Lacan and the Discourse of the Other

by Anthony Wilden

Nous ne sommes hommes et ne nous tenons les uns aux autres que par la parole.
(Montaigne.)

I

It is especially difficult to know where to begin with Lacan, partly because of the range of the echoes one finds in his work and partly because Lacan is not prone to define or employ his terms unambiguously. It appears that most of this explication has been attended to in his seminar, now in its sixteenth year, of which very little has ever been published. This is a situation which accentuates Lacan's tendency to write forever in suspense; only time will tell whether he has fulfilled the promises of his manifesto, the *Discours de Rome*. Nevertheless a great deal of the ground he once staked out for future occupation is a fairly solid acquisition now, and, provided he is read in the light of his sources, his interpretation of Freud has consequences both for us and for our reading of Freud of which we can hardly fail to take cognizance.

The Stade du Miroir *and the Imaginary Order*

Let me begin with the *stade du miroir,* which has been fairly extensively covered in the notes (translator's notes 3, 27, 49, 106, 113). As Laplanche and Pontalis point out in their *Vocabulaire de la Psychanalyse* (1967), the original concept is derived from Henri Wallon.[1] Lacan develops the idea further in the light of the observations of children by Charlotte Bühler, Elsa Köhler, and the Chicago school in the thirties. To evidence concerning the role of the other in childhood—the situation known as "transitivism," for instance, where the child will impute his own actions to another—Lacan adds evidence from animal biology,

[1] In his article: "Comment se développe chez l'enfant la notion du corps propre," *Journal de Psychologie* (1931), pp. 705–48.

where it has been experimentally shown that a perceptual relationship to another of the same species is necessary in the normal maturing process. Without the visual presence of others, the maturing process is delayed, although it can be restored to a more nearly normal tempo by placing a mirror in the animal's cage.

The "mirror phase" derives its name from the importance of mirror relationships in childhood. The significance of children's attempts to appropriate or control their own image in a mirror (cf. t.n. 183) is that their actions are symptomatic of these deeper relationships. Through his perception of the image of another human being, the child discovers a form (*Gestalt*), a corporeal unity, which is lacking to him at this particular stage of his development. Noting the physiological evidence for the maturing of the cortex after birth—which Freud sought to relate to the genesis of the ego—Lacan interprets the child's fascination with the other's image as an anticipation of his maturing to a future point of corporeal unity by identifying himself with this image. Although there are certain difficulties in Lacan's expression of his views on this extremely significant phase of childhood, the central concept is clear: this primordial experience is symptomatic of what makes the *moi* an Imaginary construct. The ego is an *Idealich*, another self, and the *stade du miroir* is the source of all later identifications (cf. t.n. 113).

It is worth noting that this theory—which is what lies at the basis of the later distinction between the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real —was first put forward in 1936, during the heyday of Husserlian phenomenology, and that it was repeated and expanded in 1946, 1949, and 1951, during the heyday of Sartrean existentialism. One recalls the importance of the *regard de l'Autre* in the early Sartre, as well as the lack of emphasis on language in *L'Etre et le Néant* (1943), for the *stade du miroir* has obvious philosophical and ideological consequences, especially for those accustomed to the Cartesian tradition of the *cogito* or that of its correlative, the *moi profond,* supposedly available to conscious exploration in depth. Lacan's view of the *moi* as an alienated self makes an interesting commentary on the early Sartre's concept of the ego as transcendent and not interior to consciousness, that is, as something we are conscious *of*. Lacan's *moi* corresponds to the internalization of the other through identification; we are conscious of this self, but unconscious of its origins.

In the "Schema L" (t.n. 49), Lacan shows the dual relationship be-

tween *moi* and other as a dual relationship of objectification (and, inevitably, of aggressivity) along the lines of Sartre's analysis of our sadomasochistic relationship to the other who is an object for us, or for whom we make ourselves an object. Aggressivity is intimately linked to identification, notably in paranoia, where the subject's persecutors may turn out to be those with whom he had once identified himself: the other we fear is often the other we love. The *moi* is thus another, an *alter ego*. In Lacan's interpretation, perception is certainly primary in human existence, but it is the notion of self, rather than that of subjectivity, which perception generates. The child's release from this alienating image, if indeed he is released from it, will occur through his discovery of subjectivity by his appropriation of language from the Other, which is his means of entry into the Symbolic order in the capacity of subject. (As will be clear presently, he is already constituted in it as an object, from before his birth.) He begins that crucial moment of entry through the phonemic organization of reality evident in the *Fort! Da!,* which Lacan has never ceased to stress. Later the child will appropriate personal pronouns for himself and others, along with the whole category of what linguists call "shifters." It is well known that personal pronouns present important difficulties for the child, who usually tends to prefer the apparent solidity of a proper name (a case of valid ostensive definition) to an "alienable" word like "I," which seems to be the property of others and not something designating the child himself. (These difficulties may be repeated in reverse in some kinds of aphasia and schizophrenia.)

Since the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real co-exist and intersect in the subject—the Real is not synonymous with external reality, but rather with what is real for the subject—at the same time as they are functions linking the subject to others and to the world, any change in one order will have repercussions on the others. The Symbolic is the primary order, since it represents and structures both of the others; moreover, since it is ultimately only in language (or in judgment) that synonyms, ambiguities, and interpretations operate, Lacan avers that it is not possible to view the Freudian concept of overdetermination (of the symptom) as originating outside the Symbolic order. A specific instance of the way in which these repercussions may take place will be given in the discussion of Lacan's remarks on psychosis at the end of Section IV. But the relationship between these "systems" is invariably

problematic. A symbol in the traditional sense is not necessarily part of the Symbolic order, for instance, nor an image necessarily part· of the Imaginary, since these terms define functions rather than the elements entering into these functions. However, not all the difficulties involved in reading Lacan stem immediately from these concepts or from their objects; some stem directly from the structural approach itself.

The Schema L, for example, is obviously ambiguous in that it seeks to represent both an initial and a later relationship, as well as a dynamic process. The ambiguity is of course ultimately inherent in what the schema seeks to represent. But at the same time the whole notion behind the structural approach is that any structural metaphor must be multivalent if it is to have any value at all. In other words, since the emphasis of the structural view is upon relationships rather than upon objects, the various *loci* of an algorithm like the Schema L must perform the algebraic function of allowing all sorts of substitutions, whereas the *functions* represented by the relationships between these *loci* remain more or less constant.

It is not the purpose of this introduction to Lacan's thought to go into detail about the more recent developments of Lacan's views; nor do I wish or intend to become very deeply involved in the specific psychoanalytical problems of the object relation as originally developed by English analysts. Nevertheless, the difficulties of interpreting Lacan's algebraic metaphors can be put into correct perspective only if one recalls that the general concept of the object relation in psychoanalysis involves several levels: the genetic and the structural, the psychological and the metapsychological, the logical and the existential. Lacan's works up to about 1953 concentrate upon the genetic view; here he is concerned about the *stade du miroir* as a specific phase in development. At the same time he employs the psychological data to construct a metapsychology of the *moi*, and he speaks in existential terms, as the reader has seen from the translator's notes. In his later works, however, Lacan's emphasis becomes almost exclusively structural, and he concentrates upon the logical level of the *chaîne signifiante* in an attempt to construct a "logic of the signifier" on the basis of the child's earliest relation to objects.

What is especially important in the development of his views is the notion of the "partial object," derived from English psychoanalysis. Whereas Lacan says little about the object relation in the earlier works

which is not a restatement in psychoanalytical terms of the Hegelian theory of desire (t.n. 68), the growing emphasis in the later works is upon a reinterpretation of the Kleinian theories about the object relation. Thus there is a significant difference in the nature of the object involved: in the early works it is "*l'autre (petit a)*"; in the later ones it is "*l'objet a,*" which is a much more primordial relationship, a relationship to objects which is anterior to the child's relationship to a person as an object.

In the Hegelian view, the object of one's desire is what mediates any relationship to others, since we desire that object because it is desired by the other. But the child's relationship to the "partial object" is anterior to the constitution of the other in his world, and his desire for unity with this object (the mother's breast, for example) is at a different level from his desire for unity with the other—or in other words his desire to identify with the other—at a later stage in his life. Nevertheless, the *function* of the object relation remains the same when one moves from the genetic to the structural view, and at the same time the Freudian concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (t.n. 46) enables one to see how an earlier relationship may be interpreted by the subject at a level quite different from the original level, as specific objects come to play their part in the relationship of the subject to objects.

Lacan's concern for a psychoanalytical epistemology has led him to develop this essentially psychological notion of the object relation into what he calls *une logique du signifiant*. This theory is heavily dependent upon a radical interpretation of the *Fort! Da!* in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Lacan sees this phonemic opposition as directly related not to any specific German words but rather to the binary opposition of presence and absence in the child's world. At this level the child is repeating at the level of the *Vorstellung* a relationship which he discovered at a much more primordial level. Lacan would view the newborn child as an "absolute subject" (t.n. 110) in a totally intransitive relationship to the world he cannot yet distinguish from himself. For the object to be discovered by the child it must be *absent*. At the psychological level the partial object conveys the lack which creates the desire for unity from which the movement toward identification springs—since identification is itself dependent upon the discovery of *difference,* itself a kind of absence. At the logical or epistemological level, says Lacan, the "lack of object" is the gap in the signifying chain which the subject seeks to fill

at the level of the signifier. This is the condition which makes it possible to discover the subject's truth in the linear movement of his discourse, since all other relationships, phantasies, and so forth will eventually be represented at this level of representation. Here Lacan is seeking to answer the question of the *movement* of the discourse. Whereas linguists tend to view speech as essentially static—that is to say, as subject to the mechanics of articulation and to time in a nonessential way—Lacan views speech as a movement toward something, an attempt to fill the gaps without which speech could not be articulated. In other words, speech is as dependent upon the notion of *lack* as is the theory of desire. Since Lacan does not distinguish thought from speech, there is no question for him of speech articulating in time and space something already "given" in thought. It is the relationship to absence which accounts for the rather peculiar fact that Freud's grandson found it necessary to substitute for a phantasy relationship to the lack of object (at one level, the breast; at another, the mother's comings and goings) the signifier relationship of speech, at the same time as he employed a substitute (the toy) for the more primordial object. It is this relationship between phantasy, signifier, and absence which allows Lacan to speak of the *parole vide* as an Imaginary discourse and to describe the "transposition" of word to word in metonymy as desire.

But for the nonspecialist reader, the concept of the *stade du miroir* is primarily of psychological importance, and it is this aspect which I shall emphasize here. The reader interested in examining Lacan's logic of the signifier and the way in which he relates it to Frege's theory of integers will want to turn to the articles of 1966 and later as well as to the studies now appearing in *Les Cahiers pour l'Analyse* (c.f. the Prefatory Note), since these aspects of Lacan's views will not be dealt with in detail here.

The fascination of the subject with an image, and the alienation revealed by the *stade du miroir*, are clearly demonstrable both in the study of the child and in psychopathology, as well as in literature. Oedipus' debate with Tiresias (the situation of what René Girard calls the *frères ennemis*), the subject who says "I" in Montaigne's *Essays*, Balzac's Sarrasine in the short story of that name, and the hero of Rousseau's *Confessions* (or, more vividly, the hero of his *Pygmalion*) are instances which come immediately to mind, in addition to the more obvious literature of the double from Chrétien de Troyes' Yvain to Molière's *sosie*, the Romantic *Doppelgänger*, Dostoievsky's schizoid heroes, and Proust's

snobs. Insofar as the *moi* of the subject is still embroiled in the dialectics of narcissism and identification at later stages in his life, one can say that the subject is involved in the objectification of the Imaginary axis at the same time as in the Symbolic and unconscious relationship between *Es* (later related to $, the subject barred from consciousness) and the Other, which is his means to the radical intersubjectivity of the full Word, through recognition of his unconscious desire. As I read it, the relationship of Imaginary objectification and identification is directly reciprocal in that it is a dual dialectic of activity and passivity. The subject may constitute the other as an object, he may be constituted as an object by the other, or he may constitute himself as an object in the eyes of the other (as in masochism, for instance). The process of objectification and identification is an infinite dialectic of images (*a* and *a'* are the images of ego and other); it is symmetrical.

Its very symmetry makes it a closed system from which the subject could never escape without the mediation of the third term, the unconscious. The pathological quest for the self in the other—Don Juan, for instance—is no more than an advanced degree of the normal dialectic of love and hate revealed by Freud's observations on narcissism and known to psychologists of literature at one time as the Renaissance theory of love. "My soul is totally alienated in you," says Rousseau's Saint-Preux to his Julie, and she replies: "Come back [to me] and reunite yourself with yourself." This is precisely the fate Saint-Preux must avoid: Julie marries Wolmar; Saint-Preux is safe again—in the Oedipal triangle he has never wanted to escape. Wolmar is the defense which enables Saint-Preux to live out a "normal" life in the rest of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, for he has unconsciously recognized the same incestual danger which menaces the Frédéric of Flaubert's *L'Education sentimentale*, an education in the atrophy of desire. For the boy, the specular identification with an ideal, notably with the father, constitutes the subject in the *position* of the real father and thus in an untenable rivalry with him; what the subject must seek is what Lacan calls the symbolic identification with the father—that is to say, he must take over the *function* of the father through the normalization of the Oedipus complex. This is an identification with a father who is neither Imaginary nor real: what Lacan calls the Symbolic father, the figure of the Law.

