived of as a plane determined by the lines of its propositions (after all, this would be to take up, by means of a calculable displacement, the interpretation Queneau gave of Hilbert); if the point of science is not exterior to this plane, it cannot structure it in a regulatory manner. There is therefore no sense in asking under what conditions psychoanalysis would be a science. There is no more sense in presenting some well-made science as a model that psychoanalysis would have to imitate. In other words, since there is no ideal of science with regard to psychoanalysis, there

is no ideal science for it. Psychoanalysis will find in itself the foundations of its principles and methods.

Still better, psychoanalysis will discover itself to be confident enough to be able to question science. "What is a science that includes psychoanalysis?" asks Lacan in 1965,¹⁰ such that science itself could turn out to be the most consistent form of an activity that would be named *analysis*, which would be found, both diversified and still self-identical, in all regions of knowledge. Psychoanalysis would propose the ideal of this analysis, organizing the epistemological field and enabling orientation within it (witness the theme of the "Lacanian orientation"). Far from psychoanalysis consenting to an ideal of science, it would be the very responsibility of psychoanalysis to construct an ideal of analysis for science.

In its time, *Cahiers pour l'analyse* determined such a point, adding solely that Marxism both could and should be ordered accordingly. One can understand how in the very same gesture they laid claim to both psychoanalysis and epistemology. On the basis of the ideal of analysis, it is quite easy to end up with the ideal analysis, whose mannequin the little Lacanians set about dressing up—refashioning mathematics, logic, physics, biology and so on to measure. But that is of no concern, except socially.

2 The theory of the modern

The first recognizable characteristic of the Lacanian theory of science can be explained in the following way: it must render apparent the singular connection by which science is essential to the existence of psychoanalysis, yet for this very reason is not posed in front of it like some ideal. The most fitting relation for this task is presented in terms homologous with the historical operators, succession and break. Also, Koyré is used as a base, read in the light of the historicizing Kojève.

For purposes of clarity, it is permissible to adopt here the habits of geometers, who reason by means of axioms and theorems. Here are the most important:

Kojève's theorems:

- (i) There is a break between the ancient world and the modern universe.
- (ii) This break is tied to Christianity.

Koyré's theorems:

- (i) There is a break between the ancient *episteme* and modern science.
- (ii) Modern science is Galilean science, whose type is mathematized physics.
- (iii) In mathematizing its object, Galilean science strips it of its sensible qualities.

Lacan's hypothesis:

Koyré's theorems are a particular case of Kojève's theorems.¹¹

Lacan's lemmas:

- (i) Modern science is constituted by Christianity insofar as the latter is distinguished from the ancient world.
- (ii) Because the point of distinction between Christianity and the ancient world result from Judaism, modern science is constituted by the Judaism that remains in Christianity.¹²
- (iii) Everything that is modern is synchronous with Galilean science and there is no modern except that which is synchronous with Galilean science.

Conforming equally to this theme is the treatment of the hypothesis of the subject of science, which passes via Descartes. It is well known that Lacan endlessly analyzed and commented upon the Cartesian *cogito*.¹³ This insistence, in the final analysis, is based on the thesis that Descartes is the first modern philosopher qua modern.

This proposition has certainly been advanced several times, most notably by Hegel. Yet one still has to agree upon what is meant by *modern*. In the strict sense that Lacan gives this term (see lemma [iii]), it can only mean the following: Descartes is supposed to show, by the internal order of his *oeuvre*, what is required of thought by the birth of modern science. Yet the Cartesian edifice is built upon the *cogito*. The thought of science therefore has needs, of which the *cogito* is the testimony. The fact that the author of the *Meditations* is also the creator of analytic geometry and the author of a *Dioptrics* certainly constitutes weighty proof. But it is also necessary that this is not merely a contingent fact. This is what is supported by a set of propositions that articulate what could be termed Lacan's *radical Cartesianism*:

- If Descartes is the first modern philosopher it is because of the *cogito*.
- Descartes invents the modern subject.
- Descartes invents the subject of science.
- The Freudian subject, insofar as Freudian psychoanalysis is intrinsically modern, can be none other than the Cartesian subject.

Of course, this is not solely a matter of chronological correlation; a discursive kinship is also supposed. The sales pitch runs as follows: physics eliminates every quality from existents, therefore a theory of the subject that wishes to respond to such a physics must also strip the subject of every quality. This subject, constituted following the characteristic determinations of science, is the subject of science as defined in section one. The qualitative markings of the empirical individual are not appropriate to the subject,

whether they are somatic or psychic, nor are the qualitative properties of a soul. The subject is neither mortal nor immortal, neither pure nor impure, neither just nor unjust, neither sinner nor saint, neither damned nor saved. Even the properties that for a long time have been believed to constitute subjectivity as such are not appropriate: this subject has neither self, nor reflexivity, nor consciousness.

Such is precisely the existent that the *cogito* causes to emerge, if at least the order of reasons is taken seriously. At the very instant when this subject is pronounced as certain it is disjoint, by hypothesis, from every quality, the latter being at that moment collectively and distributively put into doubt. The very thought by which one defines the subject is strictly non-specific; it is the minimum common to all possible thought, because all thought, whatever it is (true or false, empirical or not, reasonable or absurd, affirmed or denied or put in doubt), can give me occasion to conclude that "I am." One can see in what sense this existent, a correlate without qualities supposed of a thought without qualities—named subject by Lacan, not by Descartes—responds to the gesture of modern science.

It is true that Descartes did not stop there; he passed on without delay, as if in haste, to consciousness and thought with qualities. For it is clearly a matter of thought with qualities once the synonymy is posed: "A thing which thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling, and also imagines and has sensory perceptions."¹⁴ One then understands why Lacan only ever lays claim to what can be called the extreme point of the *cogito*, and employs every effort in trying to suspend the passage from the first moment to the second. To this end he confines the *cogito* to its strict enunciation; moreover, he buckles this enunciation back upon itself, making the conclusion ("therefore, I am") the pure *pronuntiatum* of the premise ("I think"): "writing: *I think: 'therefore, I am'*, with quotes around the second clause."¹⁵ In this manner, the insistence of thought without qualities is assured before it diversifies into doubt, conception, affirmation, negation and so on.¹⁶

Yet thought without qualities is not only appropriate to modern science. Lacan demonstrates that it is also necessary for the Freudian unconscious. The very pivot of Freud's program resides in this acknowledgement, which the fact of the dream (*factum somnii*) appears to impose: "there is thought in the dream." From whence the reasoning: if there is thought in the dream (in the joke, in the parapraxes of everyday life, and so on), then thought is not what the philosophical tradition has said it to be: namely, it is not a corollary of self-consciousness. Now, if there is thought in the dream (in the joke, in the parapraxes of everyday life, and so on; this is what the *Traumdeutung* and the later works established); therefore, and so on.

If one allows that the name *unconscious* is shorthand for the negative proposition "self-consciousness is not a constitutive property of thought," then the following theorem is obtained:

- If there is thought in the dream, there is an unconscious.

By the same token the following lemma is obtained:

- The dream is the royal road of the unconscious.

And the definition that is deduced from the theorem and the lemma:

- To affirm that there is an unconscious is equivalent to affirming *it thinks*.

Lacan adds solely the proposition drawn from Descartes and extended to Freud:

- If there is thinking, there is some subject.

However this reasoning is only correct on two conditions. First, it is necessary that it be possible for there to be a subject while there is neither consciousness nor self—this would require a nontrivial theory of the subject. Second, it is necessary that the thought that makes up the material of the dream and the parapraxis is disjoint from any quality. In this manner the phenomena will be saved.¹⁷

Being Freudian, according to Lacan, consists in a triple affirmation: that there is some unconscious, that it is not foreign to thinking, and on that basis, that it is not foreign to a thinking subject. If it were, psychoanalysis would be illegitimate in principle and doubtlessly impossible in practice. An unconscious foreign to the subject that thinks is actually somatic, but the somatic has nothing to do with either truth or speech; yet psychoanalysis has to do with both truth and speech. The unconscious, insofar as psychoanalysis has something to do with it, is therefore neither foreign to the subject nor to thought. By way of consequence, neither the subject nor thought requires consciousness.

But to say that self-consciousness is not a constitutive property of the subject is to correct the philosophical tradition and notably Descartes, that is, the Descartes of the second moment, who is in as much of a hurry to leave the extreme point of the *cogito* as certain prisoners are to leave their prison. In light of Freud, self-consciousness becomes solely a mark of empirical individuality, unduly introduced by philosophy into the subject, however meticulous its filtering in other regards. Psychoanalysis therefore understands the axiom of the subject more strictly than any other doctrine. With an unparalleled precision, it separates two entities: in one, self-consciousness can be supposed to be non-essential without contradiction; and in the other, self-consciousness cannot be supposed to be non-essential without contradiction. The first alone responds exactly to the requirements of science, and it alone falls within the limits fixed by the axiom of the subject; it will then be

termed, in all legitimacy, the subject of science. It is at this moment that one understands why it is just as much a Cartesian subject as a Freudian subject.¹⁸ As for the second entity, the name *ego* suits it as much as any other.

