

and who is infatuated by it will be captured by its discourse and will make the blatantly erroneous statement that the unconscious is the condition of language. Those who say this make themselves into authors by disregarding what I told them, what I even incanted to them, which is, that language is the condition of the unconscious.

Symbol and Imaginary

The notion of message in cybernetics has nothing to do with what we habitually call a message, which always makes sense. The cybernetic message is a succession of signs. And a succession of signs always leads back to a succession of o's or 1's. This is why what is called the unit of information, which is to say something against which the efficiency of the signs is measured, is always related to a primordial unit that is called the key and which is nothing other than the alternative.

The message, within this system of symbols, is part of a network. The network is that of combinations based on a unified scanning, on a 1 which is the principle of the scanning.

On the other hand, the notion of information is easy to understand in one of these little tables.

o	o	:	o
o	1	:	o
1	o	:	o
1	1	:	1

If we use this table, what it means is that in order to win, both elements must be positive. That means that at the beginning the probability of winning is 1:4. Let us suppose that I have already played once. If the element is negative, I have no chance of winning. If it is positive, I have one chance out of two, 1:2. This means that there are different levels of chances and that in moving from one to the other my chances have increased.

Phenomena that have to do with energy always tend to equalize the chances. When we are concerned with messages and with a calculus of chances, the greater the amount of information, the greater the differentiation of levels. I am not saying that it always increases, that my chances always increase, because there are cases where it does not increase; but when it decreases, it decreases toward differentiation.

What we call language can be organized around this base. In order for there to be language there must be little things like orthography and syntax. All of this

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is given at the beginning. These tables are precisely a syntax, and they show why machines can perform logical operations.

From this point of view syntax precedes semantics. Cybernetics is a science of syntax and it is made to make us see that the exact sciences do nothing more than link the real to a syntax.

But then what is semantics? It certainly has to do with the languages that people speak and that we as analysts work with; these languages have ambiguity, emotional content, and sense. Are we going to say that semantics is peopled or furnished with men's desires?

It is certain that we bring the sense to language: at least, for a large number of things it is certain. But can we say that everything that is circulating in the machine makes no sense? Certainly not in all the senses of the word *sense*, because, in order for the message to be a message, it is necessary not only that there be a succession of signs but that this succession of signs has a direction, an orientation. In order to function according to a syntax, it is necessary for a machine to move in one sense or another. And when I say *machine* you can see that I am not talking about some little thing which we usually call a machine. When I write on a piece of paper the transformations of the r's and o's, this production always has a direction.

Therefore it is not absolutely rigorous to say that human desire alone introduces sense into language. The proof is that nothing comes out of the machine except what we are expecting. This is to say, not so much what interests us, but what we have foreseen. The machine stops at a point that we have commanded it to stop at; that is where we shall read the results.

The base of the system is already present in the game we invented for the table above. How could we have established it if it did not rest on a notion of chance, on a certain kind of pure waiting; and this is already a sense.

Here, then, is the symbol in its purest form. This is certainly more useful for us than mistakes in syntax. Mistakes in syntax engender errors; they are accidents. But a mistake in programming will engender falsehood. At this level the true and the false are in play as such. But what does this mean for us analysts. What do we have to deal with when we encounter the human subject who comes to see us?

We can say that his discourse is *impure*. Is it impure because he makes syntactical errors? Of course not. Psychoanalysis is founded on the fact that finding something valuable in human discourse is not a problem of logic. Behind this discourse, which has its sense, we seek another sense, *the* sense. And we seek it in the symbolic function that is manifested through this sense. But this is another sense of the word symbol now.

Here there intervenes a precious fact manifested by cybernetics – something that is not eliminable from the symbolic function of human discourse, and this is the role the imaginary plays in it.

The first symbols, natural symbols as they are called, issued from a certain number of prevalent images – the image of the human body, the image of a certain number of evident objects, such as the sun, the moon, and others. This

is what gives the weight, the vital force, the emotional vibration to human language. Is this imaginary homogeneous with the symbolic? No. And it would pervert the meaning of psychoanalysis to reduce it to the valorizing of these imaginary themes, to the coaptation of the subject to an elective, privileged, prevalent object; nowadays this is called the theory of object relations.

