

## NINE

## The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious

This text represents my contribution to a conference entitled 'La Dialectique', held at Royaumont 19-23 September, 1960. The conference was organized by the 'Colloques philosophiques internationaux', and I was invited to participate by Jean Wahl.

This conference preceded by a month the Congrès de Bonneval, at which I delivered my text, *Position de l'inconscient*. The later text was very much a development of this (earlier) one, and its publication serves to demonstrate that my teaching has always been ahead of my published work.

(The graph reproduced here first appeared in my seminar on the formations of the unconscious. It was worked out with particular relation to the structure of the witticism, which, to the surprise of my audience, I took as a point of departure. An account of this seminar, which took place in the first term of the year 1957-8, appeared, together with the graph, in a number of the *Bulletin de psychologie*.)



The praxis that we call psychoanalysis is constituted by a structure. An audience like the one here today – an audience that we presume to be aware of philosophical problems – cannot ignore this structure.

The notion that to be a philosopher means being interested in what everyone is interested in without knowing it has the interesting peculiarity that its pertinence does not imply that it can be verified. For it can be put to the test only by everyone becoming a philosopher.

I say its philosophical pertinence, for such, in the last resort, is the schema that Hegel gave us of History in *The Phenomenology of Mind*.

Summarizing it in this way is to provide us with a mediation that facilitates the situating of the subject – namely, in relation to knowledge.

It is also easy to demonstrate the ambiguity of such a relation.

The same ambiguity is manifested in the effects of science in the world today.

The scientist, too, is a subject, and one particularly qualified in his constitution, as is shown by the fact that science did not come into the

world of its own accord (its birth was not without its vicissitudes, and it was preceded by a number of failures – by abortion or premature birth).

Now this subject who must know what he is doing, or so one presumes, does not know what, in the effects of science, is already, in fact, of interest to everyone. Or so it would appear in the world of today, where everyone finds himself at the same level as the scientist as far as ignorance on this point is concerned.

This fact alone justifies us in speaking of a subject of science – a notion to which an epistemology that can be said to display more promise than success hopes to be equal.

Hence, let it be noted, my entirely didactic reference to Hegel, by which I wished to say something, for the purposes of the training that I have in mind, about the question of the subject, in so far as that question is properly subverted by psychoanalysis.

What qualifies me to proceed in this direction is obviously my experience of this praxis. What has decided me to do so, those who follow my teaching will bear this out, is a theoretical nullity coupled with abuses in the way in which it is passed on, which, while presenting no danger to the praxis itself, result, in either case, in a total absence of scientific status. To pose the question of the minimum conditions required for such a status was not perhaps a dishonest departure. This departure has taken us a long way.

I am not dealing here with anything so broad in scope as a radical questioning of social bases; I do not intend, in particular, to dwell on the conclusions that I have been forced to draw about the notorious deviations in analytic praxis that are perpetrated in the name of psychoanalysis in Britain and America.

What I will try to define is subversion proper, and I apologize to this gathering, whose quality I have already acknowledged, for being unable to do more in its presence than in its absence, that is, to take it as the very pivot of my demonstration, even though it is up to me to justify this latitude with regard to it.

Yet I shall use it in order to take as given the fact that empiricism cannot constitute the foundations for a science.

At a second stage, we encounter what has already been constituted, by virtue of a scientific label, under the name of psychology.

A label that I would reject – precisely because, as I will show, the function of the subject, as it is established in Freudian experience, disqualifies from the outset what, under cover of the term 'psychology',

however one dresses up its premises, merely perpetuates an academic framework.

Its criterion is the unity of the subject, which is one of the presuppositions of this sort of psychology, it being even taken as symptomatic that its theme is always more emphatically isolated, as if it were a question of the return of a certain subject of knowledge (*connaissance*), or as if the psychical had to obtain its credentials as a double of the physical organism.

We must take as our standard here the idea in which a whole body of traditional thought comes together to validate a term, 'state of knowledge' (*état de la connaissance*), that is not without foundation. Whether it is a question of the states of enthusiasm described by Plato, the Buddhist degrees of *samadhi*, or the *Erlebnis*, the experience obtained under the influence of hallucinogenic drugs, it is necessary to know how much of these is authenticated by any theory.

Authenticated in the register of the connaturality implied in knowledge (*connaissance*).

It is clear that Hegelian knowledge (*savoir*), in the logicizing *Aufhebung* on which it is based, sets as little store by these states in themselves as modern science, which can recognize in them an object of experience, in the sense of an opportunity to define certain co-ordinates, but in no way an ascesis that might, let us say, be epistemogenic or noophoric.

It is certainly on this account that reference to them is pertinent to my approach.

For I suppose my listeners are sufficiently informed about Freudian practice to grasp that such states play no part in it – but what is not fully appreciated is the fact that the practitioners of this supposedly depth psychology do not think of using them to obtain illumination, for example, do not even attribute to these states any value in relation to the direction indicated by such a depth psychology.

For that is the meaning, which is not insisted on, of that distance from which Freud proceeds when it comes to *hynoid states*, even when it is merely a question of explaining the phenomena associated with hysteria. The stupefying fact is that Freud prefers the discourse of the hysteric. What I have called 'fruitful moments' (*moments féconds*) in my mapping of paranoiac knowledge (*connaissance*) is not a Freudian reference.

I have some difficulty in getting a hearing in circles infatuated with the most incredible illogicality for what is involved in questioning the unconscious as I do, that is to say, to the point at which it gives a reply

that is not some sort of transport of delight, or flat rejection, but rather that 'it says why'.

If we take the subject anywhere it is to a deciphering that already presupposes this sort of logic in the unconscious: in which, for example, an interrogative voice, even the development of an argument, is recognized.

The whole psychoanalytic tradition supports the view that the analyst's voice can intervene only if it enters at the right place, and that if it enters too early it merely produces a closing up of communication.

In other words, psychoanalysis that is sustained by its allegiance to Freud cannot in any circumstances offer itself as a 'rite of passage' to some archetypal, or in any sense ineffable, experience: the day when anyone expresses a view of this order that is not simply a dead loss will be the day when all limits have been abolished. And we are still a long way from that.<sup>1</sup>

This is merely an approach to our subject. For it is a question of grasping more precisely what Freud in his doctrine himself articulates as constituting a 'Copernican' step.

Is it enough that a privilege should be consigned to it, namely the one that put the earth in the central place? The subsequent dislodging of man from a similar place by the triumph of the idea of evolution gives one the feeling that this would involve a gain that would be confirmed by its consistency.

But can one be sure that this is a gain, that it is real progress? Does nothing make it appear that the other truth, if we may so term revealed truth, is seriously affected as a result? Do we not believe that, by exalting the centre, heliocentrism is no less of a lure than seeing the earth as the centre of the Universe, and that the fact of the ecliptic no doubt provided a more stimulating model of our relations with the true, before it lost much of its interest by being no more than the earth nodding its assent?

In any case, it is not because of Darwin that men believe themselves to be any the less the top dogs in creation, for it is precisely of this that he convinces them.

The linguistically suggestive use of Copernicus' name has more hidden resources that touch specifically on what has just slipped from my pen as the relation to the true, namely, the emergence of the ellipse as being not unworthy of the locus from which the so-called higher truths take their name. The revolution is no less important for concerning only the 'celestial revolutions'.

To stop at this stage no longer means simply revoking some idiotic

notion deriving from the religious tradition, which, as can be seen well enough, is none the worse for it, but rather of binding more closely the régime of knowledge to the régime of truth.

For if the work of Copernicus, as others have remarked before, is not as Copernican as is customarily believed, it is in this that the doctrine of double truth continues to offer shelter to a knowledge that until that time, it must be said, had every appearance of being quite content with it.

So here we are at this sensitive frontier between truth and knowledge; and it might be said after all that, at first sight, our science certainly seems to have re-adopted the solution of closing the frontier.

Yet if the historical birth of science is still a sufficiently burning question for us to be aware that at that frontier a shift took place, it is perhaps there that psychoanalysis is marked out to represent an earthquake yet to come.

For let us look again from this angle at the service we expected from Hegel's phenomenology, for it represents an ideal solution – a solution, one might say, involving a permanent revisionism, in which truth is in a state of constant re-absorption in its own disturbing element, being in itself no more than that which is lacking for the realization of knowledge. The antinomy that the Scholastic tradition posed as a matter of principle is here taken to be resolved by virtue of being imaginary. Truth is nothing other than that which knowledge can apprehend as knowledge only by setting its ignorance to work. A real crisis in which the imaginary is resolved, thus engendering a new symbolic form, to use my own categories. This dialectic is convergent and attains the conjuncture defined as absolute knowledge. As such it is deduced, it can only be the conjunction of the symbolic with a real of which there is nothing more to be expected. What is this real, if not a subject fulfilled in his identity to himself? From which, one can conclude that this subject is already perfect in this regard, and is the fundamental hypothesis of this whole process. He is named, in effect, as being the substratum of this process; he is called the *Selbstbewusstsein*, the being conscious of self, the fully conscious self.

