

event, an experience, a system of signifiers, and so forth. It is obviously not the meaning. Abstract general nouns (or their related propositions), for instance, have no separate referent in this sense, only a signified (or concept), which coalesces with the referent in their signification. Unlike the possibility there is of ostensibly defining certain visual thing presentations (but only with the help of words and in an already constituted language context), the chain of words in an abstract general proposition can only be defined by substitution. This is a substitution of signifiers, or verbal definition, to which all ostensive definitions can also be reduced. For Freud, this is clearly the category of the *Wortvorstellung* or "word presentation."

Let me now relate this terminology of signifier, signified, and presentation specifically to the more well-known terminology of Ogden and Richards' *The Meaning of Meaning* (New York: Harvest Books, 1966 [1923]). The authors of this celebrated work, from which many Anglo-Saxon attempts at resolving the epistemological or psychological problems of meaning take their departure, summarily dismiss Saussure from the very beginning. They had perhaps not read the *Cours de linguistique générale* very carefully, for, quite apart from their misreading of Saussure's view of the difference between the linguistic sign and the symbol, they failed to see the significance of Saussure's "diacritical" theory of meaning. The significance of this theory of meaning (the signification of a signifier is its differentiation from all other signifiers) lies in how it differs from the presuppositions behind the traditional use of commutative definitions—replacing "obscure symbols" by more suitable ones, as Ogden and Richards put it. Saussure is talking at a different and more profound level; he is talking about the *conditions* of meaning, as meaning operates immanently and unconsciously within the discourse, whereas Ogden and Richards are primarily concerned with the type of metasemantics implied in the title of the book—which is why Lacan smites what he calls their "logical positivism" hip and thigh in "L'Instance de la lettre" (1957). Their interest is not primarily in how what we say makes sense but rather in making sense of what we say. And if Ogden and Richards have elaborated a theory going far beyond the hints—usually related primarily to the philological question of why "mouton" has both a wider and a narrower referent than "sheep"—thrown out by the *Cours de linguistique générale*, these hints are highly significant. They could perhaps have given pause even to Ogden and Richards. Besides the common misinterpreta-

tion of the sound and sense distinction already mentioned, it is only because of the unfortunate diagram (including the picture of the tree) attached to Saussure's original algorithm that one might become misled as to Saussure's view of meaning. All that this formulation tells us is that Saussure—or Saussure as interpreted by his students—was not primarily concerned to distinguish the presentation or referent from the signified in the way that the psychologist or philosopher would be. The diagram is in fact modified later in the *Cours de linguistique générale* and the picture replaced by a word within quotation marks. Elsewhere Saussure specifically denies that his view involves relating a word to a real thing (p. 100). But what in this case can be meant by the notion of the arbitrariness of the sign (or signifier)? As Benveniste has pointed out in the article already cited on the nature of the linguistic sign, the sound and sense distinction is not arbitrary *in fact*; it is *necessary*. "Sister" and the signified sister are not actually divisible for the speaker of English; the word comes to him already defined by a collective context. This point is supported by the fact that Saussure, as a philologist first and a structural linguist second, can be seen shifting his terminology in response to the surreptitious third term not covered by the dichotomy of signifier and signified; this third term is either the presentation (referent) or the "real object" (since Saussure is not concerned with that particular distinction). When one examines the contradictory statements of the *Cours de linguistique générale* more closely, it is clear that Saussure's concern for philological problems of semantics—the relationship between "soeur" and "sister," for instance—is in conflict with his structural approach, which implicitly disregards philological semantics.

Consequently, when he talks about the dichotomy of the sign in a structural context, meaning the distinction between sound and sense, he is concerned with the conditions of the communicational circuit between sender and receiver: how *this* sound generates *this* sense in the "speech circuit" which he was the first to formulate expressly (p. 12). It is immaterial in this context to know what the signified represents; what is important, of course, is Saussure's emphasis upon language as the *form* of *communication* rather than as the substance of expression. Although the distinction between acoustic image and concept seems to share the mentalist view of Ogden and Richards—that speech is the expression of thought content—the indivisibility of the sign as emphasized by Saussure suggests that this would be a misinterpretation. At the same time the notion of

the arbitrary relationship of sound and sense becomes largely irrelevant. In a communicational context, the relationship is *necessary*, otherwise there would be no *langue* to which the *parole* could be related. The sound/sense distinction is only arbitrary to a *transcendental observer*.

But Saussure as a philologist *is* a transcendental observer of languages other than his own, and this is where his confusion arises. The relationship between "boeuf" and "Ochs" *is* arbitrary, as he says (p. 102), but since that between cognates and derivatives in various languages is not, as he does not say, it is clear that the arbitrariness lies between the signifier and "reality"—that is, between the signifier and either "real objects" or whatever is represented as reality by the social consensus of mutually shared presentations or referents. Thus, although Saussure speaks of the arbitrariness of the *signifier*, he really means what he says when he uses the expression "the arbitrariness of the *sign*" as a synonym, for the linguistic sign *is* arbitrarily related to referents, which were probably conceived of by Saussure as "real objects."

Now obviously Saussure (or his students) were ill-advised to place so much apparent emphasis upon the notion of the word as an element of meaning. But this is hardly unexpected, since he is usually thinking in the terms of philological semantics, where words in one language do mean something in another, because in both languages a whole communicational system lies behind our ability to discover that "soeur" means "sister." Saussure would obviously have been better advised to speak explicitly of the signifier as a proposition or syntagm; nevertheless, his structural formulation allows this substitution without changing the model he is using.

But what is much more important, what Ogden and Richards could have learned from Saussure, is the wide implication of his "second" theory of meaning, derived from the notion of the arbitrariness between sign and referent. This is the "diacritical" view already mentioned, which is rigorously concerned with the conditions of meaning in the way that his discussion of "boeuf" and "Ochs" is not. This view depends upon the notion of differentiability in linguistics, which is entirely original with Saussure and which has seen its fullest development in phonology. At the semantic level, he expresses it as follows: "Since there is no vocal image whatsoever which would correspond more than any other one to *what it is charged with saying*, it is evident, even a priori, that *a fragment of language* can never be founded, in the last analysis, except on its *non-*

*coincidence* with the rest. *Arbitrary* and *differential* are two correlative qualities" (p. 163, emphasis added). This point was taken up in 1951 by Merleau-Ponty:

Coming back to the spoken or living language, we discover that its expressive value is not the sum of the expressive values belonging to each element of the "verbal chain." On the contrary, these elements become a system in the synchronic order in the sense that each one of them signifies only its difference in relation to the others—signs, as Saussure says, being essentially "diacritical"—and since this is true of all of them, in any language there are only differences of signification. If eventually the language means or says something, it is not because each sign carries a signification belonging to it, but because they all allude to a signification forever in suspense, when they are considered one by one, and toward which I pass them by without them ever containing it<sup>80</sup> [cf. t.n. 8].