At another level, the specular relationship, however "normal," generates an image of unity where there is in fact discord. If the child does not

escape the attraction of this alienated self, he is potentially embroiled in the pathological search for the lost object of which Freud spoke in his earliest works. Since the discovery of the lack of object is for Lacan the condition and the cause of desire, the adult quest for transcendence, lost time, lost paradises, lost plenitude, or any of the myriad forms the lack of object may take—including the most grotesque and the most absurd—can be reduced, if one wishes, to the question at the root of neurosis and psychosis, the question asked by Oedipus: "Who (or what) am I?" The subject, like Oedipus, always knows the answer, but the distinction between Knowledge (*savoir*) and truth repeatedly emphasized by Lacan points up the function of *méconnaissance* and *reconnaissance* in human life. Truth for the subject is not knowledge but recognition. Mental illness on the other hand is precisely the refusal to recognize that truth; the mechanisms of negation, disavowal, rejection, isolation, and so forth flow from it. But a certain *méconnaissance*—which we might call sublimation—is essential to health; Dostoievskian hyperconsciousness is no solution. The point is of course that hyperconsciousness or hyperrecognition simply corresponds to the intensity of the loss. To pose the question at all is the subject's way of recognizing that he is neither who he thinks he is nor what he wants to be, since at the level of the *parole vide* he will always find that he is another. For the Freudian analyst (and for Lacan), the question will eventually be answered at the level of the phallus (the object of symbolic exchange between parents and generations); for the Dasein-analyst, it will be answered with equal conviction in the terms of "ontological insecurity," simply because to be an object for the other is to have lost one's being as a person. In the same way as the quest for being—the quest for the lost "authentic" self (however interminable)—depends upon an original loss and the discovery of difference, self-knowledge depends upon an original misconstruction. For Lacan this is the Imaginary misconstruction of the ego. But since the only valid definition of mental illness is that it can always be found somewhere in psychiatrists' offices, this *méconnaissance* has no a priori value in determining the subject's future: like history, the subject can only be read backwards. All that can be said about the Imaginary relationship a priori is that because it denies the unconscious elements within it, it is correlative to the notion that "consciousness" and "subject" are synonyms.

At whatever level one views the Imaginary relationship as it is ex-

pressed in Lacan's earlier works—whether from the static or the dynamic point of view—it is a relationship of love and aggressivity between two egos. The Imaginary battle of mutual objectification is quite different from the symbolic objectification in which the child becomes an object for the parents in a system of symbolic exchange, from long before his birth. In this instance the child functions primarily not as a subject to be reduced to an object (a slave) in a Hegelian struggle for recognition, but more nearly as what Lacan would call a *signifier* in a system of communication between other people. Thus, at the later level of the interpersonal relationships in which the subject is involved as a subject (who may become an object), Lacan's formulation of the Imaginary relationship—whose paradigm is the *stade du miroir*—is significant because it is a development of the notion of the *imago* (Jung) and of the dialectics of narcissism throughout the works of Freud. At the same time it involves a reversal of the usual sense of the word ego (*moi*) both in Freud and in most contemporary psychoanalysis. It is on this return from contemporary "ego psychology" to the problem of the subject that Lacan articulates his "return to Freud."

An example from the *Standard Edition* will serve to illustrate the traditional usage of the notion of "object-choice" in Freudian analysis. Freud is discussing "the establishment of a connection" between a preconscious and an unconscious presentation in the dream, and he employs the word "transference" in doing so, a concept "which provides an explanation of so many striking phenomena in the mental life of neurotics." The editor comments: "In his later writings, Freud regularly used this same word . . . (*Uebertragung*) to describe a somewhat different, but not unrelated, psychological process . . . —namely the process of 'transferring' on to a contemporary object feelings which originally applied, and still unconsciously apply, to an infantile object."[2]

The reader will have noted to what extent the notion of transference within the dialectic of analysis is inseparable from any comprehension of interhuman relationships outside it—whether in a contemporary or genetic sense. At the most elementary level, the silent "neutrality" of the analyst (his role as "dummy") enables the subject to project onto him the image of the significant other to whom the subject is addressing his *parole vide*. This *alter ego* of the subject is the ego of the subject himself insofar as his ego is the product of a capture by the other (ultimately reducible

[2] *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), V, 562, note 2.

to the ideal of the ego). The relationship is a purely dual one for the subject; he is in fact maintaining a sort of short circuit between his narcissistic image of himself and the image of the other, in order to resist any attempts to change that image. But the analyst himself is neither an object nor an *alter ego*; he is the third man. Although he begins by acting as a mirror for the subject, it is through his refusal to respond at the level consciously or unconsciously demanded by the subject (ultimately the demand for love), that he will eventually (or ideally) pass from the role of "dummy," whose hand the subject seeks to play, to that of the Other with whom the barred subject of his patient is unconsciously communicating. The mirror relationship of ego and *alter ego* which was the obstacle to recognition of his unconscious desires which the subject has set up and maintained will be neutralized, the subject's mirages will be "consumed," and it will be possible for the barred subject to accede to the authenticity of what Lacan calls "the language of his desire" through his recognition of his relationship to the Other. This relationship is represented by the broken line in the Schema L between S and A, the latter representing the unconscious or what Lacan calls "the locus of the Other." The triangular relationship between ego, *alter ego,* and the analyst is mediated by the reciprocal interaction of the analyst's unconscious and that of the patient; thus the relationship requires the four terms of the Schema L: two triangles that can be folded one upon the other. In spite of the difficulties of bringing Lacan's algebraic metaphors into the analysis of concrete relationships, it will be seen at once how important the concept of *locus* is for his views. Identification and narcissism, or the relationship between ego and *alter ego,* are not relationships of identity; it is always a question of each trying to take the other's *place*—as in what Lacan defined and demonstrated as an "inmixing of subjects" in his commentary on Poe's *Purloined Letter* (1956). But no one can take another's place, whereas he can be constituted there as in a locus of relationships and functions.

Before dealing further with the *stade du miroir* and the Imaginary, I should indicate something of the status of narcissism and identification in Freud, since the reader will recall that Lacan claims the *stade du miroir* to be an extension of Freud's views.

Näcke's description of narcissism (1899), with which Freud begins his article on the subject,[3] is concerned with autoeroticism in clinical

3 "On Narcissism" (1914), *Standard Editon*, XIV, 67.

cases. Freud begins his assimilation of narcissism into the mental life of all of us by dealing with it in the terms of the libido which was to become the all-encompassing Eros in his later works. He then distinguishes for the first time between "ego libido" (narcissism) and "object-libido" (sexual choice), which leads him to the significant conclusion that "a unity comparable to the ego cannot exist in the individual from the start; the ego has to be developed" (p. 77). After a lengthy digression on the dangers of hypothesis, a cautionary approach so typical of Freud, he develops the following thesis:

A person may love:

(1) According to the narcissistic type:
    (a) what he himself is [i.e. himself]
    (b) what he himself was
    (c) what he himself would like to be
    (d) someone who was once part of himself [i.e. his children].
(2) According to the anaclitic (attachment) type:
    (a) the woman who feeds him
    (b) the man who protects him and the succession of substitutes who take their place (p. 90).

He goes on to develop the notion of the "ego ideal" or "ideal ego" which becomes the target (by displacement) of the originally narcissistic love. This conception of the model, which becomes internalized as conscience in certain respects, was later to reappear in the concept of the superego. He explains the ideal of the ego (Type 1c) as follows:

In addition to its individual side, this ideal [ego] has a social side; it is also the common ideal of a family, a class or a nation. It binds not only a person's narcissistic libido, but also a considerable amount of his homosexual libido, which is in this way turned back into the ego. The want of satisfaction which arises from the non-fulfilment of this ideal liberates homosexual libido, and this is transformed into a sense of guilt (social anxiety) (pp. 101-2).

In 1916, in *Mourning and Melancholia,*[4] Freud developed a view of narcissism as identification with the lost loved object, which tends to confirm Lacan's assimilation of narcissism to identification. But, as Laplanche and Pontalis point out, neither of these terms is very clear. There are at least three types of identification (*Identifizierung,* not *Einfühlung*) involved: (1) primary identification, which Freud describes as the original, pre-Oedipean affective link to an object, related

4 *Standard Edition,* XIV, 249-51.

to incorporation, the oral stage, and the mother; (2) identification as the regressive substitute for an abandoned object choice; and (3) nonsexual identification with another insofar as one person has something in common with another (the desire of schoolgirls to be involved in love, for instance).[5]

But in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud also mentions two other kinds of relationship: (1) the nonobjectal primary narcissism (replacing the primary narcissism of "On Narcissism," which then becomes "secondary narcissism"), a view which seems to send us back to the theory of the monad; and (2) a presexual identification with the father: "It is easy to state in a formula the distinction between an identification with the father and the choice of the father as [a love] object. In the first case one's father is what one would like to *be*, and in the second he is what one would like to *have*. The distinction, that is, depends upon whether the tie attaches to the subject or to the object of the ego" (p. 106). This presexual identification with an ideal is viewed as "the earliest and original form of emotional tie" (p. 107). It is through this last conception and through the further mechanism of identification as "active" (identification of oneself with the other), or "passive" (identification of the other with oneself), or "reciprocal" that Freud comes to view the psychology of the group (the masses) as an identification with the leader who replaces the ego ideal of the group and the consequent identification of each member with each other on the basis of that ideal.

The reader might well wonder at the inconclusiveness of these remarks, but the term "identification" is commonly used so loosely that it is essential to have some notion of the complexity of what we are actually talking about. As far as Freud's own views are concerned, the contradictions forced upon him by empirical facts can be resolved only by further reference to the facts, and further interpretation. What is immediately noticeable is the paradoxical way in which Freud regards the hydraulics of that somewhat unfortunate metaphor, the libido. In the article on narcissism all forms of identification, including the identification with an ideal, are assimilated to sexual choice in the end, and primacy is given to the mother ("the attachment type"). In the later article on

[5] See: *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921), *Standard Edition*, XVIII, 105ff. Note that the German term is *Masse*, with its somewhat derogatory connotations.

group psychology, however, the notion of identification with the father as an ideal is, supposedly "presexual." Later in this work, nevertheless, identification with the ideal of a group is again subsumed under the libido, which seems always to be a masculine notion, although the identification with another on the basis of a common element is described as nonsexual. Nothing is said at this level to relate the dialectic of identification with persons to the more primordial question of introjection and expulsion of primary objects as it was developed by Freud in the 1925 article "Die Verneinung," to which I shall return later. Moreover Freud's use of the expression *das Ich* is much looser—closer to "self"—in the earlier article. As far as the relationship of the group and the relationship of the subject to an ideal is concerned, however, the implication is clearly that all types of identification, at all sorts of levels, operate in these instances, without any one type being assigned a primacy: "Each individual is a component part of numerous groups, he is bound by ties of identification in many directions, and he has built up his ego ideal upon the most various models. Each individual therefore has a share in numerous group minds . . ." (*Group Psychology*, p. 129). Whatever the difficulties of interpretation involved, however, Lacan's view of the *moi* ("I," "me," "self") as an alienation can be clarified to a certain extent by another passage from the same chapter: "In many individuals the separation between ego and the ego ideal is not very far advanced; the two still coincide readily; the ego has often preserved its earlier narcissistic self-complacency" (p. 129).

Norman O. Brown offers an interpretation of Freud's contradictions on this subject by reference to the concept of Eros, which he feels underlies the distinctions Freud tries unsuccessfully to maintain. Fundamentally, he suggests, love is for Freud the concept of a desire for union with the love object, rather than a desire to possess it, an interpretation which is similar in some respects to Sartre's negative view of desire as the desire to appropriate the other's liberty (which cannot be appropriated at the level of having). Although Brown's view of the assimilation of identification and narcissism seems totally opposed in intent to Lacan's, it is certainly instructive here: ". . . In some of his writings [Freud] uses the terms 'narcissistic object-choice' and 'anaclitic object-choice,' corresponding to his later terminology of 'identification' and 'true object-choice' (or 'object-cathexis'). Summarizing the distinction, Freud says that the human being has originally two sexual objects: himself and the woman

who tends him" ["On Narcissism," p. 88]. But Freud's distinction be-
tween identification and object choice, or between narcissistic and ana-
clitic object choices, does not, in Freud's own terms, seem to be tenable.
As I have indicated, Freud does not maintain the correlation of identifi-
cation with love of the father and object choice with love of the mother.
Thus Brown concludes: "Close examination of Freud's own premises
and arguments suggests that there is only one loving relationship to
objects in the world, a relation of being-one-with-the-world which,
though closer to Freud's narcissistic relation (identification), is also at
the root of his other category of possessive love (object-choice)." [6] Con-
sequently, for Brown, being the other is at the basis of our desire to have
the other.

Some further clarification of Lacan's early view of the metapsychology
of identification and narcissism can be found in his "Aggressivité en
psychanalyse" (1948). In speaking of the relationship of aggressivity and
narcissism, the one being correlative to the other, Lacan views the *stade
du miroir* as the primary identification allowing the possibility of the
secondary identification described by Freud as part of the function of
the Oedipus relationship. The function of the Oedipus complex

is one of sublimation, which designates very precisely an identificatory re-
organization of the subject, and, as Freud put it when he felt the necessity of
making a "topographical" coordination of psychic dynamisms, a *secondary
identification* by the introjection of the *imago* of the parent of the same sex.
. . . But it is clear that the structural effect of identification with the rival
is not self-evident, except at the level of the fable, and can only be conceived
of if it is previously prepared by a primary identification which structures the
subject as a rival of himself (p. 382).

Thus aggressivity, for Lacan, is primarily intrasubjective. But is the
infans of the *stade du miroir* a subject? Lacan employs the term with a
fine distinction: the child is a subject, he says, because, unlike the
chimpanzee before a mirror, he recognizes what he sees and celebrates
his discovery. But he is an alienated subject (a *moi*) by this very fact.
His "true" subjectivity, as I interpret it, is only "restored" to him "in the
universal" (that is, in the world of language) by his learning to speak.

The *stade du miroir* is further the "crossroads" through which the
child is introduced to human desire:

[6] *Life against Death* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), p. 42.

It is this capture by the *imago* of the human form, rather than an *Ein-
fühlung* which seems clearly to be absent in early infancy, which, between the
age of six months and two and a half, dominates all the dialectic of the
behavior of the child in the presence of his counterparts. . . .
. . . This erotic relationship in which the human individual fixes upon
himself an image which alienates him from himself, is the energy and the
form from which there originates that passionate organization which he
calls his *moi*.
In effect this form becomes crystallized in the conflictual tension internal
to the subject which determines the awakening of his desire for the object of
the desire of the other. Here the primordial coming togther is precipitated
into an aggressive concurrence, and it is from this concurrence that there is
born the triad of the other, the *moi*, and the object . . . (*Ibid.*, p. 379).