I would to heaven it were so, but the history of science itself – I mean our science, from its inception, say, in Greek mathematics – presents itself rather in the form of détours that comply very little with this immanentism. In fact, the theories – and let us not be misled by any re-absorption of the limited theory into the generalized theory – do not, in any way, fit together according to the thesis/antithesis/synthesis dialectic.

Indeed, a number of cracks to be heard confusedly in the great consciousnesses responsible for some of the outstanding changes in physics remind us that, after all, for this knowledge as for others it is elsewhere that the hour of truth must strike.

And why would we not see that the astonishing consideration shown to the din emerging from psychoanalysis in science may be due to the theoretical hope psychoanalysis offers – a hope that is not only the result of confusion?

Of course, I am not referring to that extraordinary lateral transference, by which the categories of a psychology that re-invigorates its menial tasks with social exploitation acquire a new strength in psychoanalysis. For the reason already given, I regard the fate of psychology as signed and sealed.

In any case, my double reference to Hegel's absolute subject and to the abolished subject of science provides the illumination necessary to an accurate formulation of Freud's dramatism: the re-entry of truth into the field of science at the same time as it gains recognition in the field of its praxis: repressed, it reappears.

Who cannot see the distance that separates the unhappy consciousness – of which, however strongly it is engraven in Hegel, it can be said that it is still no more than the suspension of a corpus of knowledge – from the 'discontents of civilization' in Freud, even if it is only in a mere phrase, uttered as if disavowed, that marks for us what, on reading it, cannot be articulated otherwise than the 'skew' relation<sup>2</sup> that separates the subject from sexuality?

There is nothing, then, in our expedient for situating Freud that owes anything to the judicial astrology in which the psychologist dabbles. Nothing that proceeds from quality, or even from the intensive, or from any phenomenology from which idealism may draw reassurance. In the Freudian field, in spite of the words themselves, consciousness is a feature as inadequate to ground the unconscious in its negation (that unconscious dates from St Thomas Aquinas) as the affect is unsuited to play the role of the protopathic subject, since it is a service that has no holder.

Since Freud the unconscious has been a chain of signifiers that somewhere (on another stage, in another scene, he wrote) is repeated, and insists on interfering in the breaks offered it by the effective discourse and the cogitation that it informs.

In this formula, which is mine only in the sense that it conforms as closely to Freud's text as to the experience that it opened up, the crucial

term is the signifier, brought back to life from the ancient art of rhetoric by modern linguistics, in a doctrine whose various stages cannot be traced here, but of which the names of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson will stand for the dawn and its present-day culmination, not forgetting that the pilot science of structuralism in the West has its roots in Russia, where formalism first flourished. 'Geneva 1910' and 'Petrograd 1920' suffice to explain why Freud lacked this particular tool. But this defect of history makes all the more instructive the fact that the mechanisms described by Freud as those of 'the primary process', in which the unconscious assumes its rule, correspond exactly to the functions that this school believes determines the most radical aspects of the effects of language, namely metaphor and metonymy – in other words, the signifier's effects of substitution and combination on the respectively synchronic and diachronic dimensions in which they appear in discourse.

Once the structure of language has been recognized in the unconscious, what sort of subject can we conceive for it?

We can try, with methodological rigour, to set out from the strictly linguistic definition of the I as signifier, in which there is nothing but the 'shifter' or indicative, which, in the subject of the statement, designates the subject in the sense that he is now speaking.

That is to say, it designates the subject of the enunciation,<sup>3</sup> but it does not signify it. This is apparent from the fact that every signifier of the subject of the enunciation may be lacking in the statement, not to mention the fact that there are those that differ from the I, and not only what is inadequately called the cases of the first person singular, even if one added its accommodation in the plural invocation, or even in the *Self* (*Soi*) of auto-suggestion.

I think, for example, that I recognized the subject of the enunciation in the signifier 'ne', which grammarians call the expletive, a term that already prefigures the incredible opinion of those, and they are to be found among the best, who regard its form as being a matter of mere chance. May the weight that I give it persuade them to think again, before it becomes obvious that they have missed the point (*avant qu'il n'e soit avéré qu'ils n'y comprennent rien*) – take out that *ne* and my enunciation loses its attack, *Je* eliding me into the impersonal. But I fear that in this way they will come to curse me (*je crains ainsi qu'ils n'en viennent à me honnir*) – slide over that *n'* and its absence, reducing the alleged fear of a declaration of my repugnance to a timid assertion, reduces the emphasis of my enunciation by situating me in the statement.

But if I say 'tue' [the 3rd person singular of *tuer*, to kill and the past participle of *se taire*, to fall, or remain, silent], because they bore me to death, where am I situated if not in the 'tu' [the familiar form of 'you'] from which I eye them?

Don't go into a sulk, I am merely referring obliquely to what I am reluctant to cover with the distorting map of clinical medicine.

Namely, the right way to reply to the question, 'Who is speaking?', when it is the subject of the unconscious that is at issue. For this reply cannot come from that subject if he does not know what he is saying, or even if he is speaking, as the entire experience of analysis has taught us.

It follows that the place of the 'inter-said' (*inter-dit*), which is the 'intra-said' (*intra-dit*) of a between-two-subjects, is the very place in which the transparency of the classical subject is divided and passes through the effects of 'fading'<sup>4</sup> that specify the Freudian subject by its occultation by an ever purer signifier: that these effects lead us to the frontiers at which slips of the tongue and witticisms, in their collusion, become confused, even where elision is so much the more allusive in tracking down presence to its lair, that one is surprised that the *Dasein* hunt hasn't done better out of it.

Lest the hunt be in vain for us analysts, we must bring everything back to the function of the cut in discourse, the strongest being that which acts as a bar between the signifier and the signified. There the subject that interests us is surprised, since by binding himself in signification he is placed under the sign of the pre-conscious. By which we would arrive at the paradox of conceiving that the discourse in an analytic session is valuable only in so far as it stumbles or is interrupted: if the session itself were not instituted as a cut in a false discourse or rather, to the extent that the discourse succeeds in emptying itself as speech, in being no more than Mallarmé's worn coinage that is passed from hand to hand 'in silence'.

This cut in the signifying chain alone verifies the structure of the subject as discontinuity in the real. If linguistics enables us to see the signifier as the determinant of the signified, analysis reveals the truth of this relation by making 'holes' in the meaning of the determinants of its discourse.

It was along this line of approach that Freud was able to carry out the imperative, which he brought to a level of sublimity worthy of the pre-Socratics in the formulation, 'Wo es war, soll Ich werden', which I have

commented upon several times already, and which I will now try to present in a different light.

To take one step at a time in Freud's grammar: 'there where it was . . .' (*là où ce fut . . .*), which means what? If it were only that which had been (in an aoristic, indefinite form), how can I come there in order to make myself be there, to state it now?

But the French says: '*Là où c'était . . .*' Let us make use of the benefit that French gives us of a distinct imperfect.<sup>5</sup> There where it was just now, there where it was for a while, between an extinction that is still glowing and a birth that is retarded, 'I' can come into being and disappear from what I say.

An enunciation that denounces itself, a statement that renounces itself, ignorance that dissipates itself, an opportunity that loses itself, what remains here if not the trace of what *must* be in order to fall from being?

A dream described by Freud in his article, 'Formulations on the Two Principles of the Mental Functioning',<sup>6</sup> gives us, with all the pathos that the figure of a dead father returning as a ghost would be invested, the sentence: 'He did not know that he was dead.'

I have already taken the pretext of this sentence to illustrate the relation of the subject to the signifier – a relation that is embodied in an enunciation (*énonciation*) whose being trembles with the vacillation that comes back to it from its own statement (*énoncé*).

If the figure of the dead father survives only by virtue of the fact that one does not tell him the truth of which he is unaware, what, then, is to be said of the *I*, on which this survival depends?

He did not know . . . A little more and he'd have known. Oh! let's hope that never happens! Rather than have him know, I'd die. Yes, that's how *I* get there, there where it was: who knew, then, that *I* was dead?

Being of non-being, that is how *I* as subject comes on the scene, conjugated with the double aporia of a true survival that is abolished by knowledge of itself, and by a discourse in which it is death that sustains existence.