The diacritical theory of meaning is a structural notion which deprives us of the transcendental dictionary Wittgenstein spoke of in the *Philosophical Investigations*. It implies a circularity of meaning, a system of signification arbitrarily related to "reality" and in fact only related to itself. "Wood," for instance, can only be finally defined by itself, because it is not any other signifier in the system. It is this implied circularity and autonomy of language that leads Lacan into postulating a sort of fault in the system, a hole, a fundamental lack into which, one might say, meaning is *poured*. It is this primordial *manque* which allows substitutions, the movement of language essential to signification, to take place. Saussure's view is in fact more radical, although it is unlikely that he concerned himself with its widest implications. It is the same radical statement of the modern notion of structure that can be found in Jacques Derrida's *L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967), where in an article on the sign, structure, and what he calls "freeplay" (*jeu*) (pp. 409–28), Derrida brings out the *unthinkable* novelty of Lévi-Strauss's concept of structure. For Lévi-Strauss a structure is totally autonomous, a system of interchangeability permitted by a sort of internal freeplay, but lacking the "center" or fixed point (the transcendental referent) implied in all the traditional notions of structure. Thus Lévi-Strauss's structural analysis of myths is, as Lévi-Strauss says himself, itself a myth, and the "myth of reference" which he employs is only

<sup>80</sup> "Sur la phénoménologie du langage," in: *Signes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), p. 110.

privileged by the method, not by "reality." It is a sort of Newtonian universe without any God to wind it up, or better, a whole system of utterances without a speaking subject. This is precisely the same sort of paradox for which Saussure has been reproached by linguists: a system without a center is unthinkable, and the diacritical system of meaning has no center. Parenthetically, whereas Derrida's notion of freeplay (which is a center related only to the system) is clearly conceived as something immanent to the structure (like the freeplay in a gear train), Lacan's notion of a primordial "lack" is precisely the "lack of a fixed point" (the impossibility for desire to recover the lost object) toward which desire and consequently the metonymic movement of discourse is aimed. It is a lack providing for the absent center (the object) and is thus simply a reversal of the fixed point. Lacan's view does not seem to dispense with the transcendental referent presupposed in psychoanalysis: for him this referent is the lost object at the origins. Presence (*Vollheit*) becomes absence (*signifiant*); and no substitute (representation) in the system is ever adequate to its object (presentation).

To return to the less metaphysical problem of terminology, Ogden and Richards also missed the point that Saussure's conception of the necessary commutability of signifiers and the non-commutability of (traditional) symbols rested mainly on definitions, not on some sort of misunderstanding of language, as they suggest. Although Saussure sometimes uses the expression "linguistic symbol," his remarks about the "natural" or "rational" link between the (traditional) symbol and the thing symbolized imply simply that symbols depend on or at one time depended on their Imaginary resemblance to "things." Thus, algebraic "symbols" are signifiers in Saussure's terminology. Neither things nor thing presentations are commutable, because reality and perception are continuous, whereas language can only be communicated in reality (by the continuous frequencies of sound waves) because it is segmented into commutable "bits." As long as they are not intentionalized as signifiers, symbols therefore remain non-commutable. In other words, whereas the symbol in this sense is mediated by perception so that the contiguity or continuity between adjacent symbols (the house, a balcony) may reflect a contiguity or continuity between what is symbolized by them (a woman), the contiguity of signifiers bears no relation to the contiguity of their referents. This is in part what Kojève was saying, albeit in a more tradi-

tional context, when he spoke of Hegel's "solution" of the problem of error in pre-Hegelian philosophy (in the passage previously quoted): "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). Although this is a view far less radical than Saussure's diacritical theory of meaning and Lacan's assertion of the primacy of the Symbolic order, it is nevertheless more radical than the simple notion of convention in language—man giving names to thoughts and things—because the convention theory, like the theory of denomination in the child, presupposes language, and, presumably, thought without language, whereas for Kojève man and language are synonymous.

What is true of symbols seems to be true of gestures also, and of similar acts of communication (voluntary or otherwise). Since a gesture is "natural," has no subject function (apparently employs no substitutable shifters), and cannot be defined by a meta-gesture in the way that a statement may be defined by a metastatement, it cannot be accurately retransmitted in its own terms, or it may not be retransmissible at all. No other subject can substitute his gesture for mine because commutability—the primary requirement for the intersubjectivity of language—requires what André Martinet and other linguists have termed a "double articulation," that is, a non-semantic level of material signals (noises, marks, movements) forming a non-semantic code (an alphabet, phonemes) with commutative rules concerning the formation of words. At another level of articulation these words are combinable into syntagms or propositions where meaning arises. Thus the meaning of a gesture is quite different from the meaning of a proposition, because beyond the most elementary levels of glandular reactions to threats and so forth (signals), the gesture has to be raised to another level of articulation before becoming meaningful. I must interpret a look which says "He is sad," whereas no such interpretation is necessary if he says "I am sad." Gestures have no alphabet or dictionary and consequently very little syntax. This is once again a mode of the distinction between digital and analog communication, a notion modeled on the difference between digital and analog scales. There is a direct rational or quantificative relationship between an analog scale and what it represents (for example, the rise of the column of mercury in a thermometer), a relationship which imposes limits on the system. Similarly, an analog computer, which

operates on a logarithmic scale and thus has no zero, employs a continuous linear scale to represent continuous linearities, such as the sequence of real numbers (which is an uncountable, continuous infinity). The digital computer, on the other hand, like language itself, employs discrete "bits" whose relationship to what they represent is constitutively arbitrary or conventional, and not limited in the same way. It may be used to represent the sequence of discrete units represented by the integers, for instance, or by the rational numbers, both sequences being discontinuous and countable—and separated by what in language would be called zero-phonemes. There are no discrete "bits" in a gesture language, unless it has become conventionalized as a system of signals (as in the deaf and dumb alphabet), and no zero-phonemes. Given a communicational situation in which gestures of any kind are being employed and recognized, it is clearly impossible for the situation of non-gesture ever to occur. (Note that in this context a traffic light is not a sign or a symbol, but precisely what we say it is, a traffic *signal*.) A digital computer, however, can theoretically be programmed (like language) to represent the behavior of any other system, including thought and language themselves.

François Bresson has pointed out this distinction in an article, "La Signification," appearing in *Problèmes de Psycho-linguistique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963, pp. 9-45). He cites various authorities to show that at certain stages of the evolution of a linguistic system, it may have depended to a large extent on analog "signs" like gestures—and, one might add, on similarly analogic groups of onomatopoeic phonemes (which, *ipso facto*, are not *words*). But since these signs are necessarily linked to what they stand for (at least originally), that is, because they are symbolic in Saussure's sense of a natural link implying *continuity* between what signifies and what is signified, rather than the *arbitrariness* necessitated in the double articulation, "the symbolic character of [these] signs is more an obstacle than a help to communication." "Languages," Bresson adds, "are *simultaneously* doubly articulated and devoid of symbolic value" (pp. 14-15). This would seem to indicate that the metaphor as usually conceived (dependent on resemblance) is not something developed out of an originally digital language, but rather that language itself, as Vico, Condillac, Rousseau, and others believed, is originally metaphorical. Bresson goes on to point out, as Wittgenstein had already done from a purely logical standpoint, that studies of chil-

dren seem to show that the primal "attitude of denomination" which is often postulated in discussions of the origins of language, and particularly in theories about language learning in the child (by Bertrand Russell, for instance), is clearly not a "spontaneous verbal attitude: it belongs in fact to metalanguage" (p. 21). It supposes, in other words, a comprehension of language which is clearly beyond the child, for whom language is identical to "reality." This view of denomination lies behind all of Lacan's attacks on the supposedly causal relationship between "reality" and language, with its usual implication that language is subordinate to "reality." The theory of denomination clearly presupposes an anterior knowledge of language as a context, a system of relationships, without which naming would be impossible.

In modern psychology, particularly that derived from the behavioral school in the United States, the considerations generated by the notions of reference in the philosophical problem of meaning have lost ground in favor of a purely pragmatic approach. The meaning of a word has been simply defined as what the subject or subjects associate with it in the traditional word-association tests. The commonest association for "black," significantly enough, is "white," so that although this emphasis upon the meaning of *words* may seem somewhat archaic, it does in fact presuppose that the word is involved in an unstated syntagm, as well as implicitly insisting that the word be defined *differentially* within a linguistic system. The referent of black is obviously not the same as the referent of white, and yet black can only be defined verbally—it being understood that in such a test neither "black" nor "white" are or can be isolated from their subjective and objective contexts—by a differential reference to all other colors, and notably to its polar opposite "white." Similarly, but less clearly, with the most common response, "chair," to the stimulus "table," for the actual referent in both instances is not a specific presentation (or "real object"), but rather a whole subsystem of signifiers—what Ogden and Richards would call a (linguistic) "sign-situation"—in which one item is defined by its distinction from the others.