The theory of science is derived from Koyré and Kojève; the unitarian interpretation of Descartes, the scientist and Descartes, the metaphysician is based on Koyré; the interpretation of the *cogito* is dependent upon Gueroult; the axiom of the subject is taken up, in homonymy or synonymy, from the post-Kantian tradition; but the hypothesis of the subject of science, the equation of subjects, the interpretation that this implies of Freud, and the articulation of the ensemble are all specific to Lacan. This is why, concerning Lacan, it is fair to speak not of a theory of science nor even of an epistemology, but of a veritable *doctrine of science*. What is specifically designated by this is the conjunction of the propositions on science and the propositions on the subject.

3 The historicist stylistics

At first sight, the doctrine of science is fundamentally historicizing in each of its parts. It historicizes that which concerns the hypothesis of the subject of science: "... a certain moment of the subject that I consider to be an essential correlate of science, a historically defined moment ... the moment Descartes inaugurates, which goes by the name of the *cogito*."¹⁹ It is historicizing in what concerns science: "the decisive change which, with physics paving the way, founded *science* in the modern sense ..."²⁰ It is historicizing in what concerns the articulation of science and the subject: "In this situation what seems radical to me is a modification in our subject position, in a double sense: that it is inaugural therein and that science continually reinforces it. Koyré is our guide here ..."²¹

The historicism is all the more accentuated if one follows Koyré in more detail. He drew two discriminatives from his own theorems, suitable, according to him, for distinguishing a Galilean science from among an ensemble of discourses that present themselves as science. The first states:

A science is Galilean if it combines two traits: mathematization and empiricity.

- This first discriminative, it's true, could be interpreted in non-historicist terms; all that is needed for that would be a general interpretation of the term "empiricity" and a response to the question, "by what mark is a proposition recognized as empirical?" But Koyré himself said nothing of the sort. In order to clarify the first discriminative he added a second, just as historicizing:
- Given that all empirical existents can be treated by a technique and that mathematization is the paradigm of all theory, Galilean science is a theory of technique and technique is a practical application of science.

The value of this discriminative is apparently entirely dependent upon its capacity to describe and explain exhaustively what everyone can observe today: "the galloping form of [science's] inmixing in our world," "the chain reactions which characterize what one might call the expansions of its energetics."²² Thus, Lacan gave the lunar expeditions the value of a sign ("the lunar landing vehicle, being Newton's formula realized in a machine . . .").²³ Yet these are the proofs of a historian of the present, in the same sense that the first discriminative is in fact based upon the proofs of a historian of the past.

One can draw some consequences from the first discriminative: science has as its object the set of what exists empirically—which can be called the universe—and science treats this set with as much precision as the literal disciplines treat theirs.²⁴ In other words, science made literal, as such, is a precise science. But this can also be interpreted in historical terms.

Take Galileo's aphorism, "the great book of the universe is written in mathematical language and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures."²⁵ It can only be completely understood if referred to humanism (Florence had been the latter's capital for a long time, and Galileo was Tuscan). To speak of the book of nature or of the world or of the universe, is in itself an extremely ancient figure of style, but it acquired a new range once printed editions became a scholarly art and once the editing of texts became subject to constraining rules. To speak of the characters of this book was to rediscover Democritus, Epicurus and Lucretius (Redondi has marked the importance, perhaps revelatory, of this alliance), but it was also to say something different, once typography, as such, was submitted to geometric forms and it was revealed that corrections could depend upon the form of a letter.²⁶

In other words, literality clarified the hold of mathematization, which, when it was a matter of nature, was both its sign and its means; but it also immediately became something more: a demand for precision. This is because, by way of humanism, the ensemble of disciplines of the letter (let's say, philology) constituted the ideal science with regard to precision. That the physician be as precise with regard to the universe (and as free of the fetters of tradition) as Estienne had been concerning Plato's *text*, or Laurent Valla had been concerning the *text* of the Gift of Constantine, or Erasmus concerning the *text* of the Evangelies, such is the injunction hidden in the very word *book*.

This means that the apparently direct passage from literality to precision can only be entirely explained by a history. The same thing goes for the passage, apparently direct, from precision to instrumentation. In Galileo's eyes, mathematics and measure were the means—among the means, the rest will be revealed—that would allow humble physics to one day equal what the prestigious philology, through the science of language (via grammar), and through the science of written documents, had, long ago, accomplished. It is

true that precision concerning empirical material required instruments that were themselves material, that is, quite different, from those the philologist used, and undoubtedly quite inferior in dignity in Galileo's eyes. Modern science, as empirical, is not only experimental; it is instrumental.²⁷

The second discriminative intervenes here. Technique has always been a material treatment by material instruments of the empirical as material. Once science takes the empirical for its object, technique can and must provide instruments for it because, after all, this science, which takes the empirical for its object, is also a literal science, that is, a precise science; the instruments provided by technique can and must be made as instruments of precision. It so happens that this was possible at that point in time because of technological progress, thanks to the celebrated engineers of the Renaissance—a thesis that, again, is historical.

The universe of modern science is at the same time and via the same movement a universe of precision and a universe of technique. Science is only literally precise if the instruments produced by technique allow it to be so materially. It is true that in the eyes of Galileo, these instruments only permitted precision insofar as science presided over their conception and their execution. Such is the true sense of the telescope and of science's relation to engineers. In this way the modern universe is configured as a union between science and technique, so intimate and reciprocal that one could also say that it's a matter of the same entity in two forms; or rather, a science, sometimes fundamental, sometimes applied; or rather, a technique, sometimes theoretical, sometimes practical.²⁸

4 The ancient episteme

Historicism is all the more accentuated when one takes into account the pertinence of the reference to antiquity. It is primordial. If science becomes the theory of technique, and technique becomes the practical application of science, then one is supposing that the couple theory/practice exactly overlaps the couple science/technique. To understand the discriminative range of this overlap, one must suppose that it is not self-evident. The simplest means of doing this is to show that it has not always been true, by geographical variation (this is the question of Chinese science), or by temporal variation.

Koyré chose the second way. In the ancient world, he discovered the couple *theoria/praxis*, entirely independent of the couple *episteme/techné*. But at the same time it became possible to articulate what appears to the moderns as a paradox of this past world: the existence of an *episteme*, the existence of *technai*, and yet at the same time, the nonexistence of productive machines. Koyré's doctrine thus concludes with hypotheses on questions that are strictly speaking those of historians, concerning slavery, machines and work in the ancient world.²⁹

This is not a matter of an extension that Koyré could have dispensed with. It apparently goes to the very heart of his theorems, such as he formulates them himself. Taken in their original version, these are, as we have seen, fundamentally differential. They speak of Galilean science, but the distinctive traits they confer on it are only fully grasped in a relation of opposition and difference. The two opposite and differential terms are presented in historical language. In truth, the opposition of antiquity to modernity constitutes the pivot of what we call history, and many hold the reciprocal position that speaking of antiquity and modernity is only meaningful if one admits history. Galilean science can only be completely understood if one understands what it isn't, but in Koyré's theory what it isn't is only constructible in a historical space.

The *episteme* is revealed as complete solely at the instant wherein it exposes that by which some object cannot, in all necessity and for all eternity, be other than it is. To be more exact, the part made up of the *episteme* in a discourse is solely the grouping of what that discourse grasps of the necessary and the eternal in its object. It then follows that an object lends itself all the more naturally to an *episteme* the more easily it reveals that which in it makes it necessary and eternal—such that there is no science of what can be other than it is, and the most complete science is the science of the most necessary and eternal object. It then also follows that in man, science can only be supported from what allies man to the eternal and the necessary. There is a name for that: the *soul*. It is distinguished from the body, that agency in man which allies him to the passing and the contingent. Finally, it then follows that mathematics proposes to science a chosen paradigm.

For the mathematics inherited from the Greeks arose from the necessary and the eternal. Figures and Numbers cannot be other than they are and by the same token cannot either come to be or cease to be—being as they are for all eternity. The necessity of demonstration has value solely in the exact measure that it is co-natural with necessity in itself. Just as the trajectories of celestial bodies crystallize for corporal eyes the most adequate figure of the eternal, in the same manner the path that departs from principles and axioms to arrive at conclusions crystallizes for the eyes of the soul the most adequate figure of the necessary.