Are we to weigh this being against that, which Hegel as subject has forged, of being the subject who treats of history in the discourse of absolute knowledge? We remember that he admits to having experienced the temptation of madness. And is our way not that which overcomes that temptation, in going as far as the truth of the vanity of this discourse?

Let us not advance our doctrine on madness at this point. For this

eschatological excursion is here only to designate the gap that separates those two relations of the subject to knowledge, the Freudian and the Hegelian.

And to show that there is no firmer root than the modes that distinguish the dialectic from desire.

For in Hegel it is desire (*Begierde*) that is given the responsibility for that minimum connexion with ancient knowledge (*connaissance*) that the subject must retain if truth is to be immanent in the realization of knowledge (*savoir*). Hegel's 'cunning of reason' means that, from beginning to end, the subject knows what he wants.

It is here that Freud reopens the junction between truth and knowledge to the mobility out of which revolutions come.

In this respect: that desire becomes bound up with the desire of the Other, but that in this loop lies the desire to know.

Freud's biologism has nothing to do with the moralistic abjection that wafts up from the psychoanalytic kitchen.

And you have to be made to live the death instinct, which is held in such abomination there, if you are to catch the true tone of Freud's biology. For to ignore the death instinct in his doctrine is to misunderstand that doctrine entirely.

From the approach that we have indicated, the reader should recognize in the metaphor of the return to the inanimate (which Freud attaches to every living body) that margin beyond life that language gives to the human being by virtue of the fact that he speaks, and which is precisely that in which such a being places in the position of a signifier, not only those parts of his body that are exchangeable, but this body itself. Thus it becomes apparent that the relation of the object to the body is in no way defined as a partial identification that would have to be totalized in such a relation, since, on the contrary, this object is the prototype of the significance of the body as that which for being is at stake.

At this point, I take up the challenge that is offered to me when what Freud calls *Trieb* is translated as '*instinct*'. 'Drive' would seem to translate the German word quite well in English, but is avoided in the *Standard Edition*. In French, my last resort would be '*dérive*', if I were unable to give the bastard term '*pulsion*' the necessary forcefulness.

And so we insist on promoting instinct, whether grounded or not in biological observation, to a place among the modes of knowledge (*connaissance*) required by nature of the living being so that he may satisfy his needs. Instinct is then defined as knowledge (*connaissance*)

that has the astonishing property of being unable to be knowledge (*un savoir*). But in Freud it is a question of something quite different, which is a *savoir*, certainly, but one that involves not the least *connaissance*, in that it is inscribed in a discourse, of which, like the 'messenger-slave' of ancient usage, the subject who carries under his hair the codicil that condemns him to death knows neither the meaning nor the text, nor in what language it is written, nor even that it had been tattooed on his shaven scalp as he slept.

This story hardly exaggerates the little physiology that is of interest to the unconscious.

It will be appreciated by the counter-proof of the contribution made by psychoanalysis to physiology since its inception: this contribution is nil, even where the sexual organs are concerned. No amount of fabulation will alter this balance-sheet.

For, of course, psychoanalysis involves the real of the body and the imaginary of its mental schema. But to recognize their scope in the perspective that is authorized by development, we must first perceive that the more or less departmented integrations that appear to order it, function in it above all like heraldic elements, like the body's coat-of-arms. This is confirmed by the use one makes of it to read children's drawings.

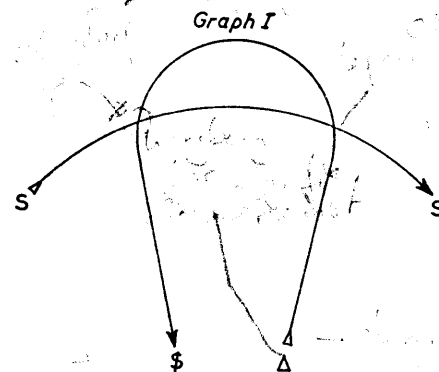
What we have here is the principle – we shall return to it later – of the paradoxical privilege possessed by the phallus in the dialectic of the unconscious, without the theory produced by the part-object being a sufficient explanation of it.

Need I now say that if one understands what sort of support we have sought in Hegel to criticize a degradation of psychoanalysis so inept that it can find no other claim to interest than being the psychoanalysis of today, it is inadmissible that I should be thought of as having been lured by a purely dialectical exhaustion of being. Nor can I regard a particular philosopher<sup>7</sup> as being responsible when he authorizes this misunderstanding.

For far from ceding to a logicizing reduction where it is a question of desire, I find in its irreducibility to demand the very source of that which also prevents it from being reduced to need. To put it elliptically: it is precisely because desire is articulated that it is not articulable, I mean in the discourse best suited to it, an ethical, not a psychological discourse.

I must now develop much further for you the topology that I have

elaborated in my teaching over the past five years, that is, introduce a certain diagram, which, I should warn you, also serves purposes other than the use that I am going to make of it here, having been constructed and completed quite openly in order to map in its arrangement the most broadly practical structure of the data of our experience. It will serve here to show where desire, in relation to a subject defined in his articulation by the signifier, is situated.



This is what might be said to be its elementary cell (cf. *Graph I*). In it is articulated what I have called the 'anchoring point' (*point de capiton*), by which the signifier stops the otherwise endless movement (*glissement*) of the signification. The signifying chain is regarded as being supported by the vector  $\overrightarrow{S.S'}$  – even without entering into the subtleties of the retrograde direction in which its double intersection with the vector  $\overrightarrow{\Delta.\$}$  occurs. Only in this vector does one see the fish it hooks, a fish less suitable in its free movement to represent what it withholds from our grasp than the intention that tries to bury it in the mass of the pre-text, namely, the reality that is imagined in the ethological schema of the return of need.

The diachronic function of this anchoring point is to be found in the sentence, even if 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.

But the synchronic structure is more hidden, and it is this structure that takes us to the source. It is metaphor in so far as the first attribution is constituted in it – the attribution that promulgates 'the dog goes miaow, the cat goes woof-woof',<sup>8</sup> by which the child, by disconnecting the animal from its cry, suddenly raises the sign to the function of the signifier,

and reality to the sophistic of signification, and by contempt for verisimilitude, opens up the diversity of objectifications of the same thing that have to be verified.

Does this possibility require the topology of a four-cornered game? That is the sort of question that looks innocent enough, but which may give some trouble, if the subsequent construction must be dependent on it.

I will spare you the various stages by giving you at one go the function of the two points of intersection in this simplified graph. The first, connoted  $O$ , is the locus of the signifier's treasure, which does not mean the code's treasure, for it is not that the univocal correspondence of a sign with something is preserved in it, but that the signifier is constituted only from a synchronic and enumerable collection of elements in which each is sustained only by the principle of its opposition to each of the others. The second, connoted  $s(O)$ , is what may be called the punctuation in which the signification is constituted as finished product.

Observe the dyssymmetry of the one, which is a locus (a place, rather than a space), to the other, which is a moment (a rhythm, rather than a duration).

Both participate in this offering to the signifier that is constituted by the hole in the real, the one as a hollow for concealment, the other as a boring-hole to escape from.

The subjection of the subject to the signifier, which occurs in the circuit that goes from  $s(O)$  to  $O$  and back from  $O$  to  $s(O)$  is really a circle, even though the assertion that is established in it – for lack of being able to end on anything other than its own scansion, in other words, for lack of an act in which it would find its certainty – refers only to its own anticipation in the composition of the signifier, in itself insignificant.

To be possible, the squaring of this circle only requires the completion of the signifying battery set up in  $O$ , henceforth symbolizing the locus of the Other. It then becomes apparent that this Other is simply the pure subject of modern games theory, and as such perfectly accessible to the calculation of conjecture, even though the real subject, in order to govern his own calculation, must leave out of account any so-called subjective aberration, in the common, that is, the psychological, acceptance of the term, and concern himself only with the inscription of an exhaustible combinatory.

Yet such a squaring is impossible, but only by virtue of the fact that the subject is constituted only by subtracting himself from it and by

decompleting it essentially in order, at one and the same time, to have to depend on it and to make it function as a lack.

The Other as previous site of the pure subject of the signifier holds the master position, even before coming into existence, to use Hegel's term against him, as absolute Master. For what is omitted in the platitude of modern information theory is the fact that one can speak of code only if it is already the code of the Other, and that is something quite different from what is in question in the message, since it is from this code that the subject is constituted, which means that it is from the Other that the subject receives even the message that he emits. And the notations  $O$  and  $s(O)$  are justified.

Code messages or message codes will be distinguished in pure forms in the subject of psychosis, the subject who is satisfied with that previous Other.