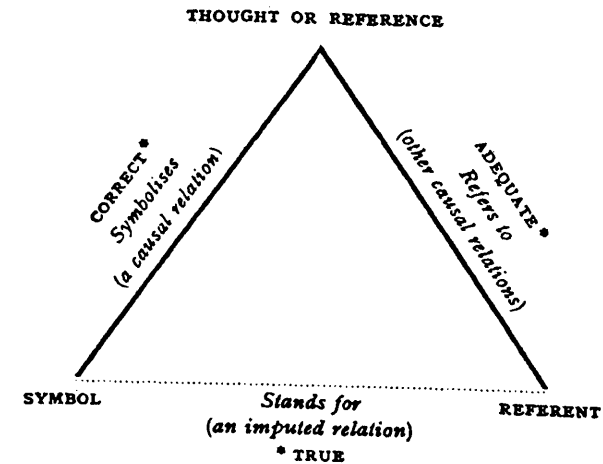
To return now to the question of the sign versus the symbol, it is clear that in Saussure's system a gesture is a symbol, not a signifier (or sign), provided that it affords or once afforded interpretation by a mimetic link. The distinction made by Ogden and Richards, on the other hand, is that the special group of signs which men use to communicate with one another, that is, "words, arrangements of words, images, gestures, and

such representations as drawings or mimetic sounds" (p. 23), are to be called symbols. They add in a note that psychoanalytical symbols "are, of course, signs only; they are not used for purposes of communication"—an error to which I shall return. For Saussure, then, we can infer that a conventionalized gesture, like "sign language," becomes a signal equivalent to, but not the same as, the phonemic level of articulation in language. At any level beyond the animal level of communication—as in the case of dolphins who communicate by sounds, and who can be trained by the stimulus-response technique to communicate within the games they have been taught to play—the gesture is mediated by the linguistic context which provides the possibility of interpretation. A word or syntagm, however, is a "linguistic sign." What Ogden and Richards might have noted, therefore, is that Saussure's linguistic sign makes up the largest subset of what they chose to call symbols, thus confusing the discursive with the non-discursive. But insofar as "symbol" signifies something communicable in their terminology, it would seem that all the symbols to which they refer are in fact intentionalized as signifiers, since "symbolization" is elsewhere defined as "directly naming" (p. 117)—as ostensive definition. What they call a "sign" is in consequence what I term a "traditional symbol," as distinct from the signifiers of the Symbolic order. This does not imply that traditional symbols may not become signifiers or vice versa. To modify radically a definition from Ogden and Richards, one might say (with Lacan) that a symbol or signifier in this sense refers to "what it is actually used to refer to" by the subject in the sender-receiver relationship and in the system or subsystem in which it occurs, complete with its overdeterminations. This seems to be the only way in which we might approach the poetry of schizophrenia, for instance, as in the following statements by a young girl—who had undoubtedly never read Nerval or seen Durer's *Melancholia*—quoted by R. D. Laing in *The Divided Self* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965):

I'm thousands.  
 I'm an in divide you all.  
 I'm a no un. [. . .]  
 She was born under a black sun.  
 She's the occidental sun. [. . .]  
 I'm the prairie.  
 She's the ruined city. [. . .]  
 She's the ghost of the weed garden.  
 The pitcher is broken, the well is dry (pp. 204-5).

"Noun," "nun," "no one," "not one," "nothing," "black son," "accidental son," "sunset"—a whole permutative series of signifiers and referents, some of which ("nun," for example) are also symbols.

Let me now introduce the well-known triangle from *The Meaning of Meaning* (p. 11) in order to bring together the various terminologies more precisely, without, of course, implying an acceptance of the theory of "real meaning," causality, and necessary reference to "things" behind it:

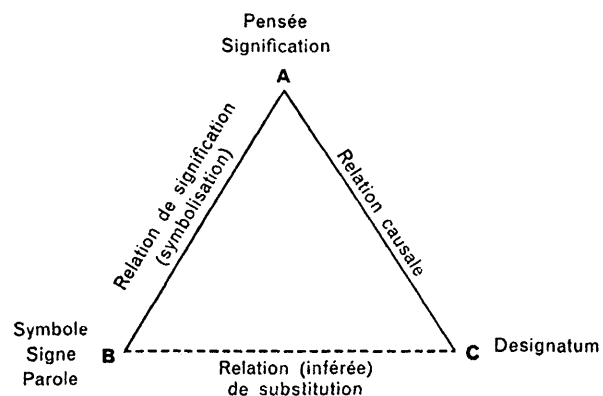


From *The Meaning of Meaning* by Charles K. Ogden and I. A. Richards. Reproduced by permission of Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc.

The triangle represents the opposition between adequacy and truth, avoids the problem of the "real object," and shows the relationship between "symbol" and "referent" as mediated by something that is neither ("thought or reference"). If we employ Saussure's terminology, we would simply substitute "sign" for the left-hand relationship between "symbol" and "thought," in order to emphasize their indivisibility, and then write "signifier" for "symbol" and "signified" for "thought." "Referent," as I have said, would be equivalent to what I have called the "presentation." Thus the relationship between signifier and presentation, or symbol and referent, is mediated by the system of signifieds, that is, by the system of *signification*. Since signification rather obviously has no ultimate meaning outside language, we can simply say that in any context the apex of the triangle represents the particular given system of language. Similarly, and for the same reason that any set or subset of signifiers (a proposition) cannot not refer to the whole of which it is

part, the referent represents the system of presentations or, in more general terms, the world of experience outside language (“the complex of associations made up of the greatest variety of visual, acoustic, tactile, kinaesthetic and other presentations” of which Freud speaks in the passage from his work on aphasia quoted below). In the same way, the left-hand side of the triangle covers Freud’s “word presentation,” and the referent is equivalent to his “thing presentation.”

This interpretation of Ogden and Richard’s triangle is derived in part from the following modification of it by Bresson in the article on signification previously cited (p. 12):



Reproduced from “La Signification” by François Bresson, in *Problèmes de Psycholinguistique*, by permission of the Presses Universitaires de France.

The terminology of Frege’s theory of sense and reference (or signification), which is not however applicable to the concept (*Begriff*) or to relations, but only to the “proper name”—defined as “a sign [*Zeichen*] which stands for or signifies [*bedeutet*] an object [*Gegenstand*]”—would be related to this diagram in the following way. Apex B represents the sign (the proper name, the designation) which “expresses” the “sense” (apex A) and stands for the “object” or the “reference” (apex C). More accurately, apex C should be labeled *Vorstellung/Bedeutung/Gegenstand*, since Frege regards the referent as real, the *Bedeutung* as objective reference or signification, and both as in opposition to the personal and subjective *Vorstellung*. The relationship between object and presentation can be regarded as mediated by the sense. Thus in his “Ueber Sinn und Bedeutung,” published in 1892, he states: “The reference or signification

of a proper name is the object itself which we designate by its means; the presentation we have in that case is wholly subjective; in between lies the sense, which is indeed no longer subjective like the idea, but is yet not the object itself.” To complete these terminological comparisons: in the Stoic armory, the respective labels would be as follows: B, the *semainon* (other possible synonyms are the *sema*, or the *sumbolon* and *semeion* used by Aristotle); A, the *semainomenon* (*significatum*), or *lekton*; C, the *phantasia*, *tunchanon*, and *pragma*. To these last remarks, we add Wittgenstein’s warning in the *Philosophical Investigations* that *Bedeutung* is being used illicitly “if it is used to designate [*bezeichnet*] the thing that ‘corresponds’ [*entspricht*] to the word. That is to confound the *Bedeutung* of a name with the *bearer* of a name” (#40).