In his prewar, phenomenologically oriented writings, Lacan had em-
phasized the function of perception as information. This is related to the
function of the *moi*: formation, information, deformation. It is the
strength of the alienated *moi*, rather than its "disintegration," which
would therefore account for the paranoid structures of identification
with the aggressor, persecution mania, erotomania, doubling, jealousy,
and so forth, all related to the subject's internal rivalry with himself. In
his thesis of 1932, Lacan had sought to show that his patient's persecutors
were identical with the images of her ego ideal. In studying what he
called "paranoiac knowledge" he formulated the view that the paranoiac
alienation of the ego through the *stade du miroir* was one of the pre-
conditions of human knowledge. Thus the *moi* is essentially paranoid;
it is "impregnated with the Imaginary." His "genetic theory of the ego,"
as the reader can see from the translator's notes and from the article of
1953, "Some Reflections on the Ego," depends upon treating the relation-
ship of the subject to his own body in terms of his identification with an
imago. The key point here is the notion of totality. The narcissistic
component of the child (or man) who sees himself in the other, without
realizing that what he contemplates as his self *is* the other, is quite
different from that which is commonly thought to mean an autoerotic
relationship between the subject and his own body (or parts of it). As
others had said before Lacan, it is the notion of the *body image* which
is involved rather than the notion of the body itself. The Romantic and
existentialist heroes who face their mirrors know this.

The *stade du miroir* is called a turning point. Lacan sometimes speaks
as if it occurred in the newborn baby's fascination with human faces, or

in his relationship to the mother—note the "primary identification" of t.n. 68, where it is the mother in a Kleinian sense who is evoked—or with "stature, status, and statues"—in other words the child's fascination with the images of other human beings as harmonious totalities at a time when he himself is still unable to control his own functions or movements. At other times, he speaks of the mirror phase as occurring much later (six to twenty-one months). What seems fairly clear is that the *stade du miroir* never "occurs" at all—any more than the genesis of the ego does. If we consider the multivalency of the Schema L, it is evident that the *stade du miroir* is a purely structural or relational concept, conceived before postwar "structuralism" had been heard of. The Imaginary components of the mirror play of the child (as a perceptual relationship) absolutely require the *stade du miroir* to be read in three ways at once: backwards—as a symptom of or a substitute for a much more primordial identification; forwards—as a phase in development; and timelessly—as a relationship best formulated in algorithmic terms. The subject's "fixation" on (or in) the Imaginary is a matter of degree.

There is less emphasis on the justification of the *stade du miroir* in Lacan's writings of the sixties—the concept is simply integrated into the Lacanian algorithms. But the empirical facts of narcissism, identification, fascination, and, of course, the double (the *Doppelgänger* sometimes appears reversed, as in a mirror), as well as their vast progeny in literature and in the various explanations offered by the psychologists who write literature, make the topic especially important. This one concept may stand as one of Lacan's most important contributions to the interpretation of psychological data. What makes it more interesting is the fact that Lacan regards the *stade du miroir*—the vision of harmony by a being in discord—as at the origin of the phantasy or dream of the *corps morcelé*. The image of the "body in bits and pieces," or as put together like a mismatched jigsaw puzzle, is one of the most common phenomena in our normal dreams and phantasies, and also in certain forms of schizophrenia and of course in the LSD "trip," to say nothing of literature, from Romanticism to existentialism. For Lacan, then, the paranoid twist of the *moi* in the Imaginary is directly related to the peculiar twists we give to our own body image.

The category of the Imaginary can be fairly quickly defined—whether it can actually be separated logically from the Symbolic is quite another matter. From the point of view of intrasubjectivity, the concept of the

Imaginary order accounts for the narcissistic relation of subject and *moi* outlined in the foregoing. From the point of view of intersubjectivity, the Imaginary is the dual relationship of the Schema L—the capture of the *moi* by another, in an erotic or aggressive relationship. In relation to the environment, the Imaginary is the area of the biological maturation through perception. In relation to meaning, the Imaginary is that in which perceptual features like resemblance operate—that is to say, in areas where there is a sort of coalescence of the signifier and signified, as in traditional symbolism. For Lacan, the Imaginary relationship, of whatever kind, is also that of a lure, a trap. In this sense he is close to the normal usage of the word "imaginary" to describe something we believe to be something else.[7]

But, in spite of the fact that the Imaginary is present in all human relations, Lacan avers that intersubjectivity cannot be conceived within its limits, since intersubjectivity is ultimately dependent upon the intentionality of the discourse. The fact is that intersubjectivity *has* generally been conceived in entirely Imaginary terms throughout the Platonic and Cartesian tradition—and one might recall the well-known fact that "I know" (οἶδα) in Greek, from which "idea" is derived, is the present perfect of "I see" (εἴδω). Lacan's original attempt to restate in psychological and empirical terms the philosophical reversal which Heidegger had begun is thus of singular importance for anyone concerned with the discourse. But the question the reader must ask himself is whether Lacan's attempt to differentiate and restate the three modes of human relationship, subject-object, object-object, and subject-subject, is in the end successful. In other words, we must ask how he actually relates the Imaginary to the Symbolic, and the question would be unfair only if he had not claimed to have answered it. Obviously the relationship is there; obviously the distinction between the two is a valid methodological concept—but so much of Lacan's theoretical development of the notion, including the question of the partial object and the phantasy, is dependent upon one single piece of empirical data from Freud (the *Fort! Da!*) that one naturally asks what other psychological data there are to support the interpretation. Certainly if Lacan shared Freud's tentative and careful use of hypotheses instead of so readily employing the aphoristic, all-conclusive generalization, the lack of other empirical data would be less

[7] See the entry in: Laplanche and Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la Psychanalyse* (Paris: PUF, 1967), p. 195.

disquieting, for even when Freud extends his own speculations far beyond the limits of the available data, he never lets the reader forget that what he is doing is based on hypothesis and speculation.

Lacan faces the problem squarely, but his explanations are less than complete. Taxed with explicating the unconscious phantasy in the terms of an unconscious "structured like a language," Lacan replies that "once it is defined as an image put into a function within the signifying structure, the notion of an unconscious phantasy presents no difficulties." [8] The reader will recall that this definition of the phantasy in the terms of a signifying function is dependent upon Lacan's interpretation of the rerepresentation at the Symbolic level of an original discovery of presence and absence at the Imaginary level (the *Fort! Da!*). And, presumably seeking to meet further objections about neurotic or hysterical symptoms (actions) which are not vocal parts of the discourse, he answers that Freud considered them *structurally* identical to facts of language (the hysterical symptom "joins in the conversation"—t.n. 52). He goes on:

> Leave to one side my remarks on the fact that overdetermination is strictly speaking only conceivable within the structure of language. In neurotic symptoms, what does this mean?
>
> It means that there is going to be an interference between the effects which correspond in the subject to any determinate demand and the effects of a position in relation to the other (here, his counterpart) which he sustains as subject.
>
> Which he sustains as subject means that Language permits him to consider himself as the engineer, or the *metteur en scène* of the entire Imaginary capture of which he could not be otherwise than the living marionette (p. 198).

Other immediate difficulties concerning the concept of the Imaginary and the *stade du miroir* are fairly clear. Compared with Lacan's remark about "the true subject" (t.n. 135) and the use of the verb "s'être" in translating Freud's "Wo es war soll Ich werden" (t.n. 110), the *stade du miroir* seems to imply a monadlike absolute subject (similar to Freud's last formulation of primary narcissism) which has to find itself again by "speaking from" the *je* rather than from the *moi*. According to Laplanche and Pontalis, however, Lacan has denied this difficulty by asserting that there is indeed an intersubjective relationship before the turning point of the mirror phase, whose importance he declares lies

[8] "La Direction de la cure" (1961), p. 199.

primarily in the *interiorization* of the image of the other as a totality. This formulation is close enough to Freud's view of the interiorization or introjection of the ideal ego, although Freud is also concerned with the partial identifications ("impersonations") involved in this relationship between subject and other.

The Cogito and the "True" Subject

Thus the Symbolic coexists with the Imaginary, since intersubjectivity is viewed by Lacan as primarily a symbolic relationship, and the Imaginary alone cannot explain intersubjectivity. Consequently, it is difficult to say precisely what it means to speak of the restoration of subjectivity to the *infans* through his appropriation of language except insofar as one interprets it somewhat tautologously to mean that this restoration "in the universal" allows the *je* to speak. If we leave aside the difficulties of the word "restoration," however, it can be said very simply that the child begins outside the Symbolic. He is confronted by it, and the significant question—ultimately the "Who (or what) am I?"—is articulated on the problem of entry into it. It has sometimes been suggested, for instance, that there is no neurosis within the highly complex symbolic structures of so-called primitive societies. Although there is empirical evidence against this position, which is primarily a theoretical one partly involving the impossibility of confronting a pristine or totally "authentic" native society, the possibility of seriously considering it devolves from the importance of the native's own symbolic position in societal interchanges. In other words, in the ideal case, he cannot pose the question of identity, because he has already been identified (as the mother's brother, for example). The question of identity may be for him a meaningless and therefore unaskable question similar to that involved in the native informant's puzzlement with the anthropologist who asks, "Well, what *would* happen if you married your sister?" In other words, the native's entry into the Symbolic order of his society is (ideally) more carefully defined than our own, and it may be the white man who teaches him to ask the question (cf. t.n. 80, 168, 188).

For Lacan, then, intersubjectivity becomes a wider or narrower concept, depending on the context, and it reflects the vacillating use of the idea in many other writers, notably since Husserl's struggles with bringing the concept into his own *cogito* philosophy in the *Méditations cartési-*

ennes, lectures delivered in Paris in 1929.[9] Husserl had tried unsuccessfully to solve the accusation that phenomenology entails solipsism, by recourse to the notion of empathy—which Lacan, following Heidegger, rejects as a primordial phenomenon—and by a further recourse to an "intermonadology." I doubt that Lacan has solved the technical problem of solipsism either, but his approach is considerably more subtle, and in any case it depends upon empirical, as opposed to apodictic, evidence. Possibly Lacan's insistence on the alienation by another through the *stade du miroir* can be more fully appreciated if we compare it with the following passage from Husserl's Fifth Meditation: "These two primordial spheres, mine which is for me as ego [*Ich*] the original sphere, and his which is for me an appresented sphere—are they not *separated* by an abyss I cannot actually cross, since crossing it would mean, after all, that I acquired an original (rather than an appresenting) experience of someone else?" (p. 121). Husserl's great difficulty was surely a lack of understanding of the sociological sphere, since some have found the truth of Saint Augustine's "interior man," which is evoked at the end of the *Meditations,* in an illusion stemming from our failure to recognize to what extent we are determined by social structures.

Many sociologists and anthropologists (notably Lévi-Strauss) regard individual psychology as more or less totally subordinated to social structures, certainly insofar as these structures are outside the psychopathological sphere. This assertion of the primacy of society, buttressed by a vast amount of anthropological evidence, is surely related to Lacan's introduction of "the Other" and "the other" (concepts to which I shall return) into his interpretation of the Freudian texts, which, we remember, tend to assert the primacy of psychology over sociology. Certainly many of Lacan's theoretical choices cannot be properly understood except as at least partly the products of a climate composed of the conflicting claims of phenomenologists, sociologists, existentialists, psychologists, and anthropologists. Thus he seems to steer between individualism on the one hand and sociology on the other, by asserting that the alienation of the *stade du miroir* is presocial yet dependent on the other, that it occurs at the level of family yet does not necessarily involve specific family relationships.

[9] Fifth Meditation. See the English rendering of the received text (which is not the same as the original French), translated by Dorion Cairns: *Cartesian Meditations* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964), p. 89ff.

For Lévi-Strauss the individual tends to disappear entirely within the social structure. But the question of the individual is fundamentally an ideological and socioeconomic one, and neither Lacan nor Lévi-Strauss ever goes beyond the values of the dominant ideology in this respect. From a philosophical perspective, one attempt to deal with the relationship of others and individuals was that of Heidegger, who begins, not with the *cogito,* but with *Mitsein.* Heidegger naturally poses difficulties as well: the concept that Dasein is "in each case mine" has been criticized as begging the question of the *cogito.* But insofar as psychoanalysis supposes what Philip Rieff has called Freud's "ideal of normalcy"—usually expressed (amusingly) in the Freudian terminology as the "genital character"—or, in Lacan's terms, a "true Word," a *parole pleine,* psychoanalysis is concerned with the problem of authenticity, just as Heidegger was, whereas for the sociologist the concept has less meaning. It must be remembered that Freud was extremely pessimistic about authenticity, unlike the more recent promoters of "social adaptation," who tend to identify it with the same sort of social conventions which Freud attacked so vigorously. Moreover, Lacan is a psychoanalyst who has never failed to point out Freud's ultimate conception of analysis as an infinite process. Death, says Lacan, has the last word. But, although it is true that in making his often implicit rapprochement between Freud and Heidegger, Lacan perhaps leaves too much unsaid, so much of his work is imbued with a Heideggerean viewpoint that it is informative to note the similarity between his view of the "true" subject and Heidegger's view.

"Who is speaking and to whom?" is one of Lacan's central questions, and if one compares it with the analysis of the "who" of Dasein in *Sein und Zeit* (1927),[10] it is perhaps not surprising to discover Heidegger's concern for the status of the "I" in the discourse—as well as negative echoes of the textbook Freud.