Observe, in parentheses, that this Other, which is distinguished as the locus of Speech, imposes itself no less as witness to the Truth. Without the dimension that it constitutes, the deception practised by Speech would be indistinguishable from the very different pretence to be found in physical combat or sexual display. Pretence of this kind is deployed in imaginary capture, and is integrated into the play of approach and rejection that constituted the original dance, in which these two vital situations find their rhythm, and in accordance with which the partners ordered their movements – what I will dare to call their 'dancity' (*dansité*). Indeed, animals, too, show that they are capable of such behaviour when they are being hunted; they manage to put their pursuers off the scent by making a false start. This can go so far as to suggest on the part of the game animal the nobility of honoring the element of display to be found in the hunt. But an animal does not pretend to pretend. He does not make tracks whose deception lies in the fact that they will be taken as false, while being in fact true ones, ones, that is, that indicate his true trail. Nor does an animal cover up its tracks, which would be tantamount to making itself the subject of the signifier.

All this has been articulated in a confused way even by professional philosophers. But it is clear that Speech begins only with the passage from 'pretence' to the order of the signifier, and that the signifier requires another locus – the locus of the Other, the Other witness, the witness Other than any of the partners – for the Speech that it supports to be capable of lying, that is to say, of presenting itself as Truth.

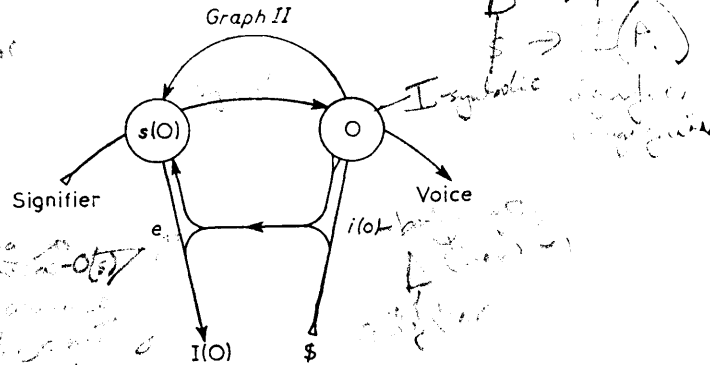
Thus it is from somewhere other than the Reality that it concerns that

Truth derives its guarantee: it is from Speech. Just as it is from Speech that Truth receives the mark that establishes it in a fictional structure.

The first words spoken (*le dit premier*) stand as a decree, a law, an aphorism, an oracle; they confer their obscure authority upon the real other.

Take just one signifier as an emblem of this omnipotence, that is to say of this wholly potential power (*ce pouvoir tout en puissance*), this birth of possibility, and you have the unbroken line (*trait unaire*) which, by filling in the invisible mark that the subject derives from the signifier, alienates this subject in the primary identification that forms the ego ideal.

This is inscribed in the notation  $I(O)$ , which, at this stage, I must substitute for the  $\$$ , the barred S of the retrograde vector, bringing its tip back to its starting point (cf. *Graph II*).



This is a retroversion effect by which the subject becomes at each stage what he was before and announces himself – he will have been – only in the future perfect tense.

At this point the ambiguity of a failure to recognize that is essential to knowing myself (*un méconnaître essentiel au me connaître*) is introduced. For, in this 'rear view' (*rétrovisée*), all that the subject can be certain of is the anticipated image coming to meet him that he catches of himself in his mirror. I shall not return here to the function of my 'mirror stage', that first strategic point that I developed in opposition to the favour accorded in psychoanalytic theory to the supposedly *autonomous ego*. The academic restoration of this 'autonomous ego' justified my view that a misunderstanding was involved in any attempt to strengthen the ego in a type of analysis that took as its criterion of 'success' a successful adaptation to society – a phenomenon of mental abdication that was bound up with

the ageing of the psychoanalytic group in the diaspora of the war, and the reduction of a distinguished practice to a label suitable to the 'American way of life'.

In any case, what the subject finds in this altered image of his body is the paradigm of all the forms of resemblance that will bring over on to the world of objects a tinge of hostility, by projecting on them the manifestation of the narcissistic image, which, from the pleasure derived from meeting himself in the mirror, becomes when confronting his fellow man an outlet for his most intimate aggressivity.

It is this image that becomes fixed, the ideal ego, from the point at which the subject stops as ego ideal. From this point on, the ego is a function of mastery, a play of presence, of bearing (*prestance*), and of constituted rivalry. In the capture to which it is subjected by its imaginary nature, the ego masks its duplicity, that is to say, the consciousness in which it assures itself of an incontestable existence (a naivety to be found in the meditation of a Fénelon) is in no way immanent in it, but, on the contrary, is transcendent, since it is supported by the unbroken line of the ego ideal (which the Cartesian *cogito* did not fail to recognize<sup>10</sup>). As a result, the transcendental ego itself is relativized, implicated as it is in the *méconnaissance* in which the ego's identifications take root.

This imaginary process, which begins with the specular image and goes on to the constitution of the ego by way of subjectification by the signifier, is signified in our graph by the vector  $i(o) \cdot e$ , which is one-way, but which is doubly articulated, once in a short circuit over  $\$ \cdot I(O)$ , and again in a return direction over  $s(O) \cdot \bar{O}$ . This shows that the ego is only completed by being articulated not as the *I* of discourse, but as a metonymy of its signification (what Damourette and Pichon take as the 'alloyed' (*étouffé*) person, as opposed to the 'purified' (*subtile*) person, the latter being no more than the function designated above as the 'shifter').

The promotion of consciousness as being essential to the subject in the historical after-effects of the Cartesian *cogito* is for me the deceptive accentuation of the transparency of the *I* in action at the expense of the opacity of the signifier that determines the *I*; and the sliding movement (*glissement*) by which the *Bewusstsein* serves to cover up the confusion of the *Selbst* eventually reveals, with all Hegel's own rigour, the reason for his error in *The Phenomenology of Mind*.

The very movement that shifts the axis of the phenomenon of mind



towards the imaginary relation to the other (that is to say, to the counterpart connoted by the small 'o', the *objet petit a*), reveals its effect: namely, the aggressivity that becomes the beam of the balance on which will be centred the decomposition of the equilibrium of counterpart to counterpart in the Master-Slave relationship, a relationship that is pregnant with all the cunning tricks (*ruses*) by which reason sets its impersonal reign in motion.

I can now show what is concealed in this initial enslavement – a mythical, rather than a real genesis, no doubt – of the 'roads to freedom' precisely because I have revealed it as never before.

The struggle that establishes this initial enslavement is rightly called a struggle of pure prestige, and the stake, life itself, is well suited to echo that danger of the generic prematuration of birth, which Hegel was unaware of, and which I see as the dynamic origin of specular capture.

But precisely because it is drawn into the function of the stakes – a more honest wager than Pascal's, though it is also a question of poker, since there is a limit on how high one can raise the bid – death shows by the same token what is elided from a prior rule, and from the ultimate rule. For, in the end, the loser must not perish if he is to become a slave. In other words, the pact is everywhere anterior to the violence before perpetuating it, and what I call the symbolic dominates the imaginary, which is why one may ask oneself whether murder is the absolute Master.

For it is not enough to decide on the basis of its effect – Death. It still remains to be decided which death,<sup>11</sup> that which is brought by life or that which brings life.

Without detracting from the Hegelian dialectic by an accusation of inadequacy, which has often been laid against it on the question of what bound the society of masters together, I simply wish at this point to stress what, on the basis of my own experience, is self-evidently symptomatic, that is to say, as installation in repression. This is properly the theme of the Cunning (*Ruse*) practised by reason – and the fact that it is erroneous, as I pointed out above, in no way diminishes its attraction. The work to which the slave is subjected and the pleasure that he renounces out of fear of death, we are told, will be precisely the way through which he will achieve freedom. There can be no more obvious lure than this, politically or psychologically. Jouissance comes easily to the slave, and it will leave the work in bondage.

The cunning of reason is an attractive notion because it echoes with a personal myth that is very familiar to the obsessional neurotic, and whose

structure is often found among the *intelligentsia*. But even if the obsessional avoids the bad faith of the professor, he cannot easily deceive himself that it is his work that must make *jouissance* possible for him. Paying very properly unconscious homage to the history written by Hegel, he often finds his alibi in the death of the Master. But what about this death? He quite simply waits for it.

In fact, it is from the locus of the Other where he installs himself that he follows the game, thus rendering any risk inoperant, especially the risk of any contest, in a 'consciousness-of-self' for which death is present only in jest.

So philosophers should not make the mistake of thinking that they can take little account of the irruption that Freud's views on desire represented.

And this under the pretext that demand, together with the effects of frustration, has submerged everything that reaches them from a practice that has declined into educative banality that cannot be revived even by such a sell-out.