The “(imputed) relationship of *substitution*” in Bresson’s diagram is precisely what we have seen in Lacan as the “metaphoric” relationship between a symptom and the presentation it replaces, neither of which “means” the other, as in the traditional sense of the meaning of a symbol or symptom, but one of which “stands in” for the other as a result of repression, or rather, as a result of the return of the repressed. When Lacan rewrites the Saussurian diagram, with the signifier over the signified, and uses the resulting algorithm  $\left(\frac{S}{s}\right)$  to represent “la topique de l’inconscient,” that is, the topology of the various levels of presentations as defined by Freud (t.n. 66), as we shall see in detail in the discussion of metaphor and metonymy below, he seems to be using “signified” to stand for the *referent* (apex C), which may, of course, be itself a signifier, rather than for the signification (apex A). But since the return of the repressed referent to consciousness is always eventually mediated by an intentionalization within the system of language or signification, since, in other words, there is no *direct* relationship between apex B and apex C, the return of the repressed means that “the unconscious speaks”—because of the intentionalization of the referent in a manner unacceptable to the conscious subject.

Lacan seems to oscillate between viewing the signified in some instances as representing preconscious or unconscious “psychic reality” and in other instances as simply the meaning of the signifier (cf. t.n. 85). It is clearly never “reality” in the sense that the “actual” referent for Ogden and Richards is a means of verifying a reference. Some readers have in-

terpreted the algorithm  $\frac{S}{s}$  as representing the metaphorical relationship between consciousness and the unconscious, and there are some statements in "L'Instance de la lettre" which seem to authorize such a reading. But the actual relationship as viewed by Lacan is more complicated, and it is difficult to see how the relation of signifier to signified thus expressed takes us beyond the notion of the manifest as the letter and the latent as the sense, which is precisely the viewpoint combatted by Lacan. Leclaire and Laplanche do in fact modify the representation radically in their lengthy article "L'Inconscient" (1961), without giving up the notion of a metaphorical relationship between two "levels" of discourse, but since Lacan does not accept their modification in certain respects, the question remains an open one. However this may be, when Lacan speaks of the primacy of the signifier in the genesis of the signified (as does Lévi-Strauss), all that he says about the signifier and signified seems to coalesce in the central idea that language in itself generates both meaning and reality (t.n. 91). In other words, the primacy of the Symbolic order is that it makes the ordering of reality possible (as Cassirer had said)—as in the crucial example of the *Fort! Da!*—at the same time as it *provides* and *constitutes* the "real" referents which are erroneously supposed to "cause" language. For Lacan, the interaction between discourse and perception is such that language, and not perception, is or becomes primary. This is a viewpoint supported by the Gestalt and other psychologists who assert that we perceive relationships, not objects, in reality, and that it is language or thought which supports our belief in the perception and knowledge of concrete objects.

In parallel fashion, it becomes impossible to make a valid and operational distinction in practice between the informative and the evocative (or expressive) aspects of language. The notion of language as information seeks to separate speech from motivation. The notion of evocative or expressive language complements this error by conferring a privilege on a theoretically bi-univocal and unambiguous correspondence between syntagm and referent and thus plays down the informative aspect of evocative language. But, as *communication*, the primary function of language is clearly to establish *relationships*, which is precisely what the theory of information and the privilege conferred on logical or digital language seeks to ignore. Freud's theory of overdetermination and Gregory Bateson's emphasis on the integral and indivisible "report-

command" aspect of any statement (*Communication: The Social Matrix of Psychiatry* [New York: W. W. Norton, 1951], pp. 179–82) surely tell us that all punctuation of the communicational circuit set up by any statement is inevitably arbitrary. This is in effect what Lacan is repeating in a different form when he dwells on the mediated relationship of transference and countertransference between analyst and patient. It is in fact by means of an overload of information that the patient (or the analyst) may seek to *jam* the evocative circuit between them—or in other words, seek to *resist* the revelation or recognition of crucial relationships. Moreover, as Bateson suggests, it is unlikely that any one subject is capable of recognizing both the "report" and the "command" aspect of his or another's statement simultaneously, and his resistance may well depend upon which aspect he has chosen to recognize in any particular situation.

Of course, if we believe that there is something abnormal about the structure of the relationship between analyst and patient, much of what Lacan says can be successfully resisted. If we do not, it is of interest to see how Ogden and Richards, for example, use their "information" or "reports" in the highly aggressive and commanding manner characteristic of a certain period of British philosophizing, whereas the later Wittgenstein uses a largely evocative "command" approach to communicate a great deal of information (reports). In this sense, the general notion that truth depends on words having specific, particular, and causally related referents, without regard to the principle of overdetermination (which implies a series of statements on statements, communication on communication, information on information—in a word, a whole series of metalanguages) or to what a signifier is intended or interpreted to mean, irrespective of its particular syntactical form (Ogden and Richards, pp. 88, 103–4), seems to be in essence an aspect of the natural human resistance to the unthinkable consequences of the loss of the transcendental referent. It is a view apparently motivated by a search for identity in life which, as Hume implied, is only possible in language. It may correspond to what Sartre—from his own experience—so aptly called "la nostalgie de la pierre," in itself a derivative of a kind of psychosis (as exemplified in Sartre's analysis of the role of this nostalgia in the psychology of the bigot, as in his *Anti-Semite and Jew* and in the prewar short story "L'Enfance d'un chef") or a kind of neurosis (as in certain religious activities). It seems to be related to a fear that the pursuit of meaning in life—call meaning "goal directed activity," if needs be—will leave us only

with Hamlet's "words, words, words." The consequence is that constructs like the notion of an ideal language are developed as defenses against this fear. Human communication is constitutively asymmetrical, and the pursuit of truth in these terms corresponds to the desire for symmetry implied by Freud's principle of inertia or constancy (homeostasis), expressing the impossible quest for the lost object—in a word, death. Truth, as both Hegel and Freud implied, is relative to the system or subsystem within which the seeker is inscribed: at any level beyond that of "I had breakfast this morning" (which is in fact a relationship of adequacy), truth is always a statement about another statement in the arbitrary punctuation of a relationship. Absolute Knowledge in Hegel corresponds to death in Freud—but this last remark may be inadequate to the subtlety of the role of death in the *Phenomenology*.

These considerations seem to lie behind Lacan's substitution of "truth" for "reality" in the *Discours*—since philosophy and commonsense have always tended to confuse the two—and it is in this sort of context that we should read Lacan on the meaning of meaning in "L'Instance de la lettre" (1957):

. . . We shall fail to stick to the question [of the nature of language] so long as we have not freed ourselves of the illusion that the signifier corresponds or answers to the function of representing the signified, or better, that the signifier has to answer for its existence in the name of any signification whatever.

For even if reduced to this last formulation, the heresy is the same. It is the heresy which leads logical positivism in quest of the meaning of meaning, as its aim or object [*objectif*] is named in the language its followers snuffle and snuggle in (p. 52).

On the other hand, when the psychologist studying the relationship of perception to the discourse evokes something similar to the Saussurian concept of the arbitrary sign (as Hegel does)—related to the notion of intentionality in phenomenology—he assimilates the sound, the image of the word, and the thing presentation to what is sensory and relates these "sensations" to conceptualization. He is not fundamentally concerned with meaning in the sense of the theoretical relationship between word and sense, because he generally assumes that the meaning is given (a picture of a table is not a picture of a house) or that the meaning is only that conferred by the subject (Rorschach tests). Considerations of arbitrariness are generated by the experiment itself, not necessarily by fundamental questions about language. But the philosopher tackles the

same four elements in a different way, since "arbitrary" for him is an idealist, realist, or nominalist position, depending upon whether the arbitrariness of the sign is conceived as between presentation and reality (idealism), word and presentation, and thus between word and reality (nominalism) or between word and concept (realism). Thus Descartes, who formulated the modern notion of the "idea" from which philosophy has had to liberate itself through language, wants to be a realist: ". . . Since we attach our conceptions to certain words in order to express them orally and since we remember the words rather than the things, we can hardly conceive anything as distinctly as if we separate entirely what we conceive from the words which have been chosen to express it" (*Principes*, I, 74).