Inversely, the empirical in its very diversity, does not cease to come to be or cease to be; by consequence it is incessantly other than it is. It is thus intrinsically rebellious to mathematics. If, however, mathematics can grasp something among this diversity, then that will be what lets itself be recognized as self-identical and eternal: the Same as such. Say for example, that certain objects, falling under the senses, let themselves be completely mathematized. What is supposed in them are eternal beings—hence the celestial bodies or harmonies. Say for example, that certain senses emanate more directly from the soul—hence sight.³⁰ For all objects that fall under any sense, one can and must cause some glimmer of eternity to emerge. If one agrees to

term this glimmer hidden in each being "idea," then it is understandable that certain ancients were able to define ideas by Numbers and that Numbers were solely an access to the Same. It was for this reason that they were important, and not due to the calculations that they made possible.

All the more so, Number is not the sole mark of the Same. Still more fundamental is necessity in demonstrations. The Greek *episteme* is founded upon demonstrations and demonstrations alone; mathematicity is only one of their secondary consequences. The radical and defining gesture consisted in drawing, from assured principles and evident axioms, conclusions in conformity with the rules of reasoning while respecting phenomenal appearances. Mathematics proposes the purest type of demonstration, to the extent that it requires a specific discipline, termed logic or dialectic, to expose its rules: (a) the principle of the unity of the object and of the homogeneity of the domain: all the propositions of science must concern elements of the same domain and be related to a unique object; (b) the principle of the minimum and the maximum: the propositions of science are either theorems or axioms—a maximum number of theorems must be deduced from a minimal number of axioms, expressed by a minimal number of primitive concepts; (c) the principle of evidence: all the axioms and primitive concepts must be evident; this dispenses with the need for their definition or demonstration.³¹

Mathematics is sovereign because it proposes the purest type of demonstration; it does so because the beings it deals with, numbers or figures, are in the closest position to the eternal and the perfect. Nothing of the sensible can come to alter the necessity of its *logoi*. It is therefore the formal paradigm of the *episteme* as such—of what there is in each particular *episteme* that makes it an *episteme* in itself, of what there is in every discourse that makes it a particular *episteme* (hence the utility of the *more geometrico*, for rendering visible, outside mathematics, the articulation of the *episteme*).

At the same time it is understood that mathematics is this formal paradigm to the degree that it *is not* the supreme *episteme*. It is not the supreme *episteme* because its object is not the supreme object; yet mathematics provides a model, because its object, stripped to the maximum of all sensible substance, has the maximum resemblance, via its formal properties, to the supreme object. If what there is of science in a discourse depends on what that discourse grasps of the eternal, the perfect and the necessary in its object, and if, moreover, there exists an object of which one can say that it is the most necessary, the most perfect and the most eternal, because in fact it is nothing if not the necessary, the perfect and the eternal in themselves, the only entire and full science is that which, conforming to the mathematical paradigm, concerns that object that is above and beyond all mathematics: namely, God—if one agrees to so name the necessary, perfect and eternal being, hence the most necessary, the most perfect and the most eternal. Number can act as an access to such a being, the best access, the sole one

perhaps, but number is not God. Mathematics alludes to what it isn't at the very instant in which it establishes its reign, but this allusion must direct the gaze toward a supreme being.

At the same time, the possibility of science in humanity is born from that which in humans allies them to the necessary and the eternal. The name of that alliance, as mentioned, is the *soul*, it being a matter of a localizable region in a human or a quasi-geometric place of points wherein the alliance is accomplished. As for the *body*, which marks humanity with the contingent and the passing, it is sometimes an allusion, sometimes an obstacle: an allusion by those of its parts that most resemble, in their materiality, materialities that themselves allude to the necessary and the eternal (the gaze, which resembles light; proportioned beauty, which alludes to numerable symmetries); everywhere else the body is an obstacle. A filter is thus required, designed to reduce the opacities of the body, leading it to the ways of purity. There is therefore only a complete *episteme* for a being endowed with a soul and a body, and moreover, one that has submitted them both to the appropriate exercises.

Having completed such exercises, the knower recognizes that the logical necessity of science itself is nothing other than the mark imprinted upon discourse by each being's necessity of being. In no way does Aristotle contradict Plato on this point. When he defines the syllogism—and one must remember, this is the general name of reasoning before being the technical name of a particular form—he says, “a discourse in which certain things having been posed, a different thing necessarily results” (*ex anankès*). But this is to echo the *Timaeus*, which ties regulated thought to the waning of celestial bodies: “God invented and gave us sight to the end that we might behold the courses of intelligence in the heaven, and apply them to the courses of our own intelligence which are akin to them, the unperturbed to the perturbed, and that we, learning them and partaking of the natural truth of reason, might imitate the absolutely unerring courses of God and regulate our own vagaries.”³² Both the Academy and the Lyceum bore witness to the proper movement of the ancient *episteme*, such as it was supposed by Koyré's theorems and the doctrine of science. The necessity in the *logoi*, qua necessity, is the point within science wherein resemblance is achieved between the necessary being of the entity and the necessary being of knowing; reciprocally, science is nothing if not the effectuation of that resemblance that, by way of the purified soul, unifies the human endowed with a body with the incorporeal Supreme Being. There is no science except that of the necessary. Still more general than the envelopment of the microcosm by the macrocosm (however recurrent this schema of the imagination), the pursuit of resemblance at the point of necessity constitutes the prime mover of knowledge.

The Galilean peripeteia is clarified by the contrast: it is, first of all, that mathematics, in science, can spell out *all* the empirical, without concerning

itself with any hierarchy of being, without ordering the objects on a scale going from the least perfect—intrinsically rebellious to number—to the most perfect—almost entirely numerable; second, it is that mathematics, spelling out the entirety of the empirical, intervenes by means of its literal nature, that is via calculation, rather than by demonstration (the emergence of science is also the inexorable decline of *mos geometricus*); third, it is that mathematics spells out the empirical *as such*, in its passing, its imperfection and its opacity.

One then understands the articulation of science with technique.³³ It is not that the ancient world did not know technique. Rather, if one believes the doctrine of science, it did not link it in an elective manner to the *episteme*. To be exact, two couples are at our disposition: *episteme/techné*, *theoria/praxis*. The modern universe superimposes them—except that, of course, at the very same moment the words cease to be correct. In the ancient world there is no reason for the couples to be exactly superimposed. If they do combine, they can get rather tangled up to the extent that an ancient term appears to gather traits that today one would say are incompatible. This signifies that in the Greek system there is a part of *theoria* in *techné* and a part of *praxis* in *episteme*. This is clearly why Socrates interrogated the artisans, in order to force them to isolate through filtering the kernel of *theoria* whose supports they were; it is clearly why the supports of the *episteme* must also act purely—science linked to conscience, as governing actions (*praxeis*).

The modern rupture therefore requires that mathematics to some degree ceases to be linked hand in hand to the eternal. Mathematizable beings (and, par excellence, the celestial bodies) are no longer *in the same manner* supposed to be eternal and perfect; they may always be supposed to be so, but that would depend on other reasons and if one must cease to suppose them to be such (if one must discern spots on the sun), that will not affect the possibility of mathematizing their paths. In the same manner, it is always possible that the necessity of mathematical demonstrations is supposed to expose the necessity of being, but that would not be via a divine analogy and, especially, it would be of no value in the usage that is made of mathematical demonstrations in science.

In science, numbers function no longer like Numbers, golden keys of the Same, but like letters, and as letters they must grasp the diverse in its quality of being incessantly other. The empirical is literalizable *qua* empirical; the letter does not bear the object up to the heaven of Ideas; the sky is not the visible deployment of the infinite sphere of being; literalization is not idealization.

The peripeteia is therefore not that modern science becomes mathematical; ancient science was already mathematical and in certain regards modern science is even less so. Rather than mathematical, one must in effect say *mathematized*. The primary resource of mathematization is number as letter, and on that basis, calculation—not the well-formed logic of demonstrations.

For the Greeks, science is mathematical; it is not number insofar as it allows counting that works toward its mathematicity (which is not mathematization) but that which makes Number an access to the Same in itself, that is, the *logos* as necessary demonstration.

But the detour via the *episteme* is not only important for Koyré. It is also one of the most important moments of the Lacanian thematic. If psychoanalysis goes hand in hand with the emergence of the modern universe, then obviously there lies one of its positive conditions, but the doctrine of science says more; it equally conceals a negative condition: the disappearance of ancient science. In other words there is something in the *episteme* that is joined to such an extent to psychoanalysis that it is able to prevent it from occurring; to understand the *episteme* is thus also to understand psychoanalysis, not only by contrast but by an intimate relation of mutual exclusion.

But if the *episteme* is nothing other than a historical figure, then the comprehension of psychoanalysis is radically historicist. Yet history, in Lacan's eyes, is fallacious. Must one then conclude that the doctrine of science, as unfolded here, is itself fallacious? That, on this basis, the hypothesis of the subject of science, which ties psychoanalysis to modern science, is an appearance to be destroyed? At the most a means for comprehension that must be thrown away once used—"throw my book away" says Gide; "one must throw away the ladder after having climbed it" said Wittgenstein—is this the last word of the doctrine?