Yes, the enigmatic traumas of the Freudian discovery are now merely repressed desires. Psychoanalysis is nourished by the observation of children and by the infantilism of the observations. I will not bore you with case-histories, edifying as they all no doubt are – though they are hardly noted for their humour, their authors being too concerned with their 'responsibilities' to leave any room for the irremediably ridiculous side to the relations that the unconscious maintains with its linguistic roots.

Yet it is impossible, for those who claim that it is through the welcome accorded to demand that incompatibility is introduced into the needs that are supposed to lie at the origin of the subject, to ignore the fact that there is no demand that does not in some sense pass through the defiles of the signifier.

And if the somatic *ananke* of man's powerlessness for some time after birth to move of his own accord, and *a fortiori* to be self-sufficient, ensures that he will be grounded in a psychology of dependence, how can that *ananke* ignore the fact that this dependence is maintained by a world of language, precisely because by and through language needs are diversified and reduced to a point at which their scope appears to be of a quite different order, whether in relation to the subject or to politics? To sum up: to the point that these needs have passed over into the register of desire, with all that this brings in terms of an obligation to confront our

new experience with its paradoxes, which have always interested the moralist, with that mark of the infinite that theologians find in it, even with the precariousness of its status, as expressed in its most extreme form by Sartre: desire, a useless passion.

What psychoanalysis shows us about desire in what might be called its most natural function, since on it depends the propagation of the species, is not only that it is subjected, in its agency, its appropriation, its normality, in short, to the accidents of the subject's history (the notion of trauma as contingency), but also that all this requires the co-operation of structural elements, which, in order to intervene, can do very well without these accidents, whose effects, so unharmonious, so unexpected, so difficult to reduce, certainly seem to leave to experience a remainder that drove Freud to admit that sexuality must bear the mark of some unnatural split (*fêlure*).

It would be wrong to think that the Freudian myth of the Oedipus complex had put an end to theology on the matter. For it is not enough to wave the flag of sexual rivalry. It would be better to read what Freud has to say about its co-ordinates; for they amount to the question with which he himself set out: 'What is a Father?'

'It is the dead Father', Freud replies, but no one listens, and, concerning that part of it that Lacan takes up again under the heading 'Name-of-the-Father', it is regrettable that so unscientific a situation should still deprive him of his normal audience.<sup>12</sup>

Yet analytic reflexion has centred vaguely on the problematic *méconnaissance* on the part of certain primitive peoples of the function of the progenitor, and psychoanalysts have argued, under the contraband banner of 'culturalism', over the forms of an authority of which it cannot even be said that any sector of anthropology has provided a definition of any scope.

Will we have to be overtaken by the practice, which may in the course of time become common practice, of artificially inseminating women who have broken the phallic bounds with the sperm of some great man, before a verdict on the paternal function can be dragged out of us?

Yet the Oedipus complex cannot run indefinitely in forms of society that are more and more losing the sense of tragedy.

Let us set out from the conception of the Other as the locus of the signifier. Any statement of authority has no other guarantee than its very enunciation, and it is pointless for it to seek it in another signifier, which could not appear outside this locus in any way. Which is what I mean

when I say that no metalanguage can be spoken, or, more aphoristically, that there is no Other of the Other. And when the Legislator (he who claims to lay down the Law) presents himself to fill the gap, he does so as an imposter.

But there is nothing false about the Law itself, or about him who assumes its authority.

The fact that the Father may be regarded as the original representative of this authority of the Law requires us to specify by what privileged mode of presence he is sustained beyond the subject who is actually led to occupy the place of the Other, namely, the Mother. The question, therefore, is pushed still further back.

It will seem odd, no doubt, that in opening up the immeasurable space that all demand implies, namely, that of being a request for love, I should not leave more play to the question; but should concentrate it on that which is closed this side of it, by the very effect of demand, in order to give desire its proper place.

Indeed, it is quite simply, and I will say later in what way, as desire of the Other that man's desire finds form, but it does so in the first instance by representing need only by means of a subjective opacity.

I will now explain by what bias this opacity produces, as it were, the substance of desire.

Desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand becomes separated from need: this margin being that which is opened up by demand, the appeal of which can be unconditional only in regard to the Other, under the form of the possible defect, which need may introduce into it, of having no universal satisfaction (what is called 'anxiety'). A margin which, linear as it may be, reveals its vertigo, even if it is not trampled by the elephantine feet of the Other's whim. Nevertheless, it is this whim that introduces the phantom of the Omnipotence, not of the subject, but of the Other in which his demand is installed (it is time this idiotic cliché was, once and for all, put back in its place), and with this phantom the need for it to be checked by the Law.

But I will stop there and return to the status of the desire that presents itself as autonomous in relation to this mediation of the Law, for the simple reason that it originates in desire, by virtue of the fact that by a strange symmetry it reverses the unconditional nature of the demand for love, in which the subject remains in subjection to the Other, and raises it to the power of absolute condition (in which 'absolute' also implies 'detachment').

For the gain obtained over anxiety with regard to need, this detachment is successful in its first, humblest form, that in which it was detected by a certain psychoanalyst in the course of his pediatric practice, and which is called 'the transitional object', in other words, the bit of 'nappie' or the beloved bit of material that the child never allows to leave his lips or hand.

This is no more than an emblem, I say; the representative of representation in the absolute condition is at home in the unconscious, where it causes desire according to the structure of the phantasy that I will now extract from it.

For it is clear that the state of nescience in which man remains in relation to his desire is not so much a nescience of what he demands, which may after all be circumscribed, as a nescience as to where he desires.

This is what I mean by my formula that the unconscious is '*discours de l'Autre*' (discourse of the Other), in which the *de* is to be understood in the sense of the Latin *de* (objective determination): *de Alio in oratione* (completed by: *tua res agitur*).

But we must also add that man's desire is the *désir de l'Autre* (the desire of the Other) in which the *de* provides what grammarians call the 'subjective determination', namely that it is *qua* Other that he desires (which is what provides the true compass of human passion).

That is why the question of the Other, which comes back to the subject from the place from which he expects an oracular reply in some such form as '*Che vuoi?*', 'What do you want?', is the one that best leads him to the path of his own desire – providing he sets out, with the help of the skills of a partner known as a psychoanalyst, to reformulate it, even without knowing it, as 'What does he want of me?'

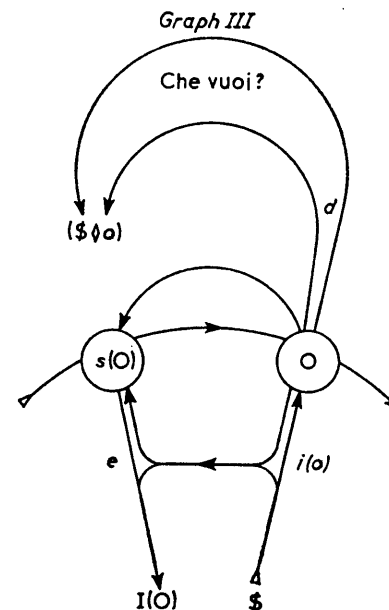
It is this superimposed level of the structure that will bring my graph (cf. *Graph III*) to completion, first by introducing into it as the drawing of a question-mark placed in the circle of the capital O of the Other, symbolizing by a confusing homography the question it signifies.

Of what bottle is this the opener? Of what reply is it the signifier, the universal key?

It should be noted that a clue may be found in the clear alienation that leaves to the subject the favour of stumbling upon the question of its essence, in that he cannot fail to recognize that what he desires presents itself to him as what he does not want, the form assumed by the negation in which the *méconnaissance* of which he himself is unaware is inserted in a very strange way – a *méconnaissance* by which he transfers the permanence

of his desire to an ego that is nevertheless intermittent, and, inversely, protects himself from his desire by attributing to it these very intermittences.

Of course, one may be surprised by the extent of what is accessible to consciousness-of-self, providing one has learnt it elsewhere – which is certainly the case here.



For in order to rediscover the pertinence of all this, a fairly detailed study is required – a study that can only take place in the analytic experience – that would enable us to complete the structure of the phantasy by linking it essentially, whatever its occasional elisions may be, to the condition of an object (the privilege of which I have done no more than touch on above in terms of diachrony), the moment of a 'fading'<sup>13</sup> or eclipse of the subject that is closely bound up with the *Spaltung* or splitting that it suffers from its subordination to the signifier.

This is what is symbolized by the sigla  $(\$ \diamond o)$ , which I have introduced in the form of an algorithm; and it is no accident that it breaks the phonematic element constituted by the signifying unity right down to its literal atom. For it is created to allow a hundred and one different readings, a multiplicity that is admissible as long as the spoken remains caught in its algebra.