The philosopher who conceives of the world as his idea will be called in the textbooks a subjective idealist (for example, Kant). If the world for him is *our* idea, he is called an objective idealist (for example, Hegel). If he says that language bears no necessary relation to reality at all, he will be called a nominalist. But a label has not yet been devised for the philosopher who seeks to relate the linguist's view of language as an autonomous system to the system of perception and to the system of reality, each being viewed as somehow "mapping" the other through a process of abstraction or metaphor or metacommunication. Certainly, as my earlier remarks imply, the trend seems to be toward a view of phenomenological intentionality as conferring a subjective meaning on perception (or consciousness in general) out of the objective stock of language, so that if I always see church steeples, it is because everybody does, whereas if I see (mean, intend) the phallus, it will be related to subjective determinants derived from my personal relationship to my familial and societal environment as well as from my personal gifts of imagination.

#### *Psychoanalytical Symbolism*

The psychoanalyst is in yet another position, because he is concerned with symbols in the traditional textbook sense of Freud's last theory of symbolism. Symbols in this sense are not discursive phenomena; no doubt this explains why the psychoanalyst has not been primarily concerned with the problems of a theory of language, since he has supposed a natural connection between word and thing (spider) and a further natural connection between the symbol and the thing symbolized (mother). This view of symbolism, notably in the dream, accounts



further for the traditional psychoanalytical interest in the symbolism of individual substantives rather than in the enchainment of words in a discourse.

Apart from the inevitably one-way interpretation of the symbol in traditional psychoanalysis (but not in Freud)—one does not often hear of the phallus standing as a symbol for a church steeple (and surely, sometimes at least, as Freud was wont to remark, a cigar is just a cigar?)—it has long been obvious that sexual, incorporative, and other “depth-psychology” symbols are so prevalent in life, in dreams, and in books that their recognition or discovery, outside the therapeutic realm, adds very little in the end to our understanding—and certainly does not provide us with the privileged level of “real meaning” as has so often been supposed. In literature, for instance, the analyst has tended to concern himself not so much with “nonliterature,” as literary prudes are accustomed to wail—since everything about an author or his text has its relevance—but rather with one level and one means of interpretation to the exclusion of all others. But the real failing of many psychoanalytical or psychological approaches to literature and philosophy has lain not simply in the superiority of the symbol hunter, who knows what the author does not know because he has cracked his unconscious code and who confers a privilege on his knowledge because of that fact, but more significantly in his essentially nonsocial and nondialectical view of the symbol. It is not enough to talk about the universal symbols of the human race, all referring, as Jones had said, to a very limited number of human relationships, if one then returns to a kind of automatic and essentially solipsistic interpretation based upon allegory or analogy, which tends to negate the particular social, historical, and personal conjunctures in which the producer of the symbol is involved.

It is against the notion of a fixed symbolic code (*die Symbolik*: t.n. 86) that Lacan directs his attack in the *Discours*. Analogical interpretation is in fact only a step past the oriental dream books Freud was writing against in the early part of the *Traumdeutung*. Much of Lacan's orientation comes from his knowledge of the use of symbolism in anthropology, which differs in important ways from the usually accepted notion in psychoanalysis, although not from the general psychological sense of symbolic behavior. For example, in the extraordinary complex systems of primitive exchange examined by Mauss in the celebrated *Essai sur le don* (1923) (see the passages referred to in t.n. 80), the gifts exchanged

can be called symbols. But they do not stand for what they “represent” in some fixed relationship to an unconscious “meaning.” They are the symbols of the act of exchange itself, which is what ties the society together. Thus they cease to be symbols in any important sense; it is the *act* of exchange, with its attendant mana or *hau* (t.n. 98), which symbolizes the unconscious requirement of exchange through displaced reciprocity (I give you this, he gives me that) as a means of establishing and maintaining relationships between the members of that society. They are only symbols insofar as the idea of symbol includes the notion of the *tessera* (t.n. 32) as that which forms a link. In Lévi-Strauss's terminology, these objects of exchange are often referred to as “signs,” which are exchanged like words in a discourse. The object (or woman) exchanged is part of a symbolic discourse responding to a requirement of communication. It is thus part of a symbolic function, but it symbolizes nothing in itself. Even the appellation “sign” turns out to be a dubious one in certain instances, since if we employ C. S. Peirce's definition of the sign as “something which replaces something for someone,” Lévi-Strauss will ask how we can call an object with a specific function of its own, like a stone axe, a sign, since we cannot answer the question of what it replaces, or for whom.

Lévi-Strauss's own evolving terminology contributes to the confusion, since, outside the sociological sphere as a whole, he has equated the signifier with the symbol, in the traditional sense. Speaking of the shaman who cures his patients by driving out devils, in a process similar to the generally discarded notion of psychoanalytic abreaction, he says: “. . . The relation between monster and illness is interior to this one mind, conscious or unconscious: it is a relationship of the symbol to the thing symbolized, or, to use the vocabulary of linguistics, a relation of signifier to signified.” The symbol is a “significative equivalent of the signified, from another order of reality than that of the signified.”<sup>31</sup> Saussure's usage, however, was to distinguish the symbol from the signifier (or the sign), since the symbol, unlike the linguistic sign, is not entirely arbitrary. Unlike the arbitrary sign, there is a “rudimentary natural link”

<sup>31</sup> “L'Efficacité symbolique” (1949), in: *Anthropologie Structurale* (Paris: Plon, 1958), pp. 218, 221. Freud's early interest in catharsis as the key to the cure (later rejected) has been revived in the therapy of the psychodrama.

Lacan expresses himself similarly to Lévi-Strauss: “The symptomatic signifier [that is, horses in the “myths” of “little Hans”] covers the most multiple of signifieds” (Seminar of March-April, 1957, p. 854).

or a "rational relationship" between the symbol and the thing symbolized (pp. 101, 106), as I have already emphasized.

Lacan obviously does not deny the existence of *la symbolique*, the more or less fixed symbolic code developed by Freud, Jones, and others out of Stekel's intuitions, but he certainly seeks to weaken the overriding importance it had subsequently been accorded in traditional psychoanalysis. There is in Freud both a wide and a restricted sense ascribed to symbolism: the first and earliest is the notion of a symbolic action as something displaced, or figurative, or having a latent meaning; the second is that of the fixed code to which the analyst may resort when the dreamer is unable to supply his own interpretation of an image. Consequently Freud added to the *Traumdeutung* a series of "typical dreams," as in a dreambook. But at the beginning of the chapter on symbols in dreams (mostly added between 1909 and 1925), he acknowledged his debt to Stekel as to a man who had possibly damaged psychoanalysis as much as he had benefited it. Since Freud had very early insisted that the dreamer interpret his own dream text by means of his associations—the method Freud employed in interpreting most of his own dreams—he was perhaps aware of the danger of a purely automatic system of interpretation replacing the dialectical interpretation upon which his method had been founded. But the two methods of interpretation, one associative and personal, the other tied to the collective experience of humanity, exist side by side in his text. The difference between them is that emphasized by Saussure, the apparently "natural" reference of symbols as opposed to the arbitrary reference of signifiers. A symbol is not distinguished by its differentiation from other symbols as is the signifier, nor can it generally be replaced by other symbols, and it certainly cannot be defined by them. Symbolism in this sense is a sort of natural language or, more accurately, a semiology, rather than a language. Insofar as traditional symbolism depends upon visual resemblances, Lacan would relegate it to the Imaginary. But insofar as both the associative and the coded method of interpretation manifest a structural (semiotic) similarity (in the sense that one does speak of a "language of symbols"), there will be instances where the second will be subsumed under "le symbolique," a concept derived from the anthropological concept of the symbolic function, which is treated in Section IV.