What cybernetics shows us is the difference between the symbolic order and the imaginary order. A cybernetician even admitted to me recently the extreme difficulty he has in finding a cybernetic translation for the functions of a Gestalt, which is to say the capture of good forms. Something that is a good form in living nature is a bad form in the symbolic.

As people have often said, man invented the wheel. The wheel is not in nature but it does have a good form, that of the circle. However there is nothing in the nature of the wheel that will describe the pattern of marks that any one of its points makes on each turn. There is no cycloid in the imaginary. The cycloid is a discovery of the symbolic (figure 1). And while a cycloid can easily be constructed in a cybernetic machine, people have the greatest difficulty, except in the most artificial way, in making one circle respond to another in the dialogue between two machines.

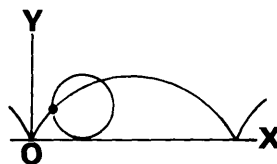


Figure 1 Cycloid

This brings to the fore the essential difference between the imaginary and the symbolic.

What the imaginary brings to a subject's discourse is an inertia. This inertia mixes up the discourse to the extent that when I want the best for someone, I really want the worst; when I love someone, it is really myself that I love; or when I think that I love myself, it is precisely at this moment that I love another. This imaginary confusion is precisely what the dialectical exercise of analysis should dissipate. To do so restores to discourse its sense as discourse.

The question is to know whether the symbolic exists as such or whether the symbolic is only the fantasy of imaginary capture taken to a second degree. This is where one has to choose between two different orientations for analysis.

Everyone, in the adventures of his history, has accumulated a certain amount of sense in the ballast of his semantics. Ought we to follow him in the sense that he has already given to his discourse, in so far as he knows that he is doing a psychoanalysis and that psychoanalysis has formulated certain norms? Ought we to encourage him to be very nice, to become a person who has attained instinctual maturity, having left behind the developmental stages in which one orifice or another is dominant? Do we try in analysis to capture these fundamental images, to rectify, to normalize these imaginary terms, or do we try

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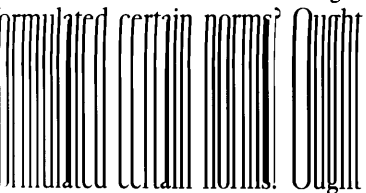


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to liberate the sense in the discourse, in this succession of discourse where the subject is engaged? The different schools diverge on these points.

Freud had to the highest degree this sense of sense, which explains why some of his works, for example "The Theme of the Three Caskets", read as though they were written by a master of the art of divination, as though he were guided by a sense which is like poetic inspiration. What is in question is knowing whether analysis will continue in the Freudian sense, not seeking the ineffable, but the sense.

But what is sense? The sense is that the human being is not the master of this primordial and primitive language. He has been thrown into it, engaged in it, caught in its gears.

We do not know its origin. We are told, for example, that cardinal numbers appeared in languages before ordinal numbers. This is not expected. One would have thought that man entered into the world of numbers through ordinals, through dance, through religious and civil ceremonies, through social hierarchies, through the organization of the village, which is nothing other than order and hierarchy. And yet linguists tell me that the cardinal number appeared first.

The paradox is none the less marvellous. Here man is not master of his own house. There is something into which he is integrated and which reigned already through its own combinations. The passage of man from nature to culture follows the same mathematical combinations which will serve later to classify and to explain. Claude Lévi-Strauss calls them the elementary structures of kinship. And yet, we do not suppose that primitive men were like Pascal. Man's entire being was taken into the procession of numbers, into a primitive symbolism which is distinguished from imaginary representations. It is in the middle of all that that something of man has to make itself recognized. But what has to be recognized, as Freud says, is not what is expressed, but what is repressed.

Something in a machine which does not get to the right place at the right time falls away and does not complain about it. With men things are not the same: the scanning is alive and what did not get there at the right time remains suspended. That is what is in question in repression.

Undoubtedly, something that is not expressed does not exist. But the repressed is always there – it insists, and it demands to come into being. The fundamental relation of man with this symbolic order is precisely the same one which founds this symbolic order itself – the relation of non-being to being.

That which insists on being satisfied can only be satisfied through recognition. The end of the symbolic process is that non-being comes to be, that he is because he has spoken.