This algorithm and the analogues of it used in the graph in no way contradict what I said earlier about the impossibility of a metalanguage. They are not transcendent signifiers; they are the indices of an absolute signification, a notion which, without further commentary, will seem appropriate, I hope, to the condition of the phantasy.

On to the phantasy presented in this way, the graph inscribes that desire governs itself, which is similar to the relation between the ego and the body image, except that it still marks the inversion of the *méconnaisances* on which each is based. Thus the imaginary way, through which I must pass in analysis, and where the unconscious was *itself*,<sup>14</sup> is closed.

Let us say, borrowing the metaphor used by Damourette and Pichon about the grammatical 'I' and applying it to a subject to which it is better suited, that the phantasy is really the 'stuff' of the 'I' that is originally repressed, because it can be indicated only in the 'fading' of the enunciation.

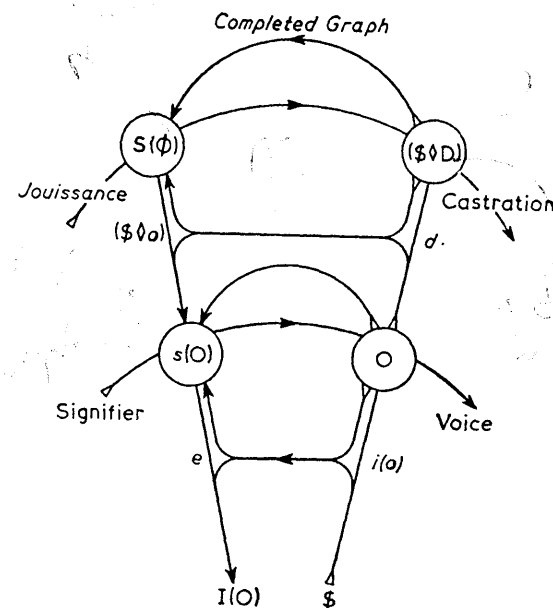
So our attention is now drawn to the subjective status of the signifying chain in the unconscious, or rather in primal repression (*Urverdrängung*).

In our deduction it is easier to understand why it was necessary to question oneself regarding the function that supports the subject of the unconscious, to grasp that it is difficult to designate that subject anywhere as subject of a statement, and therefore as the articulator, when he does not even know that he is speaking. Hence the concept of drive, in which he is designated by an organic, oral, anal, etc., mapping that satisfies the requirement of being all the farther away from speaking the more he speaks.

But although our completed graph enables us to place the drive as the treasure of the signifiers, its notation as  $(\S \diamond D)$  maintains its structure by linking it with diachrony. It is that which proceeds from demand when the subject disappears in it. It is obvious enough that demand also disappears, with the single exception that the cut remains, for this cut remains present in that which distinguishes the drive from the organic function it inhabits: namely, its grammatical artifice, so manifest in the reversions of its articulation to both source and object – Freud is unfailingly illuminating on this matter.

The very delimitation of the 'erogenous zone' that the drive isolates from the metabolism of the function (the act of devouring concerns other organs than the mouth – ask one of Pavlov's dogs) is the result of a cut (*coupure*) expressed in the anatomical mark (*trait*) of a margin or border – lips, 'the enclosure of the teeth', the rim of the anus, the tip of the penis,

the vagina, the slit formed by the eyelids, even the horn-shaped aperture of the ear (I am avoiding embryological details here). Respiratory erogeneity has been little studied, but it is obviously through the spasm that it comes into play.



Observe that this mark of the cut is no less obviously present in the object described by analytic theory: the mamilla, faeces, the phallus (imaginary object), the urinary flow. (An unthinkable list, if one adds, as I do, the phoneme, the gaze, the voice – the nothing.) For is it not obvious that this feature, this partial feature, rightly emphasized in objects, is applicable not because these objects are part of a total object, the body, but because they represent only partially the function that produces them?

These objects have one common feature in my elaboration of them – they have no specular image, or, in other words, alterity.<sup>15</sup> It is what enables them to be the 'stuff', or rather the lining, though not in any sense the reverse, of the very subject that one takes to be the subject of consciousness. For this subject, who thinks he can accede to himself by designating himself in the statement, is no more than such an object. Ask the writer about the anxiety that he experiences when faced by the blank sheet of paper, and he will tell you who is the turd of his phantasy.

It is to this object that cannot be grasped in the mirror that the specular image lends its clothes. A substance caught in the net of the shadow, and which, robbed of its shadow-swelling volume, holds out once again the tired lure of the shadow as if it were substance.<sup>16</sup>

What the graph now offers us is situated at the point at which every signifying chain prides itself on looping its signification. If we are to expect such an effect from the unconscious enunciation, it is to be found here in  $S(\emptyset)$ , and read as: signifier of a lack in the Other, inherent in its very function as the treasure of the signifier. And this is so even though the Other is required (*che vuoi*) to respond to the value of this treasure, that is to say, to reply, from its place in the lower chain certainly, but also in the signifiers that constitute the upper chain, in terms of drive, in other words.

The lack referred to here is indeed that which I have already formulated: that there is no Other of the Other. But is this mark made by the Unbeliever of the truth really the last word that is worth giving in reply to the question, 'What does the Other want of me?', when we, the analysts, are its mouthpiece? Surely not, and precisely because there is nothing doctrinal about our office. We are answerable to no ultimate truth; we are neither for nor against any particular religion.

It is already quite enough that at this point I had to situate the dead Father in the Freudian myth. But a myth is not enough to support a rite, and psychoanalysis is not the rite of the Oedipus complex – a point that I shall develop later.

No doubt the corpse is a signifier, but Moses's tomb is as empty for Freud as that of Christ was for Hegel. Abraham revealed his mystery to neither of them.

Personally, I will begin with what is articulated in the sigla  $S(\emptyset)$  by being first of all a signifier. My definition of a signifier (there is no other) is as follows: a signifier is that which represents the subject for another signifier. This signifier will therefore be the signifier for which all the other signifiers represent the subject: that is to say, in the absence of this signifier, all the other signifiers represent nothing, since nothing is represented only for something else.

And since the battery of signifiers, as such, is by that very fact complete, this signifier can only be a line (*trait*) that is drawn from its circle without being able to be counted part of it. It can be symbolized by the inherence of a  $(-I)$  in the whole set of signifiers.

As such it is inexpressible, but its operation is not inexpressible, for it is

that which is produced whenever a proper noun is spoken. Its statement equals its signification.

Thus, by calculating that signification according to the algebraic method used here, namely:

$$\frac{S(\text{signifier})}{s(\text{signified})} = s(\text{the statement}), \text{ with } S = (-I), \text{ produces: } s = \sqrt{-I}.$$

This is what the subject lacks in order to think himself exhausted by his *cogito*, namely, that which is unthinkable for him. But where does this being, who appears in some way defective in the sea of proper nouns, originate?

We cannot ask this question of the subject as 'I'. He lacks everything needed to know the answer, since if this subject 'I' was dead, he would not, as I said earlier, know it. He does not know, therefore, that I am alive. How, therefore, will 'I' prove to myself that I am?

For I can only just prove to the Other that he exists, not, of course, with the proofs for the existence of God, with which over the centuries he has been killed off, but by loving him, a solution introduced by the Christian *kerygma*. Indeed, it is too precarious a solution for me even to think of using it as a means of circumventing our problem, namely: 'What am "I"?'

'I' am in the place from which a voice is heard clamouring 'the universe is a defect in the purity of Non-Being'.

And not without reason, for by protecting itself this place makes Being itself languish. This place is called *Jouissance*, and it is the absence of this that makes the universe vain.

Am I responsible for it, then? Yes, probably. Is this *Jouissance*, the lack of which makes the Other insubstantial, mine, then? Experience proves that it is usually forbidden me, not only, as certain fools believe, because of a bad arrangement of society, but rather because of the fault (*faute*) of the Other if he existed: and since the Other does not exist, all that remains to me is to assume the fault upon 'I', that is to say, to believe in that to which experience leads us all, Freud in the vanguard, namely, to original sin. For even if we did not have Freud's express, and sorrowful avowal, the fact would remain that the myth Freud gave us – the latest-born myth in history – is no more use than that of the forbidden apple, except for the fact, and this has nothing to do with its power as myth, that, though more succinct, it is distinctly less oppressive (*crétinisant*).

But what is not a myth, and which Freud nevertheless formulated soon after the Oedipus complex, is the castration complex.

In the castration complex we find the major mainspring of the very subversion that I am trying to articulate here by means of its dialectic. For this complex, which was unknown as such until Freud introduced it into the formation of desire, can no longer be ignored in any reflexion on the subject.

There can be little doubt that in psychoanalysis, far from there having been any attempt to carry its articulation further, it has been employed precisely in order to avoid any explanation of it. This is why this great Samson-like body has been reduced to turning the grinding wheel for the Philistines of general psychology.