The central aspect of the Symbolic order is communication, and with the introduction of the concept of *le symbolique*, the word symbol sheds its

traditional sense in psychoanalysis to become a stronger term. In his article on "Le Symbolique" (1960), Rosolato distinguishes between sign, signal, and symbol on the basis of the multivalency or overdetermination (t.n. 70, 81, 86) which is possible only in, or in reference to, the intersubjectivity of language. Although his somewhat Lacanian style makes difficult reading, one or two points seem clear. The multivalency of the symbol ("a transmuted sign") "entails, *conjointly*, for a *signifier*, the correspondence of several *signifieds*, and, vice-versa, for one of these signifieds, *any one whatever*, several *signifiers*" (p. 225). This is in effect how Freud described the relationship between the manifest and latent details of the dream in the early part of the *Traumdeutung*. The linguistic sign, on the other hand, in its daily use in language is more or less fixed and consequently easily decodable. Rosolato goes on to say that "the Symbolic appears as a category when the sign acquires the supplementary dimension of the symbol; the Symbolic also assures the accession to a *state* (a stage) of comprehension, a state open to thought which thinks itself, to the *relation* which comes out, the subject being inserted into it or having taken it into account" (p. 227). These multivalent relationships between signifiers and signifieds are, *simultaneously*, several to one, one to several, or one to one. The symbol, notably in the dream, may institute a *function*, relating an element *x* of a set *E* to an element *y* of another set, *F*. "In opposing the sign to the symbol, it is possible to attribute to the former the *Imaginary which becomes solidified*, breaking with the Symbolic. . . . Reintroducing the Symbolic consists in opposing the *degradation* into signs or images" (p. 230). This last assertion is presumably to be related to the psychological tendency which makes us believe that words stand for things, whereas the fundamentally symbolic nature of language (in the sense of *le symbolique*), its constitutive ambiguity and dependence on its own internal relationships rather than on any necessary reference to "reality," clearly denies any legitimacy to this belief. Rosolato sums up:

*Le symbolique* remains in a close relationship with the Imaginary [author's capitalization] through the sliding towards the sign. Here a scansion is obligatorily set up. The sign is indispensable to the symbol; the symbol is vital for the sign. Every symbol is of language, just as every *Parole vraie* is symbolic. . . . This inclination of the signifier towards the sign, this sedimentation, like its inverse, the return to the symbol, implies the *unconscious*, an appeal to signification which must have been discovered—traced in the sign and which will be discovered—but already giving way—since it has

already been *conscious*. For, as it has been said, 'the symbol exists only in the nascent state' . . . (p. 231).

From this scansion, and from that which is produced between the Imaginary and the Symbolic [author's capitalization], from the osmosis between signs and symbols, issues the Real: *in truth, they are together* (p. 232).

In this context, then, the symbol is distinguished both from the traditional reifications of the "second theory of symbolism"—which ignores the role of the symbol in communication—as well as from the linguistic sign as such, insofar as the sign is considered to be a word "with" a meaning outside of its context. It is, of course, the context of *convention* itself which provides linguistic signs with the "inherent" meanings which common-sense ascribes to them, and which leads us erroneously to overcompensate for the total and irresolvable ambiguity of any communicational circuit with others or with the Other by means of theories of information, belief in "getting the facts straight," nostalgia for the "real" meaning, the "real" Freud (or the real Lacan), and so forth. This is a powerful epistemological scepticism—and potentially corrosive for those who lack the courage to accept the consequences of the "vanity of their gifts" (t.n. 31). It is not a new attack on error or on the outworn and faintly ridiculous notion of absolute truth, but a far more radical attack on all our little truths. If it entails what we have always known—that all reasonably intelligent interpretations are equal—it forces us to face up to the decision why some interpretations are more equal than others.

This distinction of the first from the second method of reading the symbol follows logically from Freud's own premise of overdetermination, as well as from the examples he employs.

As an example of the use of the first method where the second might have been used, that is, an example of a reading *à la lettre*, one might mention Alexander the Great's "satyr" dream on the night before his capture of Tyre. Presumably there is some obvious, fixed symbolic interpretation of this image in terms of the sexual propensities of that lusty conqueror, but in fact the image of the satyr (a regression to perception from the dream thoughts), once it was reintegrated into Alexander's discourse, revealed itself to be a simple statement in the discourse of the Other: *σὰ Τύρος*: "Tyre is thine." Obviously, if Alexander had described the image as a "funny-looking goat," this particular wish-fulfillment (however overdetermined) would have remained incomprehensible without Alexander's further associations. Freud comments at this point

that "it is impossible as a rule to translate a dream into a foreign language."<sup>32</sup>

Thus when Lacan uses "signifier," even in a clearly linguistic sense, it is not always a precise equivalent for the Saussurian term. In the general sense it is more nearly an equivalent for "word plus concept" or for "sign," since at the level of *Rede*, word and concept cannot in fact be separated (whereas definitions can be improved), nor is it now usual to attempt to differentiate them, as Descartes had done. Certainly the purely linguistic distinction of sound and sense seems to have had only a secondary interest originally for Lacan; his mathematical propensities have since led him to emphasize the notion of the signifier as made up of the combination and substitution of the phonemic chain, the substratum of the discourse. He seems to have settled on signifier for a number of reasons: one, its clear implication that something is signifying something for someone (the intentionality of the discourse)—whether that something is an individual, a society, or language itself; two, its differentiation from "signal," too easily assimilated under the term "sign"; three, its implication that no direct or necessary relationship to a real object or to reality is involved (t.n. 144); four, its autonomous nature (split off from "sense") as reducible to combinatory distinctive features. Thus the reader is always faced with deciding how Lacan is using the term in any particular context.

In the sense that the most important level of meaning of "satyr" for Alexander was a proposition in a discourse, Lacan uses "signifier" in a contextual theory of meaning, and would obviously subscribe to Wittgenstein's slogan: "The meaning is the use." Thus he also uses "signifier" to avoid the implication that any given word "contains" or "has" a meaning of its own, outside its diacritic reference to other signifiers. In this sense, even Saussure's distinctions give rise to ambiguities, for if the meaning of a signifier is its differentiation from other signifiers, it can nevertheless be defined by them. Thus the loose use of signified to mean "signification" is just another way of saying the signified is a signifier after all.

Saussure likens the relationship of signifier (sound) and signified (sense) to the two sides of a single piece of paper. This image brings to mind the analogy of the Möbius strip sometimes employed by Lacan

<sup>32</sup> See: *Standard Edition*, IV, 99, note 1.

to describe the subject, where the apparent division of conscious and repressed turns out to be the unity of the writing on one continuous side. Analogies are of course the weakest and most dangerous form of argument, however valuable they may be as illustration. It is in this restricted latter sense that one might liken the relationship between signifier (word-concept) and reality, which is the essentially irresolvable problem here, to that between a map and the countryside it represents. One might then recall the assertion of topologists that if a map is crumpled up and thrown down on another identical map, at least one point will be exactly where it would be if the two had been simply superimposed. For Lacan, the symptom is a twisted signifier, but it is still related somehow to the original map, just as the nodal point of the dream in analysis is a transferential point aimed at the "significant other" the analyst represents.

But symptoms may be simply somatic, or they may be actions. Lacan never really resolves this ambiguity, an ambiguity which might be resolved if he assimilated the discourse to a generalized semiology (t.n. 70). To do so, however, is perhaps only another way of begging the question. Nevertheless there is a distinction to be made on the basis of his view of the signifier and the sign. The reader should not be misled by Lacan's directing his attack in the *Discours* against the tendency of psychoanalysis towards an interpretation of behavior, into thinking that for him the discourse may not depend on a gesture, an act, a sigh, a moment of silence. Psychoanalysis is the "talking cure," but symptoms join in the conversation, too. A gesture may have all the value of a verbal signifier, or more value; Lacan does not deny this, but his point is that the gesture already includes the necessity of a second level of interpretation. It may be a signifier in the discourse of the subject, just as the ending of the session is a punctuation, but before being a signifier, it is a sign (something which replaces something for someone) to which a discursive meaning must be ascribed.