5 That historicism is not necessary

I don't believe, however, that this is an inevitable consequence. The figure of the *episteme* is precisely what furnishes the most solid proof. The persistence of its pertinence with regard to psychoanalysis does not arise from reminiscence, but from the present.

To be exact, it arises from a logic. A figure of the *episteme* has been determined; it has distinctive characteristics. The latter are based upon the testimony of archives. But this ballast, however convenient and even correct it may be, is in no way at the level of principle.³⁴ All that is necessary is that the figure that is sketched out is consistent and responds to effectible discourses. It is not necessary that, *de facto*, the period referred to as antiquity knew this figure alone; no more is it necessary that this figure be manifest solely during this period. Whoever demonstrates the existence in Greece and Rome of discourses both mathematized and empirical will weaken Koyré's theorems; but they will not necessarily weaken the doctrine of science.³⁵ Whoever demonstrates the existence, in the modern universe, of discourses that conform to the rules of the *episteme* will not even weaken Koyré's theorems.

The same reasoning also goes for geographical correlations: it does appear that outside the Occident, a discourse in conformity to the doctrine of

science is nowhere to be found. But it is not indispensable to Lacan that it be found. In fact, in the thematic that Lacan lays claims to, the *episteme* that modern science separates itself from is more a structural figure than a properly historical entity. It is characterized by a set of theses, not by dating, even if one can establish a natural relation between the theses and dates. The definitive theses turn on the status of mathematics and on the relation between the contingent and passing, and the eternal and necessary.

The power of these theses has not vanished. Remaining purely and solely at the level of observation, who could doubt that in the figures of the ideal science, the traits of Euclidean demonstration still persist? Many recent discourses lay claim openly to an epistemology of the minimum and the maximum, which originates, of course, with the Greeks; such is, as shall be seen, one of the paradoxical traits of structuralism. If the soul, as Lacan holds on the basis of the doctrine of science, is intimately correlated to the *episteme* and to its constitutive principles, who could deny that the soul is recurrent in the most everyday discourses? Couldn't one even hold that in the soul the current discourse of civilized democracy finds its most solid anchoring point? In religions, in the spiritual party, in humanitarian gesticulation, in the political Tartuffe, one does not discern, contrary to what is often believed, the hold of Judeo-Christianity (progressive variant of the Judeo-Masonic), but rather the thematic of the Same, handed down from the Ancients. That the demiurge of the *Timaeus* and Aristotle's prime mover have fallen to the rank of Father Christmas, that they are supposed to restore all damage visible to bodily eyes by a gain visible to the eyes of the soul alone, can lend itself to laughter or tears but they are not incomprehensible.

As for science, however ready it is with its modernities, isn't the most insistent demand addressed to it the demand that it clear the conscience?³⁶ The belief remains that a moral magistracy is the duty of a great scientist—on the condition that they solely echo what everyone has already thought, at least in the instants when they do not think. This is what is called, using a name also handed down from the Greeks, ethics. I will not argue about whether ethics is legitimate or not in the modern universe.³⁷ One thing however is sure: if ethics exists, science has nothing to do with it.

One can certainly reason in historicist terms; one could take up Gramsci's language: modern man is never contemporary with himself ("we are anachronistic in our own time" he wrote in his prison).³⁸ But Lacan is more radical, that is, more Freudian.

In a celebrated passage from his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Freud mentions three "injuries which science has inflicted upon the naïve self-love of humanity": Copernicus via the putting into doubt of geocentrism, Darwin and Wallace via natural selection, and psychoanalysis.³⁹ In this way he explained the unbridled hostility that the latter provoked, comparable in his eyes to the fury unleashed by its great predecessors. It is little matter after all whether he was correct in the historical detail (Lacan, for his

part, doubted it, privileging Kepler at the expense of Copernicus). Beyond this detail, it is necessary to reconstitute the fundamental thesis that there is a recurrent anticopernicanism, and it is linked to the ego.

The term used by Freud, *Eigenliebe*, certainly carries a moral nuance (one thinks of *amor sui*, if not of the *amour propre* of the *Maximes*), but one can easily strip it of that nuance to reduce it to its material kernel, which is the ego. The ego is structural, and it is structural because it is solely the name of the function of the imaginary. This is what is affected by modern cosmology, whether one attributes the latter to Copernicus or Kepler. The heliocentrism of the first matters less because of the supposed dethroning of the Earth than because of the radical disharmony installed between the geometric center of the planetary system and the center of observation, which remains in the places of man; the step taken by the second promotes, at the expense of the circle with a unique center, the ellipse with two foci, one of which will be irremediably empty. In both cases, the good form of the circle wherein all centers coincide with all centers has given way to a bad form.⁴⁰

There again, the anticopernicanism is structural, because the ego and the imaginary, owing to their own proper law, privilege all good form. It is thus true that the *episteme* as historical figure has disappeared, but certain of its characteristic traits remain because the ego remains, whatever the periodizations.

On that basis, the following propositions are drawn in both Freud and Lacan:

- The ego has a horror of science.
- The ego has a horror of the letter as such.
- The ego and the imaginary are *gestaltist*.
- Science and the letter are indifferent to good forms.
- The imaginary as such is radically foreign to modern science.
- Modern science, as literal, dissolves the imaginary.

From now on one can better evaluate the vocabulary of periodization, such as it appears in Lacan's work, and the vocabulary of massive comparisons, which is extremely close to Kojève's neo-Hegelian style. By means of these two vocabularies, the adept will have no difficulty in articulating one of the possible responses to the question of knowing whether Lacan requires a theory of science. It is not, they will say, via scientism, because Lacan does not believe in the ideal of science for psychoanalysis and even less in an ideal science. Rather, it would apparently be via historicizing theses: "the emergence of Galilean science rendered psychoanalysis possible" or "psychoanalysis would not have been conceived without the suturing with which modern science operates with regard to the subject (and whose documentary trace is the *cogito*)" or "psychoanalysis can only be unfolded in the infinite universe of science" and so on. The problem is that these responses

do nothing other than reiterate the question in another form. In a more general manner, one must not let oneself be taken in by the Lacan of the globalizing comparisons; it's a Lacan of scholarly conversation, but not a Lacan of knowledge.

On this occasion, the periodization has a precise function: to break, concerning psychoanalysis, with the pertinence of the couple ideal of science/ideal science. What could be more effective in this regard than the operators of succession and break whose minor consequence is a relativism and a nominalism of good company? I would go so far as to advance the following: in order to open the way for psychoanalysis in a conjuncture dominated by philosophical idealism, Freud had to base himself on a scientism of the ideal of science. The price to pay was no less than the scientism of the ideal science. In a conjuncture in which psychoanalytic institutions let themselves be dominated by a scientism of the ideal science, Lacan, in order to forge ahead in psychoanalysis, had to relativize and nominalize; the price to pay was the periodist discourse. In both cases it is a matter of securing, by different means, a similar function, which in both cases is a matter of protreptic. Or, if one wants to attain the kernel of knowledge, it is appropriate to render it logically independent of any protreptic. In this case, this would be to render it independent of chronological successions and simultaneities.

In this manner, we do nothing other than follow Lacan. For everything is in place for cutting costs and disengaging from the historical novel. From the moment that the periodizing language had its effect, from the moment that via it, the double phantom ideal of science/ideal science was found to have lost its powers, Lacan started to purify the theory of the break. Such is the function of the theory of discourses, set in place from 1969 on: to reveal the properties of discourse in general (remember discourse, in Lacan's work, is the social bond) and by doing this, to show that heterogeneity and multiplicity are intrinsic to them.⁴¹ The latter are not simply the effects, in discourse, of periods and epochs that would be in themselves extrinsic to discourse. In particular, they are not simply projected upon the axis of successions ("this is in no way to be taken as a series of historical emergences"⁴²). By a doctrine of the plurality of places, of the plurality of terms, of the difference between properties of place and properties of terms, of the mutability of terms in relation to places, what is obtained is what could be called a nonchronological and more generally nonsuccessive articulation of the concept of break. Undoubtedly, the emergence of a new discourse, the passage from one discourse to another (what Lacan terms the "quarter turn"⁴³), in a word, the change, can be an event; these events are an object that historians attempt to grasp in the form of a chronology. But they are not what historians say they are. All history, in this regard, emerges from fallacy and the first adulteration consists precisely in the minimal homogenization supposed by temporal serialization. In itself, the quarter turn has no need to inscribe itself in a historical series.

Given that the theory of discourse is a literalization of places and terms, the break is first of all the marking of a literal impossibility. It is impossible that a system of letters be another such system. In other words, there is no internal transformation of systems; all transformation is passage from one system to another.

More profoundly, one could hold that a discourse defined in such a way is nothing other than a set of rules for synonymy and nonsynonymy. Two discourses will be different from one another insofar as their defining rules are different. The nature of the discursive break is then determined in the following way:

- To say that there is a break between two discourses is solely to say that none of the propositions of one are synonymous with the propositions of the other.