Husserl had said in the *Logische Untersuchungen* (1900), II, "Das Wort 'ich' rennt von Fall zu Fall eine andere Person, und es tut dies mittels immer neuer Bedeutung" ["The word 'I' as the case may be, designates a different person, and in this way constantly takes on a new signification."]. Heidegger takes up the same idea in terms very close to Peirce's concept of the "I" as one type of indexical symbol, substituting

[10] Trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, SCM Press, London, 1962. To avoid possible confusion, I have suppressed the capitalization of the noun "Other" in the quotations and replaced "entity" (*das Seiendes*) by "existent."

the concept of designation for that of signification: "The word 'I' is to be understood only in the sense of a non-committal *formal indicator,* indicating something which may perhaps reveal itself as its 'opposite' in some particular phenomenal context of Being. In that case, the 'not-I' is by no means tantamount to an existent which essentially lacks 'I-hood,' but is rather a definite kind of Being which the 'I' itself possesses, such as having lost itself [*Selbstverlorenheit*]" (pp. 151-52). Through his rejection of empathy (*Einfühlung*) in the sense that Husserl tried later to use it as an intersubjective bridge, Heidegger turns the concept inside out, as it were. "'Empathy' does not first constitute Being-with; only on the basis of Being-with does 'empathy' become possible . . ." (p. 162). Being-toward-others is not a projection, in the psychological sense, of one's own Being-toward-oneself into something else, creating the other as a "duplicate of the Self" (that is, as a doubling from the point of view of a "given" self or *cogito*), because empathy, unlike *Mitsein,* is not a primordial existential phenomenon. In everyday inauthentic *Mitsein,* Dasein is *in subjection* to the "they": "[Dasein] itself *is* not; its Being has been taken away by the others . . . . These others, moreover, are not *definite* others. On the contrary any other can represent them . . . . The 'who' [of Dasein] is the neuter, *the 'they'* [*das Man*]" (p. 164). "Everyone is the other, and no one is himself" (p. 165).

Later on, he sums up the previous analysis before beginning the analysis of conscience (*Gewissen*), by saying in effect that the "I" is captured by the other: "For the most part *I myself* am not the 'who' of Dasein; the they-self is its who" (p. 312). In dealing with the "I," Heidegger is talking about one type of "shifter,"[11] and he has already mentioned Humboldt's remarks (1829) on certain languages which represent the "I" by "here," the "thou" by "there," and the "he" by "yonder" (p. 155). He calls these locative adverbs "Dasein-designations." He goes on to distinguish the "authentic self" from the "they-self" in which Dasein has lost itself. He begins his analysis of this alienation through consideration of "the voice of conscience," which, he says, discloses through its being an appeal or call to Dasein (in a discourse). "Losing itself in a publicness and the idle-talk of the 'they,' it *fails to hear* [*überhört*] its own Self [*Selbst*] in listening to the they-self" (p.

11 The passage from Husserl is quoted by Jakobson in his "Shifters, verbal categories, and the Russian verb," Russian Language Project, Harvard University Press, 1957.

315). The appeal of conscience is to "one's *own Self.*" Obviously the specific terminology used here by Heidegger is not the same as Lacan's, nor is his point of view that of psychology; moreover, Heidegger is talking about conscience as something which, for him, "discourses solely and constantly in the mode of keeping silent." Nevertheless, the parallel between Heidegger and Lacan seems explicit: "But we shall not obtain an ontologically adequate interpretation of the conscience until it can be made plain not only *who* is called by the call but also *who does the calling . . ."* (p. 319).

He goes on: "'It' calls (*'Es' ruft*), against our expectations and even against our will. On the other hand the call does not come from someone else who is with me in the world. The call comes *from* me and yet *from beyond me"* (p. 320). The following paragraphs reject the concept of conscience as the "voice of God" ("an alien power by which Dasein is dominated") and continue Heidegger's implicit argument against the psychoanalytical notion of the superego. But when Heidegger seeks to fix the call of conscience as something both immanent to the subject and yet beyond him, the psychoanalyst is free to read *"Es ruft"* as *"Ça parle"* in the sense that Lacan employs the phrase. The reader will remember that in Lacanian and Freudian psychology the "true subject" is the barred subject ($), and that Lacan constantly plays on the homophony of "$" and "Es." Dasein calls itself, concludes Heidegger, but: "The caller is unfamiliar to the everyday they-self; it is something like an *alien* voice." This "es" calls Dasein back to its potentially-for-Being, back from its alienation in the "they."

Heidegger's conception of this conscience is of course the very opposite of the usual psychoanalytical view of conscience as determining the individual's adaptation to "reality," or his conformity to social and familial *mores.* It is no less the opposite of the "religious" conscience; its voice may be alien to everyday Dasein, but it is ours; it is not other-worldly. The subject is ex-centric to himself, and consciousness is not the center of his being (to consciousness, the voice of Heidegger's conscience is a *silent* discourse).

But these similarities are much more apparent in the Lacan of the fifties than they are later. If the reader has noticed Lacan's seemingly "existential" concern in the *Discours* for the fate of the individual in the neo-Freudian theories of social adaptation, as well as his apparently approving references to Leenhardt's Westernized "man in his authentic-

ity" (t.n. 80, 168)—the Christianized native who has evolved from the status of a locus in relationships to that of a "person"—he will find the later Lacan moving further and further from any correlation of "subject" with *"cogito."* In the sense that "Go do kamo" is a Melanesian *cogito,* it is precisely the opposite of Lacan's logical view of the subject as the "empty subject"—a subject defined only as a locus of relationships, but in more than the two dimensions employed by Leenhardt (t.n. 188). We do not know what a subject *is,* any more than we know what an electron is, but we do know to a certain extent how it behaves in certain relationships and how it is related to the functions which intersect in it.

Many problems of interpreting Lacan are difficult to resolve because he does not approach the developments of his own theory in an unequivocal fashion. I cannot recall many published passages in which he says, for instance, that at such and such a time he thought one thing whereas now he thinks another. His views are always presented *en bloc* as if they had never evolved, with the result that one tends to assume that any formula or aphorism which is repeated always means more or less the same thing, whereas closer examination shows that this can not be so. Given these difficulties, the reader should therefore approach with some caution my opinion that, provided the very different orientation between Heidegger and Lacan is kept in mind, Lacan's early view of the unconscious as "the discourse of the Other," his notion of the neurotic as "appealing to the Other," and the ideological concept of the alienated *moi,* are in part a *psychological* development of a point of view which, while not exclusively Heideggerean, is particularly emphasized and developed in the Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit.* Later on, however, similar expressions will occur in contexts where the divergence between the philosophical epistemology of Hegel and Heidegger and the "linguistic" epistemology of Lacan is much more advanced.

Lacan's critique of the philosophical *cogito* in the late fifties is expressed in the following terms, where "subject of the signifier" and "subject of the signified" presumably represent the conscious and the unconscious subject. He begins with the formulation *" 'cogito ergo sum,' ubi cogito, ibi sum,"* and continues:

Certainly this formulation limits me to being there in my being only insofar as I think that I am in my thought . . . .

The real question is this: Is the place which I occupy as subject of the

signifier concentric or ex-centric in relation to the place I occupy as subject of the signified?

It is not a question of knowing whether I am speaking about myself in conformity with what I am, but rather that of knowing whether, when I speak of it, I am the same as that of which I speak . . . .[12]

The unconscious is an area of thought, as Freud asserted; consequently, says Lacan, the philosophical *cogito* is at the base of the mirage which makes modern man so sure of being himself in his incertitudes about himself. Thus the *cogito ergo sum* must be replaced by the following formula (p. 70): "Je ne suis pas, là où je suis le jouet de ma pensée; je pense à ce que je suis, là où je ne pense pas penser." ["I am not, there where I am the plaything of my thought; I think about what I am, there where I do not think that I am thinking (that is, at the level of the unconscious).] In essence, then, for Lacan, the conscious *cogito* is supplemented by an unconscious subject who may be the subject saying "I think" or "I am," but never both at once, since the question of the subject's being is posed at the level of the unconscious.

Shifters

Although the topic is not specifically mentioned in the *Discours,* Heidegger's reference to "Dasein-designations," or to what linguists now call "shifters," is an indication of the usefulness of this methodological concept in the interpretation of the discourse. Jakobson has taken up the problem of the status of what C. S. Peirce called "indexical symbols," more or less equivalent to Russell's "ego-centric particulars," with the intent of defining the notion more precisely for linguistics. These terms have often been applied to what are generally called indices, like "here," "there," "now," and so on, but especially to personal pronouns. But in defining his use of Jespersen's term "shifter," Jakobson includes within it what Postgate called the "subjective elements." He discards most of the definitions offered of these terms, denying to personal pronouns the primordial status accorded them by Humboldt. He notes that pronouns are the latest acquisitions of the child and one of the first losses

[12] "L'Instance de la lettre" (1957), pp. 69–70. Note that whatever Lacan says about the *theory* of the *cogito,* psychoanalysis deals only with the *subject* of the *cogito,* not with the id. Thus he reformulates the *cogito* for the Abbé de Choisy, a celebrated seventeenth-century transvestite, as: *"Je pense quand je suis* celui qui s'habille en femme."

in aphasia. For Jakobson, shifters are differentiated from other parts of the linguistic code only by their obligatory reference to the *message,* and thus to the sender.[13] Consequently a "but," a "probably," a conditional mood, or anything of a similarly "subjective" nature must be defined as a shifter. One example Lacan has employed, for instance, involves the so-called pleonastic or optional "ne" used in certain French subjunctive clauses.

Of course the shifter is only a methodological tool, since it does not necessarily increase our understanding. But Freud would almost certainly have wished to employ the notion in his lengthy discussion of the representation of a common phantasy in neurosis by the words: "a child is being beaten."[14] As the analysis progresses, this "neutral" message is re-presented in different ways. In each successive feedback or communication (*Verkehrung*) the new representation introduces the shifter without which the message cannot be interpreted, because without the shifter it refers only to the code. "My father is beating the child," says the subject. "My father is beating the child *whom I hate.*" Eventually the wording (Freud's expression) runs: "I am being beaten by my father," and so on. By designating the sender, the shifters thus move on to designate the receiver of the message. The fact that this transformed message oscillates between the conscious and the unconscious subject of the discourse, the fact that it depends upon the dialectic of identification which Lacan emphasizes so constantly, and the fact that Freud sees so much in this one phrase, will serve to suggest that Lacan's definition of the unconscious as "the discourse of the Other" (*de Alio in oratione*) is in essence a valid interpretation of Freud's experience, if not precisely in the words Freud would have chosen. Yet in a sense Freud had in fact chosen these terms, since for him the discourse of the schizophrenic is the discourse of the unconscious.

In any event, the question of who is speaking in the analytical discourse is no different in essence from the problems of locating the speaking subject in any one of the various voices of a literary or philosophical text at any particular moment—the author, the author's second self, the narrator, the questioner, the respondent, the omniscient or the restricted consciousness, the "I," the hero, and so forth—although in the

[13] The foregoing is taken from "Shifters, verbal categories, and the Russian verb," *loc. cit.* These passages date from 1950.
[14] See: "'A Child Is Being Beaten'" (1919), *Standard Edition,* XVII, 179.

case of the literary text the question may be of a more formal than existential importance, and at the same time it may be more difficult. In both cases, however, linguistic analysis employing methodological concepts like that of the shifter is particularly useful. On the other hand, as Roland Barthes has long pointed out, we must be prepared also to recognize that the over-all exigencies and constraints of speech (*parole*) are different from those of writing, a distinction which Freud never made except by implication, as in his analysis of dreams, jokes, and slips of the tongue. To take a simplistic example, if the schizophrenic says "I'm the black sŭn," the psychiatrist may well catch the significant ambiguity of "sŭn," but how would the literary author spell it? And if he were to spell it "son," what would his decision mean in the context of any particular sentence or paragraph, or in the context of his work as a whole?

II

Need, Demand, and Desire

Before the preceding remarks on the possible ancestry of Lacan's "true" subject, I had quoted a passage from "La Direction de la cure" (1961) (p. 198) concerning the relationship of subject and analyst, in which the word "demand" occurs. The distinction between need, demand, and desire is an important aspect of Lacan's theory (t.n. 68, 143), and the distinction is related to the Imaginary order.

The *parole vide* is an Imaginary discourse, a discourse impregnated with Imaginary elements which have to be resolved if the subject and analyst are to progress to the ideal point of the *parole pleine.* For Lacan, the main features of this Imaginary discourse are the demands (intransitive in fact) which the subject makes of the analyst. Desire, for him, on the other hand, is "an effect in the subject of that condition which is imposed upon him by the existence of the discourse to cause his need to pass through the defiles of the signifier." This is in effect an important and radical restatement in a structural terminology of the essentially genetic view of the subordination of the pleasure principle to the reality principle, since reality for the subject is literally *re-presented* by the signifier (cf. Freud's article on "Negation"). Lacan's view of desire, apart from its Hegelian ancestry (which I shall deal with in a moment), involves an attempt to correlate several Freudian concepts: the libido, *Trieb,* Eros, the pleasure principle, and wish fulfillment (*Wun-*

scherfüllung). Lacan's earlier works stress the libido, as my previous quotations from the "Agressivité en psychanalyse" (1948) indicate, whereas the later ones, "La Direction de la cure" (1961), for example, which I am attempting to follow here, stress wish fulfillment. Obviously these concepts are interrelated; the difficulty is to say in what way. The situation is further complicated by Lacan's assertions that the phallus is a signifier—the signifier of signifiers in fact—but the passage from the discourse to the phallus is never clearly explained.

The difficulty derives from the way that Imaginary elements may enter the Symbolic as signs, signifiers, and symbols, and, conversely, from the way that symbolic elements may be reduced to Imaginary functions. Lacan's views on the relationship between the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real, and their relationship to the phallus and to what is called the object relation in psychoanalysis are developed at length in the seminars on "La Relation d'objet et les structures freudiennes" (beginning in 1956), but since these seminars depend on a lengthy structural analysis of a number of case histories, it is not possible to go into the details here. Lacan's main point is that traditional psychoanalysis has so concerned itself with the "reduced" dialectic of the subject and his relation to objects conceived of by analysts as either imaginary (hallucinated) or real, that the most essential part of the object relation has been ignored: the notion of the lack of object. Analysts have forgotten that "between the mother and the child, Freud introduced a third term, an Imaginary element, whose signifying role is a major one: the phallus" (Seminar of November–December, 1956, p. 427). This relationship of three terms, mother, child, and phallus, is changed through the function of the father, which "inserts the lack of object into a new dialectic" and provides for what psychoanalysis calls the "normalization" of the Oedipus complex. But the father involved is not the real father, or an *imago* of any real father—he is what Lacan calls the "Symbolic father." Thus "little Hans" (1909), through whose phobia Freud first revealed in detail the extraordinary effects of castration fear in the child, was deprived of either a real or Imaginary father by the fact that his own father—by whom the analysis and cure were actually conducted—had abdicated his responsibilities in the Oedipal triangle in favor of the mother. The Symbolic father in this case, asserts Lacan, was "the Professor"—Freud himself.