On the other hand, the hysterical symptom or obsessive action may actually be directly derived from the discourse. A symptomatic sign, in other words, may be the subject's interpretation of a signifier, just as a word may be used in place of a symptomatic action—as in the case of the Rat Man's prayer: "*Samen*." Many examples could be quoted. One favored by Lacan is that of the fetishist (at the beginning of Freud's article on fetishism [1927], *Standard Edition*, XXI, 152) for whom erotic

satisfaction depended on a "shine on the nose" which he actually projected on to his partner's nose. The expression in German is "Glanz auf der Nase," but as Freud discovered, the word "Glanz" was not connected directly with its German meaning "shine," which is how the subject interpreted it, but rather with its English homonym "glance." The subject had in fact spent his early childhood in England but had since forgotten the language: his disavowal (of castration) was an Imaginary displacement on the body itself exactly parallel to the displacement from the English to the German word. What his action meant was "a glance at the nose," dependent upon the Imaginary resemblance of the two words.

#### *Freud and Language*

Freud's own explicit theory of the relationship of word and thing presents an interesting parallel with Saussure's diagram, if not with Saussure's considered theory. His "linguistic" representation of the unconscious depends upon a distinction between the primary (*Ucs.*) level, where only thing presentations are found, and the secondary (*Cs. Pcs.*) level where both thing presentations and word presentations operate (t.n. 66). In the following extract from Freud's 1891 book on aphasia, the thing presentation would correspond to "idea" in traditional philosophical terminology.<sup>33</sup>

In this article Freud speaks of our learning to speak in the traditional terms of the association of a "sound image" with the "sense" of a word, and continues:

A word . . . acquires its *meaning* by being linked to a thing-presentation at all events if we restrict ourselves to a consideration of substantives. The thing-presentation itself is once again a complex of associations made up of the greatest variety of visual, acoustic, tactile, kinaesthetic and other presentations. Philosophy tells us that a thing-presentation consists in nothing more than this—that the appearance of there being a 'thing' to whose various 'attributes' these sense-impressions bear witness is merely due to the fact that, in enumerating the sense-impressions which we have received from an object, we also assume the possibility of there being a large number of

<sup>33</sup> An extract from this book is included in *Standard Edition*, XIV, following the 1915 article "The Unconscious." There is a slight difference in terminology, the "object-presentation" of 1891 being the equivalent of the later "thing-presentation." To avoid confusion, I have substituted accordingly. The word translated "image" is *Bild*.

further impressions in the same chain of associations (J. S. Mill). The thing-presentation is thus seen to be one which is not closed and almost one which cannot be closed, while the word-presentation is seen to be something closed, even though capable of extension (pp. 213-14).

He goes on to distinguish between "first-order aphasia" (verbal aphasia), where only the associations between the separate elements of the word presentation are disturbed (speaking, writing, reading), and "second-order aphasia" (asymbolic aphasia), in which the association between the word presentation and the thing presentation is disturbed. He explains that he uses "symbolic" to describe the relationship between word and thing presentation rather than that between object and thing presentation.

In the process he produces a diagram which, if we simplify it by leaving out the elements external to the reflected relationship involved, can be represented as:

Visual object association (thing presentation)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sound image (word presentation)

which is more or less equivalent to the loose interpretation of the Saussurian notion of the concept or image (of the object) over the acoustic image (the word). "Among the object-associations," Freud explains, "it is the visual ones which stand for the object, in the same way as the sound-image stands for the word." And in the 1915 article on the unconscious, he uses the term "object-presentation" to stand for the unity of the thing presentation and word presentation, or for what Saussure would call the "sign." Thus he supposes a similar discontinuity between the word, the image, and the thing.

#### *Metaphor and Metonymy*

Freud's practice, however, never depended upon this traditionally simplified view of signification, as the *Interpretation of Dreams*, the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, and the work on *Witz*, in particular, bear witness. And Lacan, using his own inverted version of the Saussurian algorithm ( $\frac{S}{s}$ ), is quick to point out that what he views as the Saussurian signifier and signified are not of the same order of reality (in the same way as word and image, or word and thing, or sound and sense are not) and that the signified is not the thing itself. But the signified is not

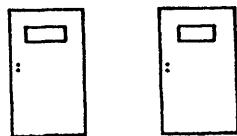
simply the meaning of the signifier, although he has implied that it is (t.n. 85), since the meaning is another signifier, and the only correspondence between them, on Lacan's—and Lévi-Strauss's—view, is that of the totality of the signifier to the totality of the signified (t.n. 70).

In "L'Instance de la lettre" (1957), Lacan makes his distinctions between signifier and signified and their relation to the Symbolic order somewhat more clear, revealing a certain evolution in his thinking since the *Discours de Rome*. Taking up Lévi-Strauss's notion of the signifier as preceding and determining the signified (see Section IV), he describes the formula  $\frac{S}{s}$  (signifier over signified) as representing two distinct and separate orders separated by "a barrier resisting signification." Using this algorithm, he says, will allow an exact study of the "liaisons proper to the signifier" and an examination of the function of these relations in the genesis of the signified. Referring to Augustine's *De magistro* (the chapter entitled "De significatione locutionis"), he reiterates the view that "no signification can be sustained except in its reference to another signification" (p. 51). (Cf. the seminar of November, 1957, p. 295: "Only the relationship of one signifier to another signifier engenders the relationship of signifier to signified.") Consequently, he brushes aside the philosopher's and anthropologist's concern to relate signifier and reality on the basis of denotation by condemning as an illusion the notion "that the signifier corresponds to the function of representing the signified, or better, that the signifier has to answer for its existence in the name of any [particular] signification whatever" (p. 52). But the function of the algorithm is not in his view simply to represent two separate but parallel orders, since without some sort of relationship between them language would simply be a total mystery.

Thus he replaces the Saussurian diagram of the tree by an amusing perversion of it (not necessarily more correct, he says), with the intention of indicating the empirical falsity of the theory of nomination or pointing, since in language the object is constituted at the level of the concept, which is not the same as "any particular nominative." It might be added that the theory of the genesis of learning of language as a reflex originally conditioned by pointing (a signal) cannot account for the obvious fact that for "table" to mean table, the child must already be constituted in a world of language. He must in fact already know all there is to know about language outside its specific vocabulary, gram-

mar, and syntax. Lacan's diagram represents something that might be seen in a railway station (p. 53):

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Thus, he concludes, if the algorithm  $\frac{S}{s}$  is an appropriate one, the crossing of the bar itself between signifier and signified cannot in any case entail any signification—"For the algorithm, insofar as it is itself only a pure function of the signifier, can reveal by this transference only a signifying structure [*une structure de signifiant*]," and the structure of the signifier is that of being articulated (p. 55). The signifier is subject to the double condition of being reducible to "ultimate differential elements" and of "combining them according to the laws of a closed order." This second property of the signifier in his view requires the notion of a topological substratum (the phonological level), which he usually calls the "signifying chain" and which he describes as analogous to the rings of a necklace which is itself sealed as a ring into another necklace made of rings (p. 55).

What this analogy seems destined to imply is the circularity of the signification of any particular signifier, itself caught in the circularity of the signification of the system of language itself, which is commonly regarded by linguists and philosophers as an autonomous and closed order, opposed to the open order of "reality." Lacan seems to be balancing on the razor's edge between what are traditionally called "idealism" and "nominalism" (but language itself is not *post res*). Fundamentally, however, Lacan's point is that if any particular signifier refers directly to a particular signified "reality," it can only do so through the mediation of the rest of the signifying system making up language. His assertion of the primacy of the signifier corresponds to the empirical fact of "the dominance of the letter in the dramatic transformation that the dialogue may bring about in the subject" in analysis. The (symbolic) dominance of certain signifiers in the discourse is analogous for Lacan to the buttons pinning down quilted upholstery at certain points. These signifiers are

what he calls the "*points de capiton*" (p. 56)—which will be mentioned again in reference to his theory of psychosis.