Certainly there is in all this what is called a bone. Though it is precisely what is suggested here, namely, that it is structural of the subject, it constitutes in it essentially that margin that all thought has avoided, skipped over, circumvented, or blocked whenever it seems to succeed in being sustained by a circle, whether that circle be dialectical or mathematical.

This is why I am so anxious to guide my students over the places where logic is disconcerted by the disjunction that breaks through from the imaginary to the symbolic, not in order to enjoy the paradoxes that are produced in such a disjunction, nor to point out some 'crisis' in thought, but, on the contrary, to bring their false brilliance back to the gap that they designate, which I always find instructive, and above all to try to work out the method of a sort of calculation, the inappropriation of which as such would spoil the secret.

Such is the phantom of the cause, which I have followed in the purest symbolization of the imaginary through the alternation of the similar and the dissimilar.<sup>17</sup>

Let us observe carefully, therefore, what it is that objects to conferring on our signifier  $S(\emptyset)$  the meaning of *Mana* or of any of its cognates. The fact is we cannot be content to articulate it from the poverty of the social fact, even if this is tracked down in some supposed total fact.

No doubt Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his commentary on Mauss, wished to recognize in it the effect of a zero symbol. But it seems to me that what we are dealing with here is rather the signifier of the lack of this zero symbol. That is why, at the risk of incurring a certain amount of opprobrium, I have indicated to what point I have pushed the distortion of the mathematical algorithm in my use of it: the symbol  $\sqrt{-1}$ , which is still

written as 'i' in the theory of complex numbers, is obviously justified only because it makes no claim to any automatism in its later use.

But we must insist that *jouissance* is forbidden to him who speaks as such, although it can only be said between the lines for whoever is subject of the Law, since the Law is grounded in this very prohibition.

Indeed, the Law appears to be giving the order, 'Jouis!', to which the subject can only reply 'J'ouis' (I hear), the *jouissance* being no more than understood.

But it is not the Law itself that bars the subject's access to *jouissance* — rather it creates out of an almost natural barrier a barred subject. For it is pleasure that sets the limits on *jouissance*, pleasure as that which binds incoherent life together, until another, unchallengeable prohibition arises from the regulation that Freud discovered as the primary process and appropriate law of pleasure.

It has been said that in this discovery Freud merely followed the course already being pursued by the science of his time, indeed, that it belonged to a long-standing tradition. To appreciate the true audacity of his step, we have only to consider his recompense, which was not slow in coming: failure over the heteroclitic nature of the castration complex.

It is the only indication of that *jouissance* of its infinitude that brings with it the mark of its prohibition, and, in order to constitute that mark, involves a sacrifice: that which is made in one and the same act with the choice of its symbol, the phallus.

This choice is allowed because the phallus, that is, the image of the penis, is negativity in its place in the specular image. It is what predestines the phallus to embody *jouissance* in the dialectic of desire.

We must distinguish, therefore, between the principle of sacrifice, which is symbolic, and the imaginary function that is devoted to that principle of sacrifice, but which, at the same time, masks the fact that it gives it its instrument.

The imaginary function is that which Freud formulated to govern the investment of the object as narcissistic object. It was to this point that I returned myself when I showed that the specular image is the channel taken by the transfusion of the body's libido towards the object. But even though part of it remains preserved from this immersion, concentrating within it the most intimate aspect of auto-eroticism, its position at the 'tip' of the form predisposes it to the phantasy of decrepitude in which is completed its exclusion from the specular image and from the prototype that it constitutes for the world of objects.

Thus the erectile organ comes to symbolize the place of *jouissance*, not in itself, or even in the form of an image, but as a part lacking in the desired image: that is why it is equivalent to the  $\sqrt{-I}$  of the signification produced above, of the *jouissance* that it restores by the coefficient of its statement to the function of lack of signifier ( $-I$ ).

If its role, therefore, is to bind the prohibition of *jouissance*, it is nevertheless not for these formal reasons, but because their supersession (*outrépassement*) signifies that which reduces all desired *jouissance* to the brevity of auto-eroticism: the paths laid out by the anatomical conformation of the speaking being, that is, the already perfected hand of the monkey, have not, in effect, been ignored in a certain philosophical ascesis as paths of a wisdom that has wrongly been termed cynical. Certain individuals, obsessed no doubt by this memory, have suggested to me that Freud himself belongs to this tradition: the technique of the body, as Mauss calls it. The fact remains that analytic experience demonstrates the original character of the guilt that its practice induces.

Guilt that is bound up with the recall of *jouissance* that is lacking in the office rendered to the real organ, and consecration of the function of the imaginary signifier to strike the objects of prohibition.

This, indeed, is the radical function for which a more primitive stage in the development of psychoanalysis found more accidental (educative) causes, just as it inflected towards the trauma the other forms in which it had the merit of interesting itself, namely, those relating to the sacralization of the organ (circumcision).

The passage from the ( $-\phi$ ) (small phi) of the phallic image from one side to the other of the equation, from the imaginary to the symbolic, renders it positive in any case, even if it fulfils a lack. Although a support of the ( $-I$ ), it becomes  $\Phi$  (capital phi), the symbolic phallus that cannot be negated, the signifier of *jouissance*. And it is this character of the  $\Phi$  that explains both the particularities of the woman's approach to sexuality, and that which makes the male sex the weak sex in the case of perversion.

I will not deal with the question of perversion here, in as much as it accentuates to some extent the function of desire in the man, in so far as he sets up dominance in the privileged place of *jouissance*, the object *o* of the phantasy (*objet petit a*), which he substitutes for the  $\emptyset$ . Perversion adds a reabsorption of the  $\phi$  that would scarcely appear original if it did not interest the Other as such in a very particular way. Only my formulation of phantasy enables us to reveal that the subject here makes himself the instrument of the Other's *jouissance*.

It is all the more important for philosophers to grasp the relevance of this formula in the case of the neurotic, precisely because the neurotic falsifies it.

Indeed, the neurotic, whether hysteric, obsessional, or, more radically, phobic, is he who identifies the lack of the Other with his demand,  $\Phi$  with D.

As a result, the demand of the Other assumes the function of an object in his phantasy, that is to say, his phantasy (my formulae make it possible to know this phantasy immediately) is reduced to the drive ( $\$ \diamond D$ ). That is why it was possible to draw up the catalogue of drives in the case of the neurotic.

But this prevalence given by the neurotic to demand, which, for an analysis declining into facility, shifted the whole treatment towards the handling of frustration, conceals its anxiety from the desire of the Other, anxiety that is impossible not to recognize when it is covered only by the phobic object, but more difficult to understand in the case of the other two neuroses, when one is not in possession of the thread that makes it possible to present the phantasy as desire of the Other. One then finds its two terms shattered, as it were: the first, in the case of the obsessional, in as much as he denies the desire of the Other in forming his phantasy by accentuating the impossibility of the subject vanishing, the second, in the case of the hysteric, in as much as desire is maintained only through the lack of satisfaction that is introduced into it when he eludes himself as object.

These features are confirmed by the fundamental need of the obsessional neurotic to stand in the place of the Other, and by the disbelieving side of hysterical intrigue.

In fact, the image of the ideal Father is a phantasy of the neurotic. Beyond the Mother, the real Other of demand, whose desire (that is, her desire) one wishes she would assuage, there stands out the image of a father who would close his eyes to desires. The true function of the Father, which is fundamentally to unite (and not to set in opposition) a desire and the Law, is even more marked than revealed by this.

The neurotic's wished-for Father is clearly the dead Father. But he is also a Father who can perfectly master his desire – and the same can be said of the subject.

This is one of the dangers that analysis must avoid, the interminable aspect of the transference principle.

That is why a calculated vacillation of the analyst's 'neutrality' may be

more valuable for a hysteric than any amount of interpretation – though there is always a danger of frightening the patient. Provided, of course, that this fright does not lead to a breaking off of the analysis, and that he becomes convinced by what follows that the analyst's desire was in no way involved. This, of course, is not a piece of technical advice, but a view that is opened up to the question of the analyst's desire for those who would not otherwise know about it: how the analyst must preserve for the other the imaginary dimension of his non-mastery, of his necessary imperfection, is as important a matter to settle as the intentional consolidation in him of his ignorance of each subject who comes to him for analysis, of an ever renewed ignorance that prevents anyone becoming a 'case'.

To return to phantasy, let us say that the pervert imagines himself to be the Other in order to ensure his *jouissance*, and that it is what the neurotic reveals when he imagines himself to be a pervert – in his case, to assure himself of the existence of the Other.