Lacan is concerned with elucidating the Symbolic, Imaginary, and

Real relationships between three subcategories of "the lack of object"—castration (Imaginary object); frustration (removal of the real object: for example, the breast); and privation (the real absence of the organ in the woman)—and the further relationships between the people involved. Thus castration (which is neither real, nor really potential) is part of the child's relationship to the father, that of the "symbolic debt." Frustration is part of the child's relationship to the mother, that of an "Imaginary injury" (*dam imaginaire*), connected with the later symbolization of the relationship of presence and absence through the *Fort! Da!*. Privation, however, is real—nothing is lacking (nothing can be lacking in the Real, which is a plenum)—and the subject's relationship is not so much to a person as to "reality" itself. Since privation concerns "what ought to be there," the object involved is symbolic. These distinctions are related to Lacan's view of *Verwerfung* (rejection), *Verneinung* (denial), *Verdrängung* (repression), and *Verleugnung* (disavowal) in Freud's metapsychology, topics which are dealt with in greater detail in Section IV.

Since the phallus is not real, but Imaginary—though not necessarily hallucinated—Lacan relates it to (unconscious) desire and to (conscious) demand. The fetishist, for instance, is in fact demanding that there be something where there is nothing. His demand is a disavowal of reality (Freud). But the fetish (the shoe, the bound foot) is not simply a symbol for the phallus, since the phallus is already an Imaginary symbol. The fetish is a metonymic displacement—and displacement of any kind is always onto "something insignificant" (that is, onto something highly meaningful)—and it is this displacement, not the symbolic substitution of the phallus for the organ itself, which maintains the lack of being (the lack of object) in the subject's relation to objects, by directing the subject's conscious demand onto something he does not want. Why speak of the phallus and not of the penis? Lacan asks.

. . . Because the phallus is not a question of a form, or of an image, or of a phantasy, but rather of a signifier, the signifier of desire. In Greek antiquity the phallus is not represented by an organ but as an insignia; it is the ultimate significative object, which appears when all the veils are lifted. Everything related to it is an object of amputations and interdictions . . . . The phallus represents the intrusion of vital thrusting or growth as such, as what cannot enter the domain of the signifier without being *barred* from it, that is to say, covered over by castration . . . . It is at the level of the Other, in the place where castration manifests itself in the Other, it is in the mother—for both

girls and boys—that what is called the castration complex is instituted. It is the desire of the Other which is marked by the bar (Seminar of April–June, 1958, p. 252).

The phallus is a *manque à être*—a lack which is brought into being.

Thus, insofar as the signification of a signifier is always another signifier (the metonymic reference of signifier to signifier which relates signifier to signified), the fetish would be a signifier of an original signifier, the phallus. After about 1956, then, Lacan's use of the term "signifier" may be more than usually ambiguous. One notes even in the *Discours* his reference to the Sanskrit noun *lakshana*, which means both signifier and phallus (t.n. 177). As with the unresolved question of the relation between signifier and symptom, however, the phallus is sometimes described, not as a signifier, but as something with a "signifying function."

To return to "La Direction de la cure," which summarizes in laconic fashion the seminars to which I have referred, it is important to realize to what extent Lacan's view of need, desire, and demand depends upon the notion of symbolic exchange in anthropology (t.n. 98), which is dealt with in detail in Section IV. This view seems to account in part for his assertion that the phallus is a signifier (or has a signifying function), since in psychoanalytical theory the phallus does indeed fulfil the task of an "object" whose exchange fixes the subjects in their respective roles as givers and receivers. The phallus is moreover part of the Symbolic order into which the child is born; it is not something he creates, but something he encounters. If the child is identified with the phallus by the mother, he is thus being required to conform to the desire of the Other. The symbolic value of castration—in which the agent is the Symbolic father who incorporates the *law:* the interdiction of incest—is in fact that of breaking this incestuous circuit, thus opening up object choices outside it. The symbolic exchange within the family is thus ideally free to escape the original dialectic and enter into a displacement of it at another level of signification. Through the child's accession to language, which for Lacan governs the Symbolic order, and through his advent to the intersubjectivity of rivalry (ideally with the parent of the opposite sex), the boy, by repressing castration, and the girl, by rejecting it (*Verwerfung*), emerge from the Oedipus complex into the subjectivity of normality (again ideally). Language provides the means of splitting off from each other the original confusion of need and demand (in

the baby) and thus for the genesis of desire, which is never articulated as such.

The transformation of need into demand is repeated at the level of the relationship between analyst and patient, where it is never a question of need:

Whether it intends to frustrate or to gratify, any reply to demand in analysis brings the transference back to suggestion.
. . . The fact is that the transference is also a suggestion, but one which can only operate on the basis of the demand for love, which is not a demand resulting from any need. That this demand is constituted as such only insofar as the subject is the subject of the signifier, is what permits it to be abused by reducing it to the needs from which these signifiers have been borrowed—which is what psychoanalysts, as we know, never fail to do (pp. 196–97).

Since demand is articulated and addressed to another in a situation where the other has nothing to give, it is distinguished from need (for an object which will satisfy a need) by the fact that the object involved is nonessential; thus any demand is essentially a demand for love. As Laplanche and Pontalis repeat and summarize the formulations of Lacan's seminars under the entry "*Désir* (*Wunsch,* sometimes *Begierde* or *Lust*)": "Desire is born from the split between need and demand. It is irreducible to need, because it is not in principle a relation to a real object which is independent of the subject, but a relation to the phantasy. It is irreducible to demand, insofar as it seeks to impose itself without taking language or the unconscious of the other into account, and requires to be recognized absolutely by him." Demand is thus *for* something, whether that something is desired or not, whereas desire, as an absolute, is fundamentally the Hegelian desire for recognition, in that the subject seeks recognition as a (human) subject by requiring the other to recognize his (human) desire; in this sense one desires what another desires. And in the sense that desire is unconscious, one desires what the Other (here the unconscious subject) desires.

In the process of analysis, says Lacan, the power of the analyst is "the power to do good. No power has any other end, which is why power has no end." In analysis, it must therefore be noted

(1) that the Word is all-powerful there, that it has the special powers of the cure
(2) that, by the fundamental rule, the analyst is a long way from directing

the subject towards the full Word, or towards a coherent discourse, but that the analyst leaves the subject free to try his hand at it

(3) that this liberty is what the subject tolerates least easily

(4) that demand is properly that which is put into parentheses in analysis, since the analyst is excluded from satisfying any of the subject's demands

(5) that since no obstacle is put in the way of the subject's avowal of his desire, it is towards this avowal that he is directed or even shepherded

(6) that his resistance to this avowal, in the last analysis, can only be the result of the incompatibility of desire with the Word.[15]

It is in the sense that desire ultimately seeks the annihilation of the other as an independent subject (or of oneself) that Lacan seeks to show both the impossibility of any fundamental satisfaction of desire (as opposed to the curative value of its recognition) and the role of demand in the discourse, where some sort of reciprocity is actually possible. At the same time the Hegelian view of desire, which is what pervades Lacan's earlier works, is supplemented by the more primordial notion of the lack of object which provides for the genesis of desire itself. If the newborn child can indeed be regarded as in a monadlike (lack of) relationship to "reality," then the desire for unity with the other, of which N. O. Brown speaks, expresses a *derivative* of the most fundamental of "relationships," the "megalomania" of primary narcissism. But primary narcissism is *not* in fact a relationship, since we assume that no objects "ek-sist" for the subject at this point, as Freud points out in his article on "Negation." The absolute character of the subject's desire matches his original status as an "absolute subject." But the absolute subject is an inexpressible, asubjective entity, since the absolute subject is a contradiction in terms, whether it be the primordial monad or the goal of the Hegelian *Phenomenology.* And it is not the fact that the child at the stage of primary narcissism "feels" all-powerful (another contradiction) which is significant for him, but rather his discovery of the absolute power of the whim of the Other whom he is totally unable to control. Since the early Lacan viewed both the paranoid character of the *moi* and its master-slave relationship to others as characteristics of modern civilization developed since the end of the sixteenth century (correlative to the discovery of the Cartesian subject whose primacy Lacan rejects), the implication seems to be that the Imaginary death struggle between egos is how things are, rather than how they

[15] "La Direction de la cure" (1961), p. 202.

have to be, whereas the subject's profoundest desire to be "One" again (to control the Other to whom he becomes subjected) is totally and absolutely irreducible. It is this desire for what is really annihilation (nondifference) that makes human beings human. And if we employ the insights of the mathematical metaphor, as Lacan does in the later works, we realize that this primordial "One" cannot be one at all, since one requires two. What it can be is *zero,* in the precise sense that, logically speaking, for mathematics the function of zero is to be the concept under which no object falls (all objects being defined as identical with themselves), because in order to "save the truth," zero is assigned to the concept "not identical with itself" (Frege). Zero makes a lack (but not a "nothing") visible, and thus it provides for the linear movement of integers in the same way as *absence* constitutes the subject of the *Fort! Da!,* who has previously known only the asubjectivity of total presence. In other words, the lack of object is what enables the child to progress to the subjectivity of "I," or, in the mathematical metaphor, from the not-nothing-not-something of zero to the status of "One," who can therefore know two. The subject *is* the binary opposition of presence and absence, and the discovery of One—the discovery of difference—is to be condemned to an eternal desire for the nonrelationship of zero, where identity is meaningless.

Whatever the value of this particular analogy—and it seems that if Freud had not reported the *Fort! Da!,* it would have been necessary to invent it, since it plays the role of the necessary "myth of origins" in Lacan's theory—the foremost consideration is the denial to the Cartesian subject of any but a derivative and essentially misconstrued function. When Lacan defines the signifier as "what represents the subject for another signifier," which is his most recent formulation, he is reducing the status of the subject from entity to locus, that is to say, to the linguistic function of the subject in the discourse—which is simply to be an intersection of relationships in the same way as the subject of the *Fort! Da!* is the intersection of presence and absence (t.n. 183).

To return to more familiar ground, Lacan's attempt to reformulate the psychoanalytical view of desire is by far the most interesting development of a tradition whose most influential exponent was Hegel. Freud, on the other hand, was not part of that tradition. In his writings he makes no methodological distinction between need and desire except in passages in the *Interpretation of Dreams* where he views the wish as something

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growing out of a need which once had known satisfaction (*Befriedi-gung*). Desire (*Wunsch*) is thus indissolubly linked to "mnemonic traces," and, since these memory traces have to be interpreted in terms of words or images, there is a considerable latitude in interpretation here. (The difficulty of relating words and images is commonly avoided by reference to "signs," a word whose ambiguity I shall consider later on.) Thus the wish, according to Freud, is an attempt to establish a present identity of perception (*Wahrnehmungsidentität*) or identity of thought (*Denkidentität*) between a present situation of nonsatisfaction and a previous situation of satisfaction. There are two ways to interpret *this* ambiguity in terms of the discourse (or in terms of writing, in the sense that dreams are a form of writing—t.n. 66): one may either speak of these signs as being "structured like a language," as Lacan tends to put it, or one may deny meaning to thought insofar as it is not an internal flow of words, with the corollary that any perception (image) is meaningless until intentionalized by words—and Lacan does this as well. The danger of the first is that it may only be an analogy, however informative the resultant *reflected* structure (or in another terminology, "homology") may be. The second view has a highly respectable ancestry, but both depend upon a metaphysical rather than upon an empirical choice. Certainly, for Freud, any reading of his works in the terms of a desire mediated by the other (as in the Oedipal triangle, for instance) is implicit rather than explicit, since the relationship of rivalry or, at another level, the desire for absolute recognition, is never examined outside an essentially dual situation. Furthermore, one can easily appreciate Lacan's difficulties in assimilating somatic symptoms, for instance, into a theory of the discourse which claims to be more than an all-encompassing semiology. Thus Lacan vacillates between asserting structural similarity and actual identity, as do the anthropologists from whose interpretations of social relationships the present notion of structure in the human sciences is derived (Mauss, Lévi-Strauss).

Kojève and Hegel

Sartre's notion of desire as a lack (t.n. 107), as well as his concept of desire as an attempt to appropriate the liberty of another, is basically Hegelian, and it bears obvious similarities to Lacan's view. This seems to be the result of what is probably their common source, the lectures of Alexandre Kojève on the *Phenomenology* at the Ecole des Hautes

Etudes between 1933 and 1939, later edited by Raymond Queneau and published as the *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*.[16] The notion of temporality and the self in Sartre's *L'Etre et le Néant* (1943)—the Hegelian "Wesen ist was gewesen ist—can be found spelled out in Kojève's especially influential first chapter (for example, pp. 12–13), which was published in *Mesures* in 1939. This chapter is Kojève's translation of and commentary on the master-slave dialectic in the *Phenomenology*, the dialectic of the desire for recognition. In the same way, Lacan's early use of the Hegelian notion of desire repeats Kojèvian formulas (t.n. 68). There are in fact few contemporary readings of Hegel which do not owe a considerable debt to Kojève's commentary, and he himself owes an equal debt to Heidegger.