From this one can conclude that there can only be synonymies—if they exist—within the same discourse, and that between different discourses, the only possible resemblances arise from homology. In such a theory, the notion of break and the notion of discourse depend entirely on each other; between two really different discourses there is no other relation than break, but the break is none other than the name of their real difference. The conclusion imposed is as follows:

- A break is not fundamentally chronological.

One could put it in other terms, generalizing its range:

- The theory of discourses is an antihistory.

Thus, synchrony here does not signify contemporaneity. It must rather be understood in the sense in which it is said that two pendulums are synchronous—that between talk of the same date, and even within the same talk, there is nonsynchrony that can be conceived easily. In the same manner, the passage from one discourse to another does not lead to univocal successions; a discourse synchronous with the *episteme* could succeed, in time, a discourse synchronous with science (and inversely). More profoundly, the nonchronological doctrine of breaks implies that a succession is only ever imaginary. There is no last real instance that legitimates serial order.

The historicizing reading of the doctrine of science is only necessary if one confines oneself to protreptic ends; it is radically insufficient if one takes into account the construction of knowledge. It is therefore appropriate to state more explicitly the intrinsic and structural traits of Galilean science and not to confine oneself to a historical reference to Galileo and his successors. This is moreover to rediscover a concern of Koyré himself, who advanced theses

on this point. Lacan made use of the latter and, without always being entirely explicit, came up with others that complete them.

6 Literality and contingency

It is possible to read Koyré eliminating the historical operators. To be more exact, it is possible to purify the Lacanian doctrine's reading of Koyré. In combining mathematicity and empiricity, in regrouping *theoria* and *praxis*, *episteme* and *techne*, Koyré's discriminatives accomplish multiple operations. However, they can all be summed up in one alone. In order to understand it one must return to an epistemology apparently well removed from Koyré, that of Popper. A scientific proposition must be refutable, said Popper, thus determining, under the name "demarcation," what one could term *Popper's discriminative*. But a proposition can only be refutable if its negation is not logically contradictory or if it can be materially invalidated by a simple observation. In other words, its referent must be able—logically or materially—to be other than it is. But that, that is contingency. In short, only a contingent proposition is refutable; there is therefore no other science than that of the contingent. Reciprocally, every contingent can and must be graspable by science—both theoretical and applied. The set of contingents, as science grasps them in theory and practice, is the universe.

Such is the thematic in which Lacan really inscribes himself. Its middle term is the contingent. Through the latter, Koyré's chronological discriminative and Popper's structural discriminative can be combined.⁴⁴ The doctrine of science is revealed to rest upon a hidden lemma:

- Koyré's discriminative and Popper's discriminative are synonymous, on the condition that they are grasped from the point of contingency.

The first consequence imposes itself: whatever formulation Koyré's theorem was originally given in, it is not fundamentally a historical proposition; if psychoanalysis depends on this theorem, it is not for historical reasons (and especially not for chronological reasons).

A second consequence, more profound, poses that the equation of subjects be rewritten as follows:

- The subject upon which psychoanalysis operates, being a correlate of modern science, is a correlate of the contingent.

What this rewriting reveals is that Popper is necessary to Lacan. It is true that Lacan hardly ever makes reference to Popper (he became interested later on and without passion); however, it is clearly the word *contingent* that is seized by Lacan in Koyré and Kojève's work: "the starry vault no longer exists, and the set of celestial bodies . . . present themselves as though they

could just as well not be there—their reality is essentially marked . . . by a character of facticity, they are fundamentally contingent.”⁴⁵ In the chain of reasons that leads Koyré’s and Kojève’s propositions to such a promotion of contingency, it is legitimate, even if it is within Lacan’s ignorance of Popper and Popper’s of Lacan, to restore the missing link.

If one wishes, however, to confine oneself to what Lacan could explicitly think, is it to go beyond the legitimate to evoke Mallarmé here? In truth, if one admits that what is proper to the modern letter is its grasping of the contingent as contingent, the first motto of the age of science states that no letter will ever abolish chance. And the second statement is that every letter is a throw of the dice.

The letter is as it is, without any reason causing it to be what it is; by the same token, there is no reason for it to be other than it is. And if it were other than it is, it would solely be another letter. In truth, from the moment that it is, the letter remains and does not change (“the unique number which cannot be another”). At the most, a discourse may not change the letter, but rather change letters. In this manner, and by a tricky turn of events, the letter takes on the traits of immutability, homomorphic to those of the eternal idea. Undoubtedly, the immutability of what has no reason to be other than it is has nothing to do with the immutability of what cannot, without violating reason, be other than it is. But the imaginary homomorphism remains.

It then follows that the capture of the diverse by the letter gives the letter, insofar as the diverse can be other than it is, the imaginary traits of what cannot be other than it is. This is what is called the necessity of the laws of science. It resembles in every point the necessity of the Supreme Being, but it resembles it all the more insofar as it has nothing to do with it. The structure of modern science is entirely based on contingency. The material necessity that one recognizes in these laws is the scar of that very contingency. In a moment of clarity, every point of every referent of every proposition of science appears to be able to be infinitely other than it is from an infinity of points of view; in the next moment, the letter has fixed each point as it is, and as not being able to be other than it is, save by changing letters, that is field. But the condition of the latter moment is the earlier moment. To manifest that a point of the universe is as it is requires the dice to be thrown in a possible universe wherein this point would be other than it is.⁴⁶ To the interval of time during which the dice tumble, before falling, the doctrine has given a name: the emergence of the subject, which is not the thrower (the thrower does not exist), but the dice themselves insofar as they are in suspension. In the vertigo of these mutually exclusive possibilities, bursts finally, at the instant after the fall of the dice, the flash of the impossible—impossible that, once fallen, they bear another number on their upturned face. Here, one sees that the impossible is not disjoined from contingency but constitutes its real kernel.

Furthermore, it is necessary, in order to see this, that one not cease to pass from the earlier to the latter. Yet this is not possible, for one must also not cease to return from the latter to the earlier. In any case, science does not allow such passages; once the letter is fixed, necessity alone remains and imposes the forgetting of the contingency that authorized it. The inopportunity of this return to the contingent is what Lacan called suture. The radicality of this forgetting is what Lacan called foreclosure.⁴⁷ Since the subject is what emerges in the step from the earlier moment to the latter moment, suture and foreclosure are necessarily suture and foreclosure of the subject.⁴⁸

To admit that a contingent and empirical proposition qua contingent and empirical is mathematizable is, at the horizon of the letter, to rip apart and sew up again in an entirely new manner, perpetually precarious and incessantly reestablished, the cloth of the passing and the immutable. The complete set of points to which the propositions of science refer is usually named the universe. Because each of these points must be graspable as an oscillation of infinite variation, because just one variation affecting just one of these points is enough for two possible universes to be distinct, because it is due to this that the number of possible universes is infinite, and because the universe only exists for science by the detour of these possible universes, the universe is necessarily infinite and does not cease to be so, even if the points that constitute it happen to be currently finite. One would almost call this infinity qualitative, rather than quantitative.

It is through contingency alone that this infinity comes to the universe and comes to it from its very interior. Again, this upsets traditional relationships, which tie infinity with ease to an exterior place, transcending the universe. The universe, as an object of science and as a contingent object, is intrinsically infinite:⁴⁹

- The infinity of the universe is the mark of its radical contingency.

It is therefore in the universe and not outside it that one must find the marks of this infinity. The modern thesis par excellence therefore says:

- Finitude does not exist in the universe.

And as nothing exists except in the universe, it also says:

- Finitude does not exist for there is nothing that is outside the universe.

It then follows in particular that the subject is not an outside-universe. How, despite this, it can and must be distinct is the object of the theory of the subject. One can understand why this theory has recourse to the mathematical theory of the interior and the exterior, in other words, to topology.

One can understand that all the variants of internal exclusion are retained.⁵⁰ These are the necessary consequences of the doctrine of science. One can also understand that the doctrine of science must articulate itself with hypotheses on the subject, independently of any historical correlation. The hypothesis of the subject of science can be disengaged from historicism.

That there is nothing outside the universe proves difficult to imagine. On this basis there is the recurrence, in representations, of figures of the outside-universe—God, man, the ego—to which specific properties are attributed that except them from the universe and constitute the universe into a whole. This property of exception receives diverse names. For a long time philosophy has laid claim to the soul, the instance in man of what allies him to God. But the soul comes from the ancient world and the *episteme*. When the latter cedes to modern science, so must the soul gradually cede its place, hence the arrival of consciousness.