It is this that gives the meaning of the perversion that is supposed to lie in the very principle of neurosis. The perversion is in the unconscious of the neurotic as phantasy of the Other. But this does not mean that in the case of the pervert the unconscious is 'open ended'. He, too, after his fashion, defends himself in his desire. For desire is a defence (*défense*), a prohibition (*défense*) against going beyond a certain limit in *jouissance*.

In its structure as I have defined it, the phantasy contains the ( $-\varphi$ ), the imaginary function of castration under a hidden form, reversible from one of its terms to the other. That is to say, like a complex number, it imaginizes (if I may use such a term) alternatively one of these terms in relation to the other.

Included in the *objet a* is the *ἀγαλμα*, the inestimable treasure that Alcibiades declares is contained in the rustic box that for him Socrates's face represents. But let us observe that it bears the sign ( $—$ ). It is because he has not seen Socrates's prick, if I may be permitted to follow Plato, who does not spare us the details, that Alcibiades the seducer exalts in him the *ἀγαλμα*, the marvel that he would like Socrates to cede to him in avowing his desire: the division of the subject that he bears within himself being admitted with great clarity on this occasion.

Such is the woman concealed behind her veil: it is the absence of the penis that turns her into the phallus, the object of desire. Draw attention to this absence in a more precise way by getting her to wear a pretty wig and fancy dress, and you, or rather she, will have plenty to tell us about:

the effect is guaranteed 100 per cent, for men who go straight to the point.

Thus by showing his object as castrated, Alcibiades presents himself as he who desires – a fact that does not escape Socrates's attention – for someone else who is present, Agathon, whom Socrates, the precursor of psychoanalysis, and confident of his position in this fashionable gathering, does not hesitate to name as the object of the transference, placing in the light of an interpretation a fact that many analysts are still unaware of: that the love-hate effect in the analytic situation is to be found elsewhere.

But Alcibiades is certainly not a neurotic. It is even because he is *par excellence* he who desires, and he who goes as far as he can along the path of *jouissance*, that he can thus (with the help of a certain amount of drink) produce in the eyes of all the central articulation of the transference, made present by the object adorned with his reflexions.

Nevertheless, he projected Socrates into the ideal of the perfect Master, whom, through the action of ( $-\varphi$ ), he has completely imaginized.

In the case of the neurotic, the ( $-\varphi$ ) slides under the  $\$$  of the phantasy, to the advantage of the imagination that is peculiar to it, that of the ego. For the neurotic has been subjected to imaginary castration from the beginning; it is castration that sustains this strong ego, so strong, one might say, that its proper name is an inconvenience for it, since the neurotic is really Nameless.

Yes, it is beneath this ego, which certain analysts choose to strengthen still more, that the neurotic hides the castration that he denies.

But, contrary to appearances, he clings to it.

What the neurotic does not want, and what he strenuously refuses to do, until the end of the analysis, is to sacrifice his castration to the *jouissance* of the Other by allowing it to serve that *jouissance*.

And, of course, he is not wrong, for although, at bottom, he feels himself to be what is most vain in existing, a Want-to-be (*un Manque-à-être*) or a Too-much-of-it (*un En-Trop*), why should he sacrifice his difference (anything but that) to the *jouissance* of an Other, which, let us remember, does not exist. Yes, but if by some chance it did exist, he would 'enjoy' it (*il en jouirait*). And that is what the neurotic does not want. For he imagines that the Other demands his castration.

What analytic experience shows is that, in any case, it is castration that governs desire, whether in the normal or the abnormal

Providing it oscillates alternately between  $\$$  and *o* in the phantasy, castration turns phantasy into that supple, yet inextensible chain by which



the arrest of the object-investment, which can hardly go beyond certain natural limits, takes on the transcendental function of ensuring the *jouissance* of the Other, which passes this chain on to me in the Law.

To whomsoever really wishes to confront this Other, there opens up the way of experiencing not only his demand, but also his will. And then: either to realize oneself as object, to turn oneself into a mummy, as in some Buddhist initiation rite, or to satisfy the will to castration inscribed in the Other, which culminates in the supreme narcissism of the Lost Cause (this is the way of Greek tragedy, which Claudel rediscovers in a Christianity of despair).

Castration means that *jouissance* must be refused, so that it can be reached on the inverted ladder (*l'échelle renversée*) of the Law of desire.

I won't go any further here.



This article is now appearing for the first time: an unexpected shortage of the funds that are usually lavished on the publication, even in their entirety, of such 'round-table' conferences having left it in abeyance, together with all the fine things that adorned this one.

I should mention, for the record, that the 'Copernican' development was added later, and that the end of the article, on castration, was never delivered owing to lack of time, and was replaced in fact by a few remarks on the machine in the modern sense of the word, from which the relation of the subject to the signifier can be materialized.

From the fellow feeling natural in any discussion, I should not like to exclude that which was aroused in me by a particular disagreement. The term 'a-human' which someone wished to attribute to what I said did not cause me the least distress, since the element of the new that

the category implies gave me, on the contrary, a certain pleasure. I noted with no less interest the crackling that followed soon afterwards at the word 'hell', since the voice that pronounced it gave it, owing to the speaker's declared allegiance to Marxism, a certain piquancy. I must admit that I am partial to a certain form of humanism, a humanism that comes from an area where, although it is not used with any less cunning than elsewhere, nevertheless has a certain quality of candour about it: 'When the miner comes home, his wife rubs him down . . .' I am left defenceless against such things.

In a private conversation someone asked me (this was how he put it) whether to speak for the blackboard did not imply belief in an eternal scribe. Such a belief is not necessary, I replied, to him who knows that all discourse has its effect through the unconscious.

## Notes

1. Or even from attempting to interest people, under the heading of *Psi* phenomena, in telepathy, or in the whole Gothic psychology that a Myers is capable of reviving. The most vulgar quack will be able to uncross the field in which Freud has contained him in advance, by presenting what he accepts of these phenomena as requiring translation, in the strict sense of the term, into contemporary forms of discourse.

Even when prostituted, psychoanalytic theory remains prudish (a well-known characteristic of the brothel). As we say since Sartre, she's a respectable girl [*une respectueuse*, a reference to Sartre's play, *La putain respectueuse* - Tr.]: she won't walk in any old street (note added, 1966).

2. The original reads: 'le rapport de travers (en anglais on dirait: skew) . . .' [Tr.].

3. I have translated *énoncé* as 'statement' and *énonciation* as 'enunciation', the former referring to the actual words uttered, the second to the act of uttering them [Tr.].

4. English in the original [Tr.].

5. The English 'was' translates the French 'fut' (*passé simple*, past historic) and *était* (*imparfait*, imperfect) [Tr.].

6. *G.W.*, VIII: 237-8; *Standard Edition*, 12: 225-6.

7. I am referring here to the friend who invited me to this conference, having, some months before, revealed to me the reservations that he derived from his personal ontology against 'psychoanalysts' who were too 'Hegelian' for his liking, as if anyone except myself in that assembly could be accused of this.

This in the confusion of pages from his journal cast to the four winds (no doubt by accident) that had snatched them from him.

At which I made him agree that, in order to interest this ontology of his in the, even entertaining, terms in which he clothed it in familiar notes, I found its

'certainly not, but perhaps' procedure doomed to mislead.

8. '*Le chien fait miaou, le chat fait oua-oua*'. A nursery song in which various animals are attributed with the wrong sound [Tr.].

9. I leave this paragraph only as a monument to a battle long since forgotten (note added, 1962: where was my head?).

10. The words in brackets have been added, with a view to pinpointing later developments on identification (1962).

11. This, too, refers to what I said in my seminar, 'L'Éthique de la psychanalyse' (1959-60), on the second death. Like Dylan Thomas, I don't want there to be two. But is the Absolute Master, therefore, the only one that remains?

12. That I should have said this at the time, even in more vigorous terms, in this détour, serves as a meeting-point by virtue of the fact that, three years later, on the subject of the Name-of-the-Father, I took the opportunity of abandoning the theses that I had promised in my seminar, on account of the permanence of this situation.

13. English in the original [Tr.].

14. 'là où s'était', thus making the verb 'to be' reflexive - an allusion to Lacan's gloss on Freud's '*Wo es war soll Ich werden*' [Tr.].

15. Which I have since justified by means of a topological model borrowed from surface theory in *analysis situs* (note added 1962).

16. In French, 'proie' is usually 'prey', but it is also used in the phrase '*lâcher la proie pour l'ombre*' ('to drop the substance for the shadow') [Tr.].

17. More recently, in the opposite direction, in the attempt to make homologous surfaces topologically defined in the terms employed here in the subjective articulation. Cf. the simple refutation of the supposed paradox 'I am lying' (note added 1962).