"Man is Consciousness of self," begins Kojève, ". . . Man becomes conscious of himself at the moment when—for the 'first' time—he says: '*Moi*.' Understanding man by comprehending his 'origin' is therefore to understand the origin of the *Moi* revealed by the Word." ". . . It is the (conscious) Desire of a being which constitutes that being as a *Moi* and reveals him as such by bringing him to say: '*Je*'" (p. 11). The human *Moi*, continues Kojève, following the *Phenomenology* closely, is "the desire of a Desire"—Lacan calls it "the metonymy of desire"—desire being "the revelation of a void, the presence of an absence of a reality." And the being of this *Moi* will be a project of becoming; its universal form will be time: "It will be (in the future) what it has become by the negation (in the present) of what it was (in the past), this negation being effected in view of what it will become" (pp. 12–13). The humanity of desire is expressed by the desire for recognition (as a subject) upon which is articulated the struggle between the master and the slave. Kojève's first chapter ends: "Thus it is that when all is said and done, all servile labor realizes not the will of the Master, but that—unconscious at first—of the Slave, who finally succeeds where the Master necessarily fails. It is therefore actually the Consciousness which was originally dependent, serving, and servile which realizes and reveals in the end the ideal of the autonomous Consciousness-of-self, and which is thus its 'truth'" (p. 34).

Kojève's commentary depends explicitly upon his theory of language—that is to say, upon his theory of truth (t.n. 130). Although it is some-

[16] Paris: Gallimard, 1947.

times difficult to tell whether it is Kojève, Heidegger, or Hegel who is speaking, Lacan's works seem often to allude directly to Kojève. Lacan's epistemology is thus a further development in the tradition of what used to be called "idealism" before the concern for the analysis of language and its function in our century revealed the misconceptions which are so easily engendered by such a label. Kojève, for one, was particularly insistent upon developing the notion of "discursive truth" in Hegel, as opposed to the "static truth" of the Cartesian and Kantian tradition. This approach naturally leads to a re-evaluation of Hegel's views about language, and his remark, repeated throughout the *Phenomenology* in various ways, that "die Sprache [ist] das Dasein des Geistes" reveals wide possibilities of interpretation in relation to history, to the collective and individual memory, and to the myth of the Spirit itself. Certainly we are more receptive now to what Hegel was doing when he criticized the idealisms and realisms of his day by distinguishing the perception of the *hic et nunc* from its representation in language:

[These philosophers] speak of the being-there of *exterior* objects, which can be even more exactly determined as effectively real [*wirkliche*], absolutely *unique, entirely personal* and *individual* things, each of which has absolutely no equal; this being-there, according to them, has absolute certitude and truth. They intend [*meinen*] *this* piece of paper on which I am writing *this,* or rather I have already written it; but what they intend they do not express. If they wanted to express this piece of paper in a way which would be actually real . . . , it would be impossible, because the sensible *hic* which is intended is *inaccessible* to language, which belongs to consciousness, to the universal in itself . . . . Therefore, what we call the inexpressible is nothing other than the non-true, the non-rational, that which is simply intended.[17]

All that I can express by language, says Hegel, is a universal; even if I say "this thing here" I am still expressing it by an abstraction, and I cannot attain the "thing-itself" in speaking of it. Speech "has the divine nature of immediately inverting the thing I intend [*Meinung*] in order to transform it into something else," because of my movement in time and space (p. 89; I, p. 92).

Through the "miracle" of the understanding (*Verstand*), with its power of abstraction, it is the negation of the thing itself which provides it with a universal essence in the concept. And since the named thing

[17] *Phänomenologie,* ed. J. Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1948), p. 88; *Phénoménologie,* trans. J. Hyppolite (Paris: Aubier, 1938–41), I, 91.

is still a universal, so, too, is the *Ich*. But the "I" is in a category different from other words. When the subject seeks to express his own singularity by saying "I," he is only asserting what any man can assert. A modern linguist would say that the obligatory reference of this "shifter" to the message rather than to the code alone makes it less concrete and more easily alienable than other words. The modern philosopher would insist that the concept of "subject" outside of language, in perception, for instance, is only an analogy from language, and that the *cogito* and the *percipio* are primarily discursive phenomena. Since language, for Hegel, is the *Dasein* of the universal in itself, then "Language is in fact the *Dasein* of the pure Self as Self," and ". . . language alone contains the *Ich* in its purity; alone it enunciates the *Ich* . . . . *Ich* is *this Ich,* but it is also the universal *Ich.* Its manifestation is immediately the alienation and the disappearance of *this Ich* and is therefore its permanence in its universality" (p. 362; II, p. 69). It is only in language that it is possible to conceive of the identity of the particular and the universal, and, as for the *cogito,* it is not only temporal, but it must come from outside; it cannot come from a purely internal certitude. The attainment of what Hegel calls the consciousness-of-self can only come from the confrontation of the two consciousnesses in the struggle for recognition (an Imaginary conflict) and reconciliation, from Hegel's optimistic view of the eventual dialectical surpassing (*Aufhebung*) of this stage in a reciprocal recognition. For Hegel, language is the active mediator in this confrontation.

Kojève has brought most of Hegel's theory of language into his own systematic view of the *Phenomenology,* attempting to integrate the Concept (the signifier in the wide sense) with time, the discourse, the consciousness-of-self, and consciousness-of-death, and equating the wisdom of the Hegelian Sage with the authentic Dasein of Being-towards-death (t.n. 125, 186):

In Chapter VIII of the PhG, Hegel says that all *conceptual*-comprehension (*Begreifen*) is the equivalent of a murder . . . .

As long as the Meaning (or the Essence, the Concept, the Logos, the Idea, etc.) is incarnate in an entity existing empirically, this Meaning or this Essence, as well as the entity, *are alive* . . . . But when the Meaning (the Essence) "dog" passes into the *word* "dog," that is to say, when it becomes an *abstract* Concept which is *different* from the sensible reality which it reveals by its Meaning, the Meaning (the Essence) *dies* . . . .

. . . If the dog were eternal, if it existed outside Time or without Time,

the Concept "dog" would never be *detached* from the dog itself [it would be a "natural sign," univocal]. The empirical existence (*Dasein*) of the Concept "dog" would be the living dog, and not the *word* "dog" (thought or pronounced). There would therefore be no *Discourse* (Logos) in the World . . . and therefore no Man in the World (pp. 373–74).

Kojève's argument at this point seems a little confused, but his intent is clear. The detachment of the meaning from the reality is possible only because spatial reality is temporal, because the real of the present is annihilated by its passage into the past. But it is nevertheless maintained by the memory of man, itself dependent upon *words,* both within him (personal memory) and outside him (concrete discourses, books, inscriptions). "Without Man, Being would be mute: it would be there (*Dasein*), but it would not be *true* (*das Wahre*)" (p. 464). Error, and therefore truth, are only possible where there is language:

> For the meaning incarnate in the word and the discourse is no longer subjected to the necessity which regulates essences bound to their respective natural supports, determined in a univocal manner by their *hic et nunc* . . . . It is this "separated liberty" and the "absolute power" from which it comes which condition the possibility of *error,* which the pre-Hegelian philosophies were never able to take into account. For this "liberty" *permits the meanings incarnate in words to combine in ways other than those of the corresponding essences,* bound to their natural supports (p. 546) (my italics).

It was in seeking to explain this fact, says Kojève, that Hegel discovered the ontological category of Negativity: "the energy of thought," the divisive and abstractive power of the understanding. "The miracle of the existence of the discourse . . . is nothing other than the miracle of the existence of Man in the world" (*ibid*). Needless to say the exigency of communication between men posed by the intersubjectivity of the discourse supposes an "existential" man without God, for if there were a God, then Cartesian truth, franked *in silence* by the Deity, would prevail, whereas for Hegel truth is temporal and discursive; it is a matter of communication, and therefore of the otherness of intersubjective discourse.[18]

[18] This conclusion follows rather naturally from all non-Platonic discursive views of truth, that is, from the Hegelian Lukàcs as well as from Kojève. See also the expression of an identical view in J. Hyppolite, "Phénoménologie de Hegel et psychanalyse," *La Psychanalyse,* III (1957), pp. 17–32. Cf. Lacan: "The full Word, in fact, is defined by its identity to that of which it speaks." "Réponse au commentaire de J. Hyppolite" (1956), p. 42.

Freud: the Rational and the Real

It is therefore precisely in the Hegelian sense that for Freud the rational is real and the Real is rational. He has often been criticized for his emphasis on "verbalization" (for example, by Philip Rieff) and for his ambiguities concerning thought and perception (by Ernest Jones)—the latter because of his use of the ubiquitous German term *Vorstellung,* whose primary meaning is simply "placed before" (presentation) but which appears as "idea," "presentation," "representation," "image," and even "thought" in English translations. Criticism directed at Freud's emphasis upon language and linguistic structures in psychic life is readily understandable in those outside the Hegelian and Heideggerian tradition, which is often rejected rather too hastily as "metaphysics," especially by people who are perhaps unwilling to seek to comprehend the metaphysical choices they have themselves made, including the metaphysical choice to avoid "metaphysics." Thus Freud's lack of concern over distinguishing phantasy from so-called reality has been a source of irritation to some, principally, it would seem, because of a misunderstanding of the role of language in perception (hallucinated or otherwise), but more especially a misunderstanding of the role of *meaning* or recognition in cognition. The subject is constituted by the signifier, and it is the signifier which constitutes reality. It seems to be the essence of great works to reflect in their ambiguities the very center of the problem they are seeking to solve. For Freud it is the metaproblem of representation itself which is reflected both in the term *Vorstellung* and in the very considerable number of metaphorical (reflected) representations of psychic structures which he introduces into the various stages of his work.

In order to avoid misunderstanding, therefore, and before coming to some remarks about Heidegger's view of the rational and the real, it is worth digressing slightly with a view to establishing Freud's own position in respect of the "intellectual scaffolding" (as he called it) which he constructed around psychic *relationships,* a scaffolding which has so often been taken in two persistent misreadings of his text: that he was describing anything other than psychic reality, or a psychical system which is not in itself psychic, by these metaphors, and that he was describing "substances" rather than the interrelation of parts of a structure whose real nature is beyond definition or grasp. Like his Romantic forebears, Freud was an "idealist," but more specifically (explicitly, I

should say), a Kantian insofar as the relationship of the *Vorstellung* to the real was concerned. Once he entered this path—and however strong the influence of J. S. Mill on the young Freud, his experience bore him out—it makes very little difference in the end whether he believes in an inaccessible noumenal realm or in no outside reality at all, since by asserting *any* kind of discontinuity between language, perception, and reality, one ends with a theory of reflection implying a *total* discontinuity. For Freud, it seems clear that in the world of language, this discontinuity was a historical evolution from a mythical earlier time of "symbolic and linguistic identity" (t.n. 80).

Apart from the fact that even the concept of *Trieb* (drive—always a psychic entity for Freud) is itself an attempt to order the real through a reflected conceptualization, Freud was not consciously deluded about the status of the representations and metaphors he used. Particularly since Whorf's indications of the drastic differences between the conceptual organization of reality in Western languages and that in languages not of the Indo-European stock, since Lévi-Strauss's controversial restatement of Frazer's view of the cosmological function of the myth in "primitive" societies, and since the many pronouncements from the 1920's on by scientists and mathematicians on the existential status of the algebra they use to structure reality or to structure structures, we are surely more than ever ready to understand the import for his own theoretical pronouncements of Freud's remark in his letter to Einstein, "Why War," in 1933: "It may perhaps seem to you as though our theories are a kind of mythology and, in the present case [the theory of the death instinct], not even an agreeable one. But does not every science come in the end to a kind of mythology like this? Cannot the same be said of your own Physics?"[19] And even in the present era of what is called "structuralism" in France—the emphasis on relationships rather than on things—it is perhaps not so surprising after all to find Freud expressing himself in very much contemporary terms: "The processes with which [psychoanalysis] is concerned are in themselves just as unknowable as those dealt with by other sciences, by chemistry or physics, for example; but it is possible to establish the laws which they obey and to follow their mutual relations and interdependences unbroken over long stretches—in short, to arrive at what is described as an 'understanding' of the field

[19] *Standard Edition*, XXII, 211.

of the natural phenomena in question."[20] And later in the same work: "Reality [*das Reale*] will always remain 'unknowable.' The yield brought to light by scientific work from our primary sense perceptions will consist in an insight into connections and dependent relations which are present in the external world, which can somehow be reliably reproduced or reflected in the internal world of our thought . . . . We [the analysts] infer a number of processes which are in themselves 'unknowable' and interpolate them in those that are conscious to us" (pp. 196–97).

In spite of the possible ambiguity in this last passage, where it might be objected that Freud is dealing with two kinds of "unknowables"—outside reality on the one hand and unconscious reality on the other—the contradiction can, I think, be resolved at least at the level of intent. Twenty years earlier he had stated quite adamantly the discontinuity between psychic and other realities (biological reality in this particular instance), but he had nevertheless indicated his own carelessness about maintaining the distinction in his writing. In this respect the charge of carelessness against Freud's use of terms is obviously valid. In part it reflects his tendency to exploit the German language to the fullest extent by employing ordinary words in special senses rather than by coining neologisms. (He never really forgave James Strachey, for example, for coining the word "cathexis" to translate *Besetzung*, which normally means "occupation," and which the French translate by "investissement.") He expresses the distinction as follows:

We have said that there are conscious and unconscious ideas [*Vorstellungen*]; but are there also unconscious instinctual impulses [*Triebregungen*], emotions, and feelings, or is it in this instance meaningless to form combinations of this kind?

I am in fact of the opinion that the antithesis of conscious and unconscious is not applicable to instincts. An instinct can never become an object of consciousness—only the idea that represents the instinct can. Even in the unconscious, moreover, an instinct cannot be represented otherwise than by an idea. If the instinct did not attach itself to an idea or manifest itself as an affective state, we could know nothing about it. When we nevertheless speak of an unconscious instinctual impulse or of a repressed instinctual impulse, the looseness of phraseology is a harmless one [*sic*]. We can only mean an instinctual impulse the ideational representative [*Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*] of which is unconscious, for nothing else comes into consideration.[21]

[20] *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1940 [1938]), *Standard Edition*, XXIII, 158.
[21] "The Unconscious" (1915), *Standard Edition*, XIV, 177.