This is the effective point of psychoanalysis. It takes up the problem of the universe again and resolves it thus: the concept of there being a universe, that nothing is excepted from it, not even man, is the concept that says “no” to consciousness; it is the unconscious. The name “unconscious” and its negative constitution is thereby clarified. If consciousness and, more precisely, self-consciousness gather together the privileges of man as an exception to the whole, the negation with which Freud affects consciousness has one function only, to mark these privileges as obsolete. By this movement the soul is also marked. This explains the gashing strikes that Lacan, advancing a step further than Freud, aims against the soul.⁵¹ He merely unfolds one of the effects hidden in the word unconscious. At the same time the soul, the figure of God, insofar as it is the outside-universe par excellence, is marked. One then understands Lacan’s *logion* “God is unconscious”; it means first of all that the name *unconscious* is shorthand for the nonexistence of any outside-universe whatsoever, yet the name of God designates such an outside-universe. The triumph of the modern universe over the Ancients is thus that the unconscious has even prevailed against God.

But this *logion* itself is entirely articulated within modern science and the thematic of the universe. That science requires the universe, that the universe renders impossible any outside-universe, the shorthand for all that in one word alone is *unconscious*, through which, at the same time, the soul and God are *atheitized*. Inversely, a system of propositions that aims at a defined object like the unconscious can only find its accomplishment within modern science and the universe it founds. Rabelais knew it: science without conscience and, for that reason alone, ruin of the soul. Or, to be more exact, science is only accomplished by making itself the science of there being neither consciousness nor soul.⁵²

It is strictly true, as Freud affirmed, that psychoanalysis injures the ego and that its kinship with Copernicus, that is with modern science, consists in this. But to understand this one must add that narcissism always amounts to

a demand for an exception to be made for oneself. The hypothesis of the unconscious is nothing other than another way of posing the nonexistence of such exceptions; for this very reason the hypothesis is nothing more and nothing less than an affirmation of the universe of science. Not only does the unconscious thus accomplish the program feared by Rabelais, but, more precisely, it reveals its own assumption of the functions of infinity.

Besides, the two words have the same structure: one says *unbewusst* as one says *unendlich*. Infinity is what says "no" to the exception of finitude; the unconscious is what says "no" to the privilege of self-consciousness. Of course, Lacan made endless unfavorable comments about the negative character of the word *unbewusst*. One can recognize the Cartesian doctrine there: infinity is first and positive, the finite is second and is obtained in some manner by a subtraction; in the same manner, the unconscious explains the conscious and not the reverse. It is shorthand for an affirmation and not for a limitation. Yet the virtues of negation are also discernable.

Moreover, the German language adds certain virtues. The prefix *un-* is not always as flatly negative as the Latin prefix *in-*; it is not always confined to delimiting the complement of the domain signified by the positive. Thus, *Unmensch* is not a nonhuman but an undone man, a monster; *Unkraut* is not an herb (*kraut*), but a weed, a parasite; the *unheimlich* is not the inverse of the familiar, but the familiar parasitized by an anxiety that disperses it.⁵³ In the same way, one would readily say that in the modern universe, there is no distinction between the domain of the infinite and domain of the finite, but that infinity perpetually parasitizes the finite insofar as everything finite, inasmuch as it is grasped by science, is fundamentally posed as able to be infinitely other than it is. Moreover, this is not so far from Descartes, the theoretician of eternal truths. In a similar manner in psychoanalysis, the unconscious perpetually parasitizes consciousness, thereby manifesting how consciousness can be other than it is, yet not without a cost: it establishes precisely how it cannot be other. The negative prefix is nothing more than the seal of this parasitism.

Ultimately, psychoanalysis is a doctrine of the infinite and contingent universe. Its doctrine of death and sexuality is thus clarified. One cannot be unaware that in the eyes of most, death is the very mark of finitude. But the modern lemma holds that finitude does not exist and psychoanalysis follows that lemma. It even gives a specific version: Insofar as it is a mark of finitude, death is nothing in analysis.

- Death only counts in psychoanalysis insofar as it is a mark of infinity.
- Death is nothing more than the object of a drive.

Such is the foundation of the concept of the death drive. One would conclude that the word *death* is a center of homologies between the finite and the infinite, but also that any philosophy wherein death counts precisely as the

inverse motif, as mark of finitude, is incompatible with the possibility of psychoanalysis. This leads to a particular conclusion: if Heidegger's philosophy is of the latter type, if being-for-death is being-for-finitude, then, notwithstanding the epistolary exchanges and private visits, notwithstanding even the weight one must give, as for the doctrine of the cure, to the definition of truth as unveiling, Lacan's doctrine, as doctrine of psychoanalysis, is antinomic to Heidegger's philosophy (and reciprocally).

Psychoanalysis deals with what the moderns call *sexuality*. This is the most well known thing in the world. Yet it is quite legitimate to ask how and why it deals with sexuality. It's useless to state that sexuality exists empirically and it's necessary for some discourse to speak about it rationally. For it is precisely not trivial that sexuality exists—that a determinable section of reality bears that name. This is so nontrivial that it has become, it seems, intolerable that the question be posed. Foucault experienced how much it costs to be revisionist on this point. Let's even suppose that sexuality exists as it is said to exist: it is not evident that psychoanalysis speaks directly of it. It's well known that cultivated minds—Jung was anything but ignorant—have denied this.

I would advance that sexuality, insofar as psychoanalysis speaks of it, is nothing other than this, the place of infinite contingency in bodies. That there is sexuation rather than not is contingent. That there are two sexes rather than one or several is contingent. That one is of one side or another is contingent. That such and such somatic characteristics are attached to sexuation is contingent. That such and such cultural characteristics are attached to sexuation is contingent. Because it is contingent, it touches infinity.

However, something does not cease to be literalizable. For the names of *man* and *woman* are first of all a manner of being counted in the midst of a set that is both totalizable and open, and to this counting responds a certain type of logic. In "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty" (1945), Lacan termed it collective logic and proposed a dialectical version, suitable for a quasi-Sartrean dramatization (*No Exit* was not far off); it is found again, in an undramatic and quasi-Russellian formalization, in the formulas of "*L'Etourdit*." It is clear that the question of the limit is the pivot of the latter. It is also clear that this question is tied to the question of infinity. The formulas of sexuation concern an infinite totality insofar as it is affected by the existence or nonexistence of a limit.

The Freudian unconscious as sexual is the unconscious qua being able to be other than it is; it is also the unconscious qua being just as it is and of which, from the very instant that it is just as it is, the letter states that from that point on it cannot be other than it is. But, from another point of view, yet by the same movement, the unconscious is infinite. Therefore, in its place, infinity and the contingent intersect, as is proper. Sexuality is also parasitized by infinity, from the very fact of the death drive, from the fact of jouissance, from the fact of contingency again, from the fact of the twists and turns of

totality. Such that the reversibility is total, the unconscious is the hold the infinite universe has on the thought of the speaking being, but insofar as it can only be sexual; sexuality is the hold the infinite universe has on the body of the speaking being, but insofar as it can only be unconscious. Thus one finds modern science again. Psychoanalysis can only authorize itself from the doctrine of science on the condition of basing itself on sexuation as phenomenon and on sexuality as the region of reality wherein this phenomenon is graspable. In return, the doctrine of science is only another name for sexuation as a throw of the dice, that is to say, as letter.

Notes

- 1 The selection translated here is the second chapter of Jean-Claude Milner's *L'Oeuvre claire; Lacan, la science, la philosophie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1995). [This chapter was originally titled "*Le Doctrinal de science*," but I have translated Milner's "*doctrinal*" as "*doctrine*" throughout. Trans.]
- 2 Jacques Lacan, "Science and Truth," *Newsletter of the Freudian Field* 3 (1989): 7.
- 3 Ibid., 23. [References will be given to published English translations of Lacan's works where possible. Readers will find that most of the history of science books referred to exist in English. Trans.]
- 4 Ibid., 12.
- 5 I refer to Francois Regnault's book *Dieu est inconscient* (Paris: Navarin, 1985); adding the paper given at the École de la Cause Freudienne, 15 October 1989, "Entre Ferdinand et Leopold." These works render other works, if any exist on this question, unnecessary.
- 6 One day it will be necessary to explain exactly what manipulations are involved, such that this word "scientism" passes so generally as insulting. It is no more insulting in my eyes than such words as materialism, atheism or irreligion (I pick these at random). Lacan constantly links Freud to scientism (cf., in particular "Science and Truth," 6-7); even if it's a matter of marking a difference from him, it would not seem that Lacan wanted to debase the very one to whom he had proposed a return.
- 7 The disjunction-conjunction of the ideal of science and the ideal science had been introduced in *Cahiers pour l'analyse*, no. 9. It obviously conforms to the disjunction-conjunction of the ideal ego and the ego ideal, such as Lacan articulated it on the basis of Daniel Lagache's work in his "Remarque sur le rapport de Daniel Lagache 'Psychanalyse et structure de personnalité,'" *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 647-684; see in particular 671-683. From such a structural analogy the mirage effects that the name of science generates can be easily drawn; they exist, they must be dissipated, but science is not reducible to them.
- 8 One fact among others: in 1911, Freud cosigned a manifesto claiming the creation of a society wherein a positivist philosophy would be developed and diffused. Among the signatories one finds the names of E. Mach, D. Hilbert, F. Klein, and A. Einstein. There is a double indication here: the fact that Freud had given his signature says something about his positions at the moment when he was publishing the third edition of the *Traumdeutung*. He had just founded the International and the *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse*; moreover, when one knows the type of filtering that usually accompanies this type of operation, the fact that Freud's name was accepted, even solicited, also gives a measure of his social success in the heart of the positivist milieu in the German language. See on this point Antonia

- Soulez's important historical introduction to the collection *Manifeste du cercle de Vienne et autres écrits* (Paris: PUF, 1985), 32.
- 9 Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Penguin, 1978), 151.
- 10 Summarized for the *École pratique des hautes études* year-book (1964–5, 249–51) and reproduced on the back of the 1973 edition of *Seminar XI*. [Also found under the title "Comptes rendus d'enseignement, 1964–1968. Les quatre concepts fondamentaux, 1964" in *Ornicar?* 29 (1984): 7–9. Trans.]
- 11 Kojève himself in "L'origine chrétienne de la science moderne," *L'Aventure de l'esprit* (= *mélanges Alexandre Koyré*), II (Paris: Hermann, 1964), 295–306, comes out with a similar proposition, but it does seem as though Lacan was first since he formulated his hypothesis from 1960 on. Moreover, it is not entirely clear that the two propositions are synonymous. Cf., following note.
- 12 See Jacques Lacan, *Seminar VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Dennis Porter (London: Routledge, 1992), 122: "... modern science, the kind that was born with Galileo, could only have developed out of biblical or Judaic ideology, and not out of ancient philosophy and the Aristotelian tradition." This is where the difference that separates Kojève and Lacan appears; the first attributes to Christianity, and more specifically to the dogma of the Incarnation (Kojève, *ibid.*, 303), a decisive role in the emergence of science; yet this dogma is precisely what separates Christianity from Judaism and justifies the former laying claim to the spirit rather than the letter. Lacan attributes a decisive role to Judaism and to what, in Christianity, remains of Judaism, that is, precisely, the letter. This means that Lacan's hypothesis (1960) does not match that of Kojève (1964), despite their being almost homologous.
- 13 See in particular Jacques Lacan, "The Agency of the Letter," in *Écrits: A Selection* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1977), 164–166 and "Science and Truth," 5–7, 13–14.
- 14 Rene Descartes, "Second Meditation," in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. Cottingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), vol. II, 19.
- 15 "Science and Truth," 13.
- 16 Of course, Lacan's commentary depends largely upon the interpretation of Martial Gueroult (termed *instantanéiste* in French), but not entirely, and Gueroult could be refuted on this point (cf., Jean-Marie Beyssade, *La philosophie première de Descartes*, [Paris: Flammarion, 1979]) without the Lacanian rewriting being radically invalidated. In the same way, it is not a decisive objection that in the *Meditations* Descartes does not take up again the formulation of the *Discourse on Method* or the *Principles of Philosophy*: "I think: therefore I am," "*cogito: ergo sum*" (cf., Etienne Balibar, "*Ego sum, ego existo*. Descartes au point d'hérésie," paper given to the *Société française de philosophie*, 22 February, 1992). One could even argue that Lacan's rewriting follows that of the *Meditations* to the letter: "that proposition: *I am*."
- 17 No less than, moreover, the coherency of the texts. For there is an apparent contradiction between the letter of Freud and the letter of Lacan: the first posing that the dreamwork, in what is specific to it, and insofar as it is the major form of the unconscious, does not think (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* [London: Hogarth Press and The Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1961] vol. V, 507); the second posing that the dreamwork, in what is specific to it, and insofar as the dream is one form of the unconscious, is shorthand for the statement: "it thinks." Add to that the contradiction that opposes Freud to himself, sometimes affirming that the dream is a form of thought, and sometimes that it does not think (*Ibid.*, 505). However, everything is clear. The thought that Freud refuses to attribute to the unconscious

is qualified thought; the thought that he does attribute to it and by which Lacan defines it is thought without qualities—for which the *cogito* is necessary.

For Freud, refusing thought to the dreamwork is to refuse it the *modalities* of thought: calculation and judgment (“the dreamwork does not think or calculate; in a more general manner, it does not judge” [Ibid., 507]). That is, everything that makes a *qualitative* difference between opposed poles. It is legitimate to look at both the text of the *Traumdeutung* and that of the *Meditations*; Descartes holds that a thing that thinks is a thing that doubts, conceives, affirms and denies, wants and does not want, imagines and feels; essential to this analysis is its differential character, not solely between modalities, but inside them in turn, between their poles (affirm/deny and so on). If the dreamwork is what Freud says it is, then, according to this analysis, it is not a thing that thinks. If, on the other hand, one holds that the dream is a form of thought, then it must be allowed that there is thought, even at the point where the difference between doubt and certitude, affirmation and negation, wanting and refusing, imagination and sensation, is problematic if not suspended. Freud, still restrained in the *Traumdeutung*, (the final state of which goes back to 1911) was explicit in the article on negation (1925): there is thought, even though no polarity, and on this basis no quality, has emerged. It is quite conceivable that Freud had ambitions that this thought without qualities could be ruled solely by the laws of quantity (energetics). We will see that the signifier proposes nonqualitative laws that, even so, will not be quantitative [The reference here is to the following chapter of *L'Oeuvre claire*. Trans.]

From a more general point of view, it is an open question whether thought without qualities, as it is constituted here, is also thought without properties. It could be that it has “minimal” properties. There again, the theory of the signifier proposes a specific response to the question.

- 18 Helmholtz from 1855 had explicitly raised the question of a thought without self-consciousness (“*ein denken ohne Selbstbewusstsein*”); cf., Helmholtz, “Über das Sehen des Menschen,” *Vorträge und Reden*, 1896, II, 110. The historical articulation between scientism and the unconscious is thus revealed. To be more precise, in introducing a theory of the unconscious, Freud does not detach himself from scientism, rather he accomplishes its program.
- 19 “Science and Truth,” 5.
- 20 Ibid., 4.
- 21 Ibid., 5. [Translation modified.]
- 22 Ibid., 4–5.
- 23 “Radiophonie,” *Scilicet* 2/3 (Paris: Le Seuil, 1970): 75. See also *Television* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 36.
- 24 [I have translated *littérale*, *littéralisé* and *littéralisable* throughout as *literal*, *literalized* and *literalizable*, but the reader should keep in mind that in French, and especially in this context, *littéral* signifies that which is of the letter in the sense of the letters or algebraic symbols used in the formal notation of mathematics. Trans.]
- 25 *Il Saggiatore* §6; cited in the edition of C. Chauvire, *L'Essayeur de Galilée* (Paris: Annales Litter. Franche-Comte, 1980), 141. [Translation modified.]
- 26 Pietro Redondi, *Galilée hérétique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 69–75. [Pietro Redondi, *Galileo Heretic* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987)]. This author takes Galileo to be an atomist; on this point he is opposed to Koyré, who made a Platonist out of Galileo (Alexandre Koyré, *Études galiléennes* [Paris: Hermann, 1939], III, 267–281). It is true that the two interpretations are not necessarily irreconcilable (cf., F. Hallyn, *Le Sens des formes* [Geneva: Droz, 1994], 296–97).