In reference to "unconscious affective impulses," he goes on to say: "Yet its affect was never unconscious; all that had happened was that its *idea* had undergone repression" (p. 178). Or, in Lacan's terminology: "c'est le signifiant qui est refoulé" (t.n. 66).

It is the interpretation of this and similar passages, besides analyses of concrete examples from Freud, which allows Lacan to declare that the "unconscious is structured like a language," and it is this reading of Freud which brings us to see how often Freud is in fact observing, commenting, representing, and interpreting at one level of reality: discursive reality. The relationship between conscious and unconscious in Freud is not necessarily that of the psychic and the biological, or of the verbal and the real, or of letter and meaning, but essentially a relationship of *interpolation* (or decondensation) at the level of the signifier. I shall return to a specific example of this interpolation later. But whatever final status we assign to Freud's attempt to represent the structure of the mind, or to Lacan's interpretation of that attempt, we should probably keep in mind that it was not simply an old man's irony which prompted Freud, at the very end of his life, to compare the constructions of the analyst to the delusions of his patient. What is true inside the analytical situation is surely equally true outside it. Both constructions and delusions, like myths, are "attempts at explanation and cure,"[22] and all intellectual explanations would seem to be a cure for something, be it the human condition.

Thought and Speech: Heidegger, Sapir, Merleau-Ponty

For Lacan, and I suggest also for Freud, psychic reality is primarily the intersubjective world of language. With Heidegger, Lacan views the subject as subordinated to language and thus cuts across the distinction often made between interpersonal and intrapersonal relations by representing the second as a subset of the first in the chains of signifiers which link them. This view is hardly to be found explicitly in Freud, since it depends upon a contemporary notion of communication of which Freud was unaware. It can, I believe, be applied to the Freudian texts in the sense of a continuation of the experience which informs them, as I shall try to show later.

Heidegger has been the most influential exponent in our century of a

22 "Constructions in Analysis" (1938), *Standard Edition*, XXIII, 268.

philosophical theory of the discourse which matches the more technically oriented views of a number of linguists, especially Sapir, who preceded him. The *ratio* of the Aristotelian ζῷον λόγον ἔχον is for Heidegger a description of "that living thing whose Being is essentially determined by the potentiality for discourse [*Rede*]."[23] He continues: "The real significance of 'discourse,' which is obvious enough, gets constantly covered up by the later history of the word λόγος . . . . Λόγος gets 'translated' (and this means that it is always getting interpreted) as 'reason,' 'judgment,' 'concept,' 'definition,' 'ground,' or 'relationship' [*Vernunft, Urteil, Begriff, Definition, Grund, Verhältnis*]" (p. 55). Heidegger goes on to justify these various translations in the terms of his interpretation of Aristotle's view of the function of the discourse as letting something be seen. "The λόγος lets something be seen (φαίνεσθαι)—namely, what the discourse is about; and it does so either *for* the one who is doing the talking (the *medium*) or for persons who are talking with one another . . ." (p. 56). "When fully concrete, discoursing . . . has the character of speaking [*Sprechens*]—vocal proclamation in words" (*ibid.*). And further: *"Discourse is existentially primordial with state-of-mind and understanding.* The intelligibility of something has always been articulated, even before there is any appropriative interpretation of it" (p. 203). *Gerede* ("idle talk")—which is not intended as disparaging in Heidegger as the *parole vide* is disparaging in Lacan—is explicated as a "discoursing which has lost its primary relationship-of-Being towards the existent talked about, or else has never achieved such a relationship." The word has become the thing itself. As a result, *Gerede* "does not communicate in such a way as to let this existent be appropriated in a primordial manner, but communicates rather by following the route of *gossiping* and *passing the word along* [des *Weiter*- und *Nachredens*]" (p. 212). "The doctrine of signification is rooted in the ontology of Dasein" (p. 209). Although these disjointed quotations tend to obscure the subtlety and length of Heidegger's argument, there is a significant and less technical expression of Heidegger's views quoted by Jean Reboul in his "Jacques Lacan et les fondements de la psychanalyse" (1962), which, for lack of the original, is translated here from the French: "Man behaves as if he were the creator and master of Language, whereas on the contrary, it is Language which is and remains his sovereign . . . . For in the proper sense of these

23 *Being and Time*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson (SCM Press, London: 1962), p. 47.

terms, it is Language which speaks. Man speaks insofar as he replies to Language by listening to what it says to him. Language makes us a sign and it is Language which, first and last, conducts us in this way towards the being of a thing" (p. 1060).[24]

Sapir had already expressed in 1921 a view of the relationship between imagery and thought which is correlative to Heidegger's philosophical development of a similar concept in his distinction between αἴσθησις and λόγος. Although Sapir did make a qualitative distinction between thought and ordinary speech (thought being a "refined interpretation" of the content of speech), which bears a technical similarity to Heidegger's differentiation between *Rede* and *Gerede,* he decided it was an illusion to consider that one can think without language:

The illusion seems to be due to a number of factors. The simplest of these is the failure to distinguish between imagery and thought. As a matter of fact, no sooner do we try to put an image into conscious relation with another than we find ourselves slipping into a silent flow of words. Thought may be a natural domain apart from the artificial one of speech, but speech would seem to be the only road we know that leads to it. A still more fruitful source of the illusive feeling that language may be dispensed with in thought is the common failure to realize that language is not identical with its auditory symbolism . . . . One may go so far as to suspect that the symbolic expression of thought may in some cases run along outside the fringe of the conscious mind, so that the feeling of a free, non-linguistic stream of thought is for minds of a certain type a relatively, but only a relatively, justified one . . . . The modern psychology has shown us how powerfully symbolism is at work in the unconscious mind. It is therefore easier to understand than it would have been twenty years ago that the most rarefied thought may be but the conscious counterpart of an unconscious linguistic symbolism.[25]

These reflections lead him to the problem of the genetic primacy of thought versus speech. On this point, his views are essentially those maintained by many contemporary philosophers and anthropologists:

We may assume that language rose pre-rationally—just how and on what precise level of mental activity we do not know—but we must not imagine that a highly developed system of speech symbols worked itself out before the genesis of distinct concepts and of thinking . . . . We must rather imagine that thought-processes set in, as a kind of psychic overflow, almost at the

[24] The passage is from *Dichterisch wohnt der Mensch,* trans. André Preau, *Les Cahiers du Sud,* No. 344 (1957).
[25] *Language* (New York: Harvest Books, n.d.), pp. 15–16.

beginning of linguistic expression; further, that the concept, once defined, necessarily reacted on the life of its linguistic symbol, encouraging further linguistic growth . . . . The word, as we know, is not only a key, it may also be a fetter (p. 17).

Merleau-Ponty, writing during World War II at the same time as Sartre, reflects the growing philosophical and anthropological interest in the discourse in this century:

We live in a world where the spoken word is *instituted* . . . . The linguistic and intersubjective world does not surprise us, we no longer distinguish it from the world itself, and it is in the interior of a world already spoken and speaking that we reflect [on it] . . . .
Thought has nothing "interior" about it; it does not exist outside of the world and outside of words. What deceives us about it, what makes us believe in a thought which supposedly exists for itself before being expressed, are the thoughts which have already been constituted and expressed, which we can recall silently to ourselves, and by means of which we create the illusion of an interior life. But in fact this supposed silence echoes with spoken words; this interior life is an interior language.[26]

A similar view of the relation between thought and language emphasized by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, as distinct from the accepted views of Husserl and Descartes, was expressed by Plato in the *Sophist* and the *Theaetetus.* Although the context of truth conceived by Plato made no distinction between the truth of language and the truth (adequacy) of perception—since Plato believed that the judgment (δόξα) and perception (αἴσθησις) involved in the "appearing" (φαίνεσθαι) of external objects (in the process by which I decide what the object is) to be of the same *nature* as statement (λόγος)—the Stranger says in the *Sophist:* ". . . Thinking [διάνοια] and discourse [λόγος] are the same thing, except that what we call thinking is, precisely, the inward dialogue carried on by the mind with itself without spoken sound" (263c, Cornford translation). Since Plato also said that all discourse depends on the "weaving together" (συμπλοκή) of forms—their context—it has been possible for some commentators, as Cornford points out in his *Plato's Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957 [1934]), to suggest that for Plato thinking means predicative, discursive judgment and that the notion of the isolated meaning of *words,* as directly connected with their essences —what most people consider to be Plato's theory of meaning—is not an

[26] *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), p. 214.

accurate interpretation of the text. This attempt to discover modern theories of language in Plato is rejected by Cornford (p. 259)—but perhaps only because of his own epistemology. However this may be, the whole question of meaning, reference, and the relationship between thought, language, and perception will occupy a central part of the following discussion of the linguistic terminology of Ferdinand de Saussure, whose theories have been developed and applied outside his own discipline: in anthropology, psychology, and psychoanalysis.

<div align="center">III</div>

Ferdinand de Saussure

The technical differentiation between "speech" and "language" owes its impetus in the methodology (the language) of modern linguistics to Ferdinand de Saussure, the originator of the specific methodological concepts of synchrony and diachrony, and of the sign, signifier, and signified, if not in the precise sense in which they are now employed (*Cours de linguistique générale*, 1915).

For Saussure, *la langue* was *le langage* minus *la parole*. The distinction he employed is consequently: *langue/parole*—in other words: the social and collective institution of language as a system of signs possessing certain values and beyond the conscious control of the individual, opposed to the individual act of combination and actualization (in a discourse) of speech, which, for Saussure, would be an essentially conscious use of unconsciously determined structures. Obviously the two can be separated only formally and not existentially, since language and speech are in constant dialectical interaction. This is particularly true if we remain at the level of the historical evolution of a language, for it is through speech that it evolves. The distinction solves no problems, but it was an essential move in the transformation of philology into linguistics, and it has been the inspiration of the increasingly more subtle attempts by many linguists to clarify the relation between what is now usually called the (social) code and the (individual) message.

Synchrony and Diachrony

Synchrony and diachrony (t.n. 85) refer in Saussure's terminology to the "timeless" or synchronic cut one can make in a language at any stage of its evolution in order to examine the interrelationships of that

particular language system at a moment in time. "Diachrony" refers to the evolution through time in a language of individual words, individual phonemes, or individual morphological elements, and so forth (semantic, pronunciation, and syntactic changes), or to the evolution of the totality of one synchronic system to another one (Vulgar Latin to French, for example). Saussure's prime intent was to separate philology into "synchronic linguistics" and "diachronic linguistics," but the terms have since been revived and employed in their own right, particularly in structural anthropology. Needless to say the relationship between one synchronic system and the next (its diachronic change) is impossible to specify except on the basis of "this" becoming "that," and entailing a further change "here," and so forth. Theoretically speaking, a change in any single element of any system will have repercussions throughout the whole system, whether from the diachronic or the synchronic point of view, or from both.

It was the extension by Lévi-Strauss of the concepts of synchrony and diachrony to the relationship between static ("cold") societies and dynamic ("hot") ones that indicated the value of these terms, as well as the difficulties involved in explicating the relationship between the two categories. Theoretically speaking, it is possible to say that a "primitive" society remains essentially synchronic; it has no history, only events. An evolving society on the other hand may be conceived as in the grasp of History itself—without, of course, necessarily deifying history in the Hegelian or Marxian sense, since what we mean by History may be the myths of history. Obviously one of the key differences between the two types of society lies in the introduction of writing, and therefore of an objective kind of memory, into a society. The memory of a primitive society lies in its myths—which speak the narrator rather than being spoken by him, as Lévi-Strauss has put it (t.n. 103)—and the function of the oral myth differs from the function of writing in the sense that both the oral myth and the supposedly synchronic society *could* evolve over a long period of time, but nobody would know about it. ("Evolution" is here distinguished from the change, usually that of degradation, brought on by outside factors, or events: ecological change, wars, the coming of the white man, and so forth.) Theoretically speaking, the "structuralist" approach will concentrate upon discovering and comparing the structure of synchronic systems—within history, for instance—without concerning itself with how or why any diachronic evolution has taken place. The

historian, on the other hand, would tend to concentrate on the elements accounting for diachronic change at a specific level of society: economics, politics, or the class struggle, for example. Thus Lévi-Strauss, viewed as the man who might be able to prove to us that, *structurally speaking, our society is identical with the society of the eighteenth century and distinguished from it only by events*, has been opposed to the later Sartre, viewed as the man who must concentrate on the diachronic historical change which *has* taken place in order to discover what grounds there may be for hope that really fundamental changes can be brought about through History.

In addition to this general and simplified summary of the notions of synchrony and diachrony, it should be indicated in what sense these ideas, and their relationship to the notion of structure itself, are a transformation of the theses of the *Cours de linguistique générale*. Saussure did not in fact write this text; it was put together from lecture notes and scattered manuscripts by his students. Thus there is a certain systematization involved which was not necessarily that of Saussure himself, as Lévi-Strauss sought to indicate in 1960:

For the editors of the *Cours de linguistique générale* there exists an absolute opposition between two categories of facts: on the one hand, the category of grammar, the synchronic, the conscious; on the other, the category of phonetics, the diachronic, and the unconscious. Only the conscious system is coherent; the unconscious infra-system is dynamic and in disequilibrium. At one and the same time, it is made up of past legacies and future tendencies, which have not yet come to realization.

The fact is that Saussure had not yet discovered the presence of differential elements behind the phoneme. At another level, his position indirectly prefigures that of Radcliffe-Brown, who was convinced that structure is of the order of empirical observation, whereas structure is in fact beyond it. This unawareness of hidden realities leads both of them to opposite conclusions. Saussure seems to deny the existence of a structure wherever it is not immediately given; Radcliffe-Brown affirms its existence, but, since he sees structure where it does not exist in fact, he deprives the notion of structure of its force and import.