- 27 I must, to be exact, underline that the articulation of precision and literality is not explicit in Koyré's work. I am leaving aside, despite its historical importance, the Baconian reference, wherein the literal paradigm remains pertinent but referred to cryptography rather than to philology. Among the memorable encounters between philology and modern science, one must cite the correspondence that R. Bentley (scholarly editor of Horace) maintained with Newton (cf., Alexandre Koyré, *Newtonian Studies* [London: Chapman & Hall, 1965]). On the distinction between "experimental" and "instrumental," cf., Gerard Simon, *Le Regard, L'Être et l'apparence dans l'optique de l'Antiquité* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1988), 201. According to Simon, ancient optics was experimental; it was not and could not be instrumental.
- 28 In fact, the situation is of course more complicated: is there an exact synonymy between science and the theory of technique, between technique and applied science? One could discuss such a matter. In a similar manner, one could discuss whether the same thing is found if one goes from "right to left," from science to technique, or is going from "left to right," from technique to science. At this very moment it is obvious, under the pressure of fear and hope, that in tying research in biology to the discovery of vaccines, science is made into a pure and simple theorized technique. Science is then as free as one wants it to be with regard to the object it theorizes, yet having that particular object: not Nature, but nature treated by technique or, in this case, not configurations of molecules, but these configurations insofar as they are modifiable by voluntary procedures for the ends of medical treatment. The controversy has become furious around AIDS. A growing number of researchers affirm that the vaccine will only be found by not searching for it. This would imply that funds go elsewhere than to research for the vaccine. This is orthodox Koyréism. But those with AIDS find it difficult to agree.
- 29 See the two articles that close the *Études d'histoire de la pensée philosophique*, "Les philosophes et la machine" and "Du monde de l'à peu près à l'univers de la précision" (Paris: A. Colin, 1961); re-ed. (Paris: Gallimard, 1971). The two texts had been originally published in *Critique* in 1948.
- 30 Hence, on this basis, the eminent status of astronomy, optics and harmony. Cf., Gerard Simon, *Le Regard, L'Être et l'apparence*, 182-3. In opposition to them, following Eugenio Garin, *Moyen Age et Renaissance* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), one would put learned astrology, which pretended precisely to grasp the accidents of a destiny in what it has that is most individual, by means of the configurations of the eternal stars and calculations with numbers. Hence the scandal that it provoked among certain ancient philosophers (summarized in the discourse of Favorinus, reported by Aulu-Gelle, *Nuits Attiques* XIV, 1) and the insistence upon its "foreign" (Chaldean) character.
- 31 Cf., H. Scholz, "Die Axiomatik der Alten," article of 1930, reprinted in *Mathesis universalis* (Darmstadt, 1969), 27-44.
- 32 Plato, *Timaeus*, 47b in Plato. *The Collected Dialogues*, eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), 1175. It is interesting that H. Scholz, in his brief *Esquisse d'une histoire de la logique* (Paris: Aubier, 1968), 47—the first German edition dates from 1931—cites this passage and considers that it still determines today the greatness of logic as a discipline. Here one is at the antipodes of logical positivism, but also of modern science. One should recall that Scholz was not only a logician and philosopher but also a theologian. In a more general sense, one should remark the degree to which attention paid to mathematical logic can lead certain philosophers to efface the Galilean break; reciprocally, it is known that Koyré had hardly any esteem for mathematical logic (witness his *Épiménide le menteur*, [Paris: Hermann, 1947]).
- 33 Eugenio Garin (see Garin, *Moyen Age et Renaissance*, 121-150) goes so far as to affirm that the combination of the mathematical and the empirical, characteristic

of modern science, was rendered possible by the return of learned astrology, which became accessible again from the 12th century on, flourishing in the 15th and 16th centuries. For all that, magic, as action on the world ruled by theorizable principles, shows the first elements of the modern relation that unites science, as theory of technique, to technique, as practice and application of science.

- 34 Moreover, an empirical question remains open: are Koyré's propositions concerning ancient science incontestable? The specialists debate on this point even if, on the whole, the essence of his presentation is maintained by serious authors; cf., Thomas S. Kuhn, "Tradition mathématique et tradition expérimentale dans les sciences physiques," *La Tension essentielle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990), 69–110 [*The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977)]; and Gerard Simon, *Le Regard, L'Être et l'apparence*.
- 35 Thus were the discourses held by Archimedes and Lucretius according to Michel Serres, *La Naissance de physique dans le texte de Lucrèce* (Paris: Minuit, 1977). Independently of Serres' work, Archimedes is often supposed to illustrate such a combination of the mathematical and the empirical, not without technical applications. Cf., among others, Geoffrey Lloyd, *La science grecque après Aristote* (Paris: La Découverte, 1990), 54–62, 112–115 [G.E.R. Lloyd, *Greek Science after Aristotle* (New York: Norton, 1973)]. Moreover, what is known of Archimedes doctrinal positions confirms that he was himself a disciple of the fundamental positions of the ancient *episteme*. Cf., his incomplete work entitled *Method* and addressed to Eratosthene (fragment cited in Lloyd, *Greek Science*, 59–60).
- 36 ["*qu'elle éclaire les consciences*." Due to the varied meanings of conscience, this phrase could also be translated as "enlighten consciousness." Trans.]
- 37 This is the question that Lacan poses in his *Seminar VII*. However he has not turned his exoteric speech into writing. This proves that he considered that it had not progressed as far as required for knowledge, which is confirmed by a reading of the Seminar. It is equally confirmed by the absence of any construction of a relation between what is advanced concerning ethics and what, later, is advanced under the title of an ethics of speaking well (see, for example, *Television*). Little is therefore known of Lacanian ethics. All that is known is that it would be, in principle, legitimate.

The question of morality in an infinite, mathematized and precise universe is, of course, that posed by Kant. On this point I refer to Guy Lardreau, *La Veracité* (Lagrasse: Verdier, 1993), (cf., notably the second book, first section—130–275—and the close examination that the Lacanian intervention is subjected to, 159–60 and n.16) and to Jules Vuillemin, *L'Intuitionnisme kantien* (Paris: Vrin, 1994) *passim*. On the general question of ethics, in a universe where mathematics is the science of Being and not solely the language of science, one would read Alain Badiou, and singularly *L'Éthique* (Paris: Hatier, 1993). [Alain Badiou, *Ethics* (London: Verso, forthcoming)].

- 38 Cf., Antonio Gramsci, *Oeuvres Choies* (Paris: Éditions sociales, 1959), 19.
- 39 Sigmund Freud, Lecture XVIII, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis 1916–1917*, in *SE*, vol. XVI, 285.
- 40 Copernicus, writes Freud, showed that "the earth, far from being the centre of the universe, only forms an insignificant part of the cosmic system" (*ibid.*). Lacan, on Koyré's authority (*La Révolution astronomique* [Paris: Hermann, 1960]) held such a presentation to be "mythic"; in his eyes, the revolutionary step had been accomplished not by Copernicus, but by Kepler and it did not concern geocentrism, but the substitution of the ellipse for the circle. Cf., "Subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious," in *Écrits: A Selection*, 295–6; "Radiophonie," *Scilicet* 2/3, 73; Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XX, Encore: On Feminine*

Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998), 40–3. Whatever may be so, one can discern in Lacan a concern for historical precision that actually sets him at a distance from historicism, the latter proceeding by means of great masses.

On a Galilean rejection of the *Gestalt*, in an entirely different domain, cf., Jean-Claude Milner, *Introduction à une science du langage* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1989), 632–633.

If it is one's persuasion to quibble with Freud, one could also reproach him with having cited Wallace next to Darwin. For on this precise point of humanity's self-live, Wallace was apparently extremely prudent (cf., for example, Stephen Jay Gould, "Natural selection and the human spirit: Darwin versus Wallace," in *The Panda's Thumb* [London: Penguin Books, 1980]).

- 41 Cf., *Seminar XVII* in its entirety (*L'Envers de la psychanalyse* [Paris: Le Seuil, 1991]); "Radiophonie," *Scilicet* 2/3, 96–99; the short speech (*Allocution*) given at the closure of the congress of the *École freudienne de Paris*, 19 April, 1970, *ibid.*, 391–99; *Television*, *passim*; *Seminar XX*, 14–17.

- 42 *Seminar XX*, 14–15.

- 43 "Allocution," *Scilicet* 2/3, 395

- 44 In this regard, one would consult Kuhn's work, and in particular his collection *The Essential Tension*, which is more explicit on the confrontation with Popper than *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

- 45 *Seminar VII*, 122.

- 46 One finds in Saul Kripke's work an articulation of the letter, of possible universes and a throw of the dice. Cf., in particular, *La logique des noms propres* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1982), 167–8 [*Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1972)]. Evidently, this is to ignore the horror that a comparison with Lacan or Mallarmé might inspire in Kripke, supposing that he would even know what was at stake.

- 47 "Science and Truth," 22.

- 48 In other words, the doctrine of the letter is based on a logic of two periods. The reader can verify that Lacan's formula $S1(S1(S1(S1 \rightarrow S2)))$ —found in *Seminar XX*, 143—is solely the literalization of this logic.

- 49 Which infinity is at stake? In the last resort, the literalizable infinity: that of the mathematicians, that is, of Cantor. But he came late. At the origin of Galilean science, the paradox would have it that at the very instant when it declared itself mathematized and referred the universe to infinity, there were no mathematics of infinity. It was upon this basis of delay that the oscillation between the positive infinity and the negative indefinite was structured, whose first signal was Descartes.

- 50 "Science and Truth," 10.

- 51 Cf., *Television*, 6.

- 52 Cf., "To be the most propitious language for scientific discourse, mathematics is the science without conscience which our good Rabelais promised . . . the gay science rejoices in presuming the death of the soul." In "L'Étourdit," *Scilicet* 4 (1973): 9. [Readers should note here that in French *conscience* signifies both moral conscience and consciousness. Trans.]

- 53 Walter Benjamin reports this comment by Leiris (without the editor's being able to determine whether it was Michel Leiris or Pierre Leiris involved): "the word 'familiar' would, in Baudelaire's work, be full of mystery and anxiety" (*Charles Baudelaire* [Paris: Payot, 1982], 236). To not be separated from "anywhere outside the world . . ." and from the non-familiar as refuge.