Today, Lévi-Strauss continues, we can see in both anthropology and linguistics that the synchronic may be as unconscious as the diachronic, which makes them both less separate from each other than they seem to have been for Saussure's editors. "On the other hand, the *Cours de linguistique générale* posits relations of equivalence between phonetics,

the diachronic, and what is individual, forming the domain of *parole*; and between the grammatical, the synchronic, and what is collective, in the domain of *langue*. But we have learned from Marx that the diachronic could exist in the collective, and from Freud, that the grammatical could come to fruition in the heart of what is individual" (pp. 23–24).[27]

Synchrony and diachrony not only have a specific application in some of Lacan's formulations about the unconscious, but they are of course of especial relevance to psychoanalysis in the most general sense. It is after all the psychoanalyst who is always telling us that for the neurotic, structurally speaking, nothing has changed since his infancy, or that this or that person has regressed to this or that stage, both of which are manifestly untrue from the point of view of diachrony. A great deal has changed in the neurotic's life since infancy (but we have to decide nevertheless whether events or history—relative maturity—have operated), and it seems absurd to speak of regression or of fixation as if it were self-explanatory when we can see quite clearly that this miser today is not the constipated child of yesterday. Lévi-Strauss, for similar reasons, makes a distinction between linear, unidirectional time (diachronic time) and omnidirectional, reversible time (synchronic time). These are the times of *parole* and *langue,* respectively. The myth shares these two categories of time and adds a third by combining them: the eternity of past, present, and future in mythical time.

One difficulty in employing these terms outside systems like language, or even the relatively simple social systems of primitive societies, is that one is not even sure whether one is resorting to analogy or not. The neurotic, like the primitive society, may well depend to some extent upon a myth (personal or societal) which is speaking him repeatedly at the unconscious level of his symptoms (the unconscious is timeless, says Freud). On the other hand, his memory (the "magic writing pad") contains written on it all the pristine traces which would enable him to compare the unilinear relationship of present and past, and thus to resolve their conflict. Freud's central concept of *Nachträglichkeit,* which Lacan was one of the first to emphasize, requires this conception in fact, since deferred action, whether conscious (in the sense that I suddenly understand a book I read a year ago) or unconscious (in the more usual

[27] "Discours inaugural" at the Collège de France (1960), reprinted in *Aut Aut* (Milan), No. 88 (July, 1965), pp. 8–41.

psychopathological sense of suddenly discovering what a memory means to me, and repressing it), is one of the most commonplace facts of life. The "writing" of the dream—in its widest sense of a symptom—could be called an instance of the myth which is speaking us, since we do not know what it is trying to say. In this wide sense, the dream contains a message *to* someone (from the Other—I shall return to this point); it is an attempted explanation of the subject's reality. But it is also uttered by someone other than the subject who perceives and intentionalizes it, and the relationship between the manifest and latent content could be described as that between two versions of a myth which has evolved or been supplanted without a society's realizing it. Until recently, at any rate, Lévi-Strauss would say that this evolution is not important. All versions of the myth are part of the myth and structurally identical with it. This is in fact what the analyst would also say. If "primitive" myths are the public cosmological and conscious memory of a society which simply repeats its unconscious synchronic structure through time, then any important dream or symptom can be regarded as a similarly symbolic conscious private memory of the original system of relationships which the subject also repeats synchronically and unconsciously.

There is a great deal more to be said about these conjectures, which are open to criticism on the grounds of assimilating society to the individual, or vice versa, although it does seem that modern sociology offers a solution here. The central feature which separates this use of synchrony and diachrony from pseudo-organic views of society or pseudo-historical views of the individual is simply its reference to the societal memory, to the collective history of the society: Language itself. Meaningful memories (or myths) for society, as Lacan points out in his remarks on history in the *Discours,* are essentially indistinguishable from meaningful memories for the individual: to have meaning, they must be intentionalized in the *present,* through speech in the individual, through the historical consciousness in the collective. And this is in fact what happens within analysis itself through *rememoration* (inevitably *nachträglich*), where regression must be understood in the same way as we attempt to relate synchrony to diachrony in history. Needless to say, it is not only the neurotic who repeats, and the problem of relating synchrony to diachrony is also faced by the literary critic, especially in relation to the novel, where he must (ideally) relate any one novel, as a relatively independent structure, to the diachronic evolution of the rest of the

novelist's work, as well as (again ideally) consider the relationship of any individual novel both to all the others produced or being read at its particular synchronic moment in history and to all the others produced in the novelist's lifetime. Moreover, if he takes a specific or extranovelistic approach, the same situation will repeat itself in the society, economy, psychology, or history of ideas to which he refers the novel or novels he seeks to explicate.

Synchrony and diachrony are related to Lacan's use of two basic concepts, metaphor and metonymy, in his attempt to deal with the structure of conscious and unconscious relationships. These concepts are partly dependent upon Saussure's notion of the signifier and signified, to which I shall now turn.

Sign, Signifier, Signified, Symbol, and Symptom

Saussure's linguistic "sign" is represented as the unity: $\dfrac{\text{Signified}}{\text{Signifier}}$, which is equivalent in his terminology to: $\dfrac{\text{Concept}}{\text{Acoustic Image}}$. This representation is accompanied in the notes published by his students by another one which equates the "concept" with a visual image (the picture of a tree) and the "acoustic image" with a word (the word "tree"). However, he adds, "in normal usage" the term "sign" "generally designates only the acoustic image—for example, a word (*arbor,* and so on). One forgets that if *arbor* is called a sign, this is only insofar as it includes the concept 'tree,' in such a way that the idea of the sensory part implies that of the whole."[28]

The distinction between the *significans* (τὸ σημαῖνον) and the *significatum* (τὸ σημαινόμενον) goes back to the Stoics, who were careful also to take into account the third element involved (the denotation; the thing intended: τὸ τυγχανον), which I call the "object" (in another terminology, the referent). The complications and contradictions of Stoic theory are many and varied, but insofar as the three elements mentioned are basic Stoic distinctions, they also correspond respectively to the "sound," the "sense" (τὸ λεκτόν) and the "external object." The *lekton* is variously defined and used; fundamentally it means "that which foreigners do not understand when they hear a Greek word." In Chapter II of his *Stoic*

[28] *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris: Payot, 1963 [1915]), p. 99.

Logic (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953) Benson Mates relates these distinctions as closely as he can to Frege's *"Zeichen," "Sinn,"* and *"Bedeutung"* ("sign," "sense" or "meaning," and "signification"), respectively, and to Carnap's distinction between "designator," "intension," and "extension." As I indicated in the Introduction, "sense" (*sens*) tends to indicate subjective intention and "signification" (*signification*) objective definition, but Frege uses *Sinn* to denote objective meaning (the *lekton* for the Stoics) and distinguishes it from the (subjective) presentation or idea (*Vorstellung: φαντασία* for the Stoics), which is the fourth term involved. Thus *Bedeutung* for Frege is the denotation of the external object, *Sinn* somehow falling "between" the subjective presentation or idea and the object. The point is that outside the question of meaning itself, in employing the categories of "signifier" and "signified" in their wider acceptation, there are at least four possible terms involved: "word," "concept," "image," and "external reality."

Saussure himself, although he expressly defined the signified as the concept (psychic reality) and not the object (external reality), nevertheless tended to confuse the two in his writing, as Emile Benveniste has pointed out.[29] Not only is this the most common kind of error we all make, but even if the object is distinguished from the signified in the rather limited area of language concerned with the application of substantives to reality, one has not advanced beyond the elementary level of designation or nomination, and nothing has been said about the further question, which seems to be quite separate from the question of the relationship of the signifier to reality: that of signification or meaning. And needless to say, nothing has been said about the other, purely functional parts of speech, about the relationship of verbs and "events," about shifters (which designate the subject but do not signify him), or about substantives referring to what are traditionally called "abstract (general) ideas." Moreover it seems clear that the only substantives which properly correspond to the Stoic view of denotation are those substantives devoid of meaning: proper names. The denotation theory is not of course confined to substantives, since, as in Stoic logic, one may apply it at the level of propositions. But it is confined to propositions about reality involving curious academic questions about "existence" (What is the object of

[29] "Nature du signe linguistique" (1939), in: *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 49–55. The "acoustic image," of course, as a set of frequencies, *is* real (material)—but it is not "reality."

"Dion" in the proposition "Dion is dead"? Does the golden mountain exist?), which are symptomatic of what seems to be a total impasse in the theory once one moves away from the most elementary kind of statements. The epistemological problem is on the one hand that "valid" statements are uniformly dull, and on the other that "Cartesian" or "static" truth cannot handle the sort of realities twentieth-century man is interested in. To paraphrase Lacan, it is not a question of the reality of the subject, but of his Truth.

We might reiterate at this point Hegel's definitions of truth as a process (*Bewegung*—cf. t.n. 130), as a totality, and as "effectively real" only as a system (one might say, immanent within an ongoing structure), all contained in the celebrated image: "The true [*das Wahre*] is the Bacchantic frenzy in which no member [*Glied*] is not drunken; and because each as soon as it differentiates itself, immediately dissolves [itself]—the frenzy is as if transparent and simple repose" (*Phänomenologie,* p. 39; *Phénoménologie,* I, 40).

As will become progressively clear, neither Lacan nor Saussure is primarily concerned with the relationship of the word to autonomous external reality, whereas when Lévi-Strauss employs the terms "signifier" and "signified" he is concerned on the one hand with the relation of thought (signifier) to the cosmos (signified) and on the other with that between the phenomenological "thing itself" he studies (for example, a social reality as a system of signifiers) and the underlying structure (a system of signifieds). The terms are generally employed in such loose and undefined ways that, outside linguistics itself, only the context will indicate a particular dichotomy. In linguistics on the other hand, one can usually rely upon the linguist's attempt clearly to differentiate and define his use of the terms in the context of his own work. What is often simply glossed over is that the most common acceptance of signifier and signified in linguistics refers, as it did ultimately for the *Cours de linguistique générale,* to the *sound* (the signifier) as opposed to the *sense* (the signified).

Even if we assimilate word and concept as essentially indistinguishable (Saussure does not regard thought and speech as ultimately separable), and if we disregard for the moment the fact that meaning is not simply denotation, we do not confront simply a new set of three terms—"word-concept," "image," and "reality"—but in fact four, since the linguist is obviously methodologically concerned with sounds (ultimately the non-

semantic level of the distinctive features) and their relationship to word concepts, which he methodologically assumes to mean precisely what they say. Thus when the *Cours de linguistique générale* speaks of signifier and signified, it is not really a question of metasemantics, as Saussure's choice of examples clearly shows. *Arbor* means *arbre,* and *arbre* means "tree." When Saussure (or his students) speaks of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, he means primarily that the relationship between the sound and the word concept is discontinuous. Language could call chairs tables without affecting its semantics. Moreover, the sliding (*glissement*) of the signifier over the signified is for Saussure primarily a diachronic, evolutionary process. *Rem* (thing) becomes *rien* (nothing) over a period of time, but at any particular moment of time, words within any linguistic system mean what they say. And when he speaks of this sliding relationship in a wider context (pp. 156–57), comparing it to the wind ruffling the waters of the sea, the two pertinent terms are not "signifier" (or "sign") and "reality," but "thought" and "sound." It is Saussure's diacritical theory of meaning, to which I shall return, which is his only excursion, and an important one, into metasemantics.

Much of the problem behind this discussion is simply terminological, resulting in part from conflicting definitions of symbols as opposed to signs. Aristotle, for example, defined the spoken word as the "token" (σύμβολον) *or* the "sign" (σημεῖον) of "mental affections," which are the likenesses of things (πράγματα). The written word is similarly a token of the spoken word. For some linguists, however, a symbol is not the same as a sign—I shall clarify this distinction in a moment. But even the categories of "sound," "word," "concept," "image," and "external reality" (or "object") are deficient in themselves without some sort of definition and amplification. Since the category of "sound" is primarily material and non-semantic (the secondary articulation of phonemes), it can be ignored at this point. By "word" we really mean "syntagm" or "proposition"; the vague use of "word" is only the result of bad habits hanging on from the commonsense view that a single word is some sort of entity with a meaning. What a "concept" is outside its existence as a syntagm or proposition is difficult to say; it is surely inseparable from its expression. Certainly the fairly common translation of the technical use of *Vorstellung* in Freud as "concept" is misleading, since *Begriff* exists (and is etymologically more justifiable) to supplement and describe the inde-

terminate gap between "thought" and "speech," between "idea" and "proposition."

"Image" is surely too restricted a term for the fourth category, since what we require is something less restricted to visual connotations. This is why the German *Vorstellung* is so peculiarly apt to designate the private experience of "things," the private experience of the world, denoted by the less suitable φαντασία of the Stoics ("imagination" for Aristotle; "appearing" for Plato), which tends to imply something being revealed visually (as does "idea") rather than the composite notion of "presentation" actually involved. The concept of truth as dependent upon visual reference, as in the Platonic notion of intuition or noesis expressed by the verb κατιδεῖν, seems to be a restrictive metaphor; a presentation of an object may be *adequate* to that object, but it cannot be true or false. Thus Michel Foucault in *Les Mots et les Choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966) has made much of the deliberate transition, at the end of the Renaissance, away from notions of truth as adequacy or resemblance (to the great book of nature) and toward notions of truth as the *logos* of language, dependent upon the privileged verb "to be"—which in many of its uses corresponds or refers to nothing in nature at all. In the words of modern psychology, one could say that the language of the great book is purely analog language: a rich language of relationships (unlike the *digital* mode of discourse), a language with vast descriptive powers but no negation, no truth, no falsity. (Language may of course be both digital and analog; it may be purely expressive, or simply musical.) The "presentation," therefore, taken in this instance as covering experience outside the discourse as such (perception, phantasies, emotions, and so forth) —but necessarily mediated by it—is the category of the *referent* of the signified. In this sense, as Julius Laffal has pointed out in *Pathological and Normal Language* (New York: Atherton Press, 1965), it will in most contexts be equivalent to the Freudian *Sachvorstellung* or "thing presentation" (sometimes translated "concept of the thing" or "concrete idea"). The term avoids any necessary implication that the referent is *real.* The referent may of course be almost entirely subjective or almost entirely objective depending on whether what is presented is personal, like a phantasy, or collective, like a normal visual perception—for the visual perception can usually be defined ostensively whereas the phantasy never can. Naturally, the referent may also be a word, a proposition, an