He goes on to evoke the Saussurian concept of the *glissement* or sliding of one system over the other (t.n. 67), which accounts in Saussure's terms for the transference of meanings during the evolution of a language. (Here Lacan slides more or less imperceptibly from the notion of signifier and signified as "word concept" and "signification" to the Saussurian distinction [p. 156] of "thought" and "sound," with language serving as an intermediary between them. Language, for Saussure, "organizes" the amorphous mass of thought by selecting from an equally amorphous mass of sounds, language being in this respect comparable to the piece of paper already mentioned, thought on one side and sound on the other.) This transposition which describes the signifying function in language is *metonymy* for Lacan, the point being that there is no connection between word and thing in the way metonymy operates. We speak of "thirty sail" meaning thirty ships, but the usual definition of this figure as the "part for the whole" is totally misleading when we reflect that each ship undoubtedly has more than one sail. Thus for Lacan the connection between the part and the whole, between ship and sail, is totally included in the signifier itself: the relationship is one of "word to word" (*mot à mot*), or of signifier to signifier, not of word to any reality. The other versant of the signifying function is *metaphor*, or "one word in place of another one" (*un mot pour un autre*) (pp. 59–60). The image in the dream, in particular, once it is assumed by the subject as a signifier, metaphorical or metonymical, will as often as not have nothing whatsoever to do with its "objective" signification, any more than the words of the politician or the propagandist mean what they say. One of the prime functions of speech, like Orwell's Newspeak, is not to reveal thoughts, but to conceal them, especially from ourselves.

Since he is concerned with the discourse of the unconscious, and with its relationship to the poetic metaphor and the joke, Lacan goes on to employ the algorithm  $\left(\frac{S}{s}\right)$  in a different sense from that he had begun with, the "S" and "s" now representing the *Cs.* and the *Ucs.* discourse, respectively. As he had said in the seminar of November–December, 1956: "There is nothing in the *signified*—the lived flux, wants, pulsions—which does not present itself marked by the imprint of the *signifier*, with all the slidings of meaning which result from it and which constitute

symbolism," which is another way of saying that "the *Es* designates what in the subject is capable of becoming *Je*, not a brute reality" (p. 427). In order to account for the repression, condensation, and displacement of signifiers (for Freud the *Vorstellungen*), as well as for the diacritical theory of meaning, he seeks to replace the original algorithm by formulations which can be represented as  $\frac{S'}{S}$  (metaphor) and  $\frac{S \dots S'}{s}$  (metonymy). The actual representations he uses are more complicated. In what follows, "(—)" represents the retention of the bar resisting signification, "(+)" represents the crossing of this bar, and "≡" designates equivalence or congruence. Both formulations are derived from rewriting the original algorithm as:  $f(S) \frac{1}{s}$ :

(1) Metonymic structure:

$$f(S \dots S')S \equiv S(-)s$$

(2) Metaphorical structure:

$$f\left(\frac{S'}{S}\right)S \equiv S(+ )s$$

The difference between the metonymic structure and the metaphoric structure corresponds to the task of displacement and substitution in psychoanalytic theory. Thus, metonymy is a displacement from signifier to signifier, but since the original term, which is latent, remains unexplained, it corresponds to the censorship's seeking to escape the significant term by calling up another one contiguous to it (for example, "the *Wespe*: S. P." of the Wolf Man). The meaning or significance of the original term (unconscious or otherwise) is still to be discovered; hence the retention of the bar. Moreover metonymy, by the displacement of the "real" object of the subject's desire onto something apparently insignificant, represents the *manque d'être* (lack of being) which is constituent of desire itself. ". . . It is the connection of signifier to signifier which permits the elision through which the signifier installs lack of being in the object relation, by employing the value of reference-back of the signification in order to invest it with the desire which is aimed at the lack which [desire] supports" (p. 68). In this way need becomes (unconscious) desire by "passing through the defiles of the signifier" and becomes manifest as (conscious) but displaced demand.

The metaphorical structure, on the other hand, is more profound. As

a substitution, the *S'* accounts for "the passage of the signifier into the signified"—that is, it accounts for the repression of a particular signifier, *S*. The patent or manifest term represents the (distorted) "return of the repressed" (the symptom), equivalent in every way to the mechanism involved in the poetic metaphor, where it is what is not said which gives the metaphor its evocative power. This crossing of the bar is constitutive of the emergence of "signification." The crossing differs from that previously mentioned in the railway station example in that no "reality" is involved.

In their article on the unconscious (1961) Leclaire and Laplanche seek to relate Lacan's formulations to the Freudian "linguistic view" of the relationship between consciousness and the unconscious (t.n. 66 and Section I). They are led to modify Lacan's formulas—the details need not concern us here—and in doing so, they reveal that if Lacan is seeking to develop Freud's notions at this point, the "s" must either be regarded as another signifier—as in the case of normal repression or disavowal—or it must be regarded as an image or as the unconscious intentionalization of an image (*Sachvorstellung*: thing presentation)—as in what Freud describes as the topographical regression "through the unconscious" to perception in the dream. Naturally both Freud's view and Lacan's formulation are necessarily oversimplified; nor do I think Leclaire and Laplanche resolve the difficulties involved. But repression still remains such a mysterious process that these difficulties should not deter us if, as it seems, the new formulation, or a variant of it, can add to our understanding in both the pathological and the normal spheres. It is this particular distinction between the signifier and the signified which Lacan employs when he goes on to speak of the question of locating the subject as subject of the signifier or as subject of the signified (in his remarks on the *cogito* cited towards the end of Section I), and the ultimate distinction he made in 1956 was between two "areas" of thought, or between the conscious and the unconscious discourse, which are related metaphorically.

Fortunately there is an excellent example in one of Freud's earliest psychological works which can be employed as a practical illustration of what is expressed so ambiguously in Lacan's theoretical writings. It is such a significant case of repression that if it were ever completely dealt with in theoretical terms, the problem of formalizing the structure of repression would surely be solved. In parentheses, let it be noted that

although Lacan has referred to this incident in Freud's life many times, he has never sought in print to do more than hint at how it might be dealt with.

I am referring to Freud's forgetting of the name "Signorelli" (in 1898) and to the paralogisms which replaced it when he sought to recall the name. The details are too lengthy to go into here, but the repression of "Signorelli" can be formalized in the terms of its metaphorical relation to the symptom "Botticelli," which replaced it. Thus one writes the relationship as:  $\frac{\text{"Botticelli"}}{\text{"Signorelli"}}$ . If Freud's own structural analysis of this act of forgetting at the beginning of the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life* is rewritten in Lacanian terms, and the two signifiers treated as condensations in a chain of signifiers, their decondensation reveals that the substitution of the one for the other is an exemplary instance of the irruption of the "discourse of the Other" into Freud's conscious discourse (the return of the repressed, distorted by the censorship). The explanation of the significance of "Signorelli" (the name of an Italian painter and thus meaningless in itself, like all proper names, before it was forgotten) can be worked out in purely linguistic terms, almost entirely from Freud's own associations (his discourse) and without any necessary recourse to symbols, analogies, or instinctual processes. At the same time, as it happens, all the central theoretical concerns of psychoanalysis, as well as the central theme of death and sexuality, and the master-slave dialectic of father and son are revealed. But before dealing further with this example, let us consider the linguistic antecedents of Lacan's theory of metaphor and metonymy in greater detail.

Lacan's use of these terms (t.n. 67) and their correlation with the Freudian condensation (for Lacan, the symptom) and displacement (for Lacan, desire), respectively, is a specialized development of Jakobson's theory of the relation of similarity and the relation of contiguity.<sup>34</sup> Any linguistic sign, says Jakobson, involves two methods of arrangement: combination and contexture, and selection and substitution (or concatenation and concurrence in Saussurian terms). Thus there are always two possible interpretants (Peirce's term) of the sign, one referring to the code and the other to the context of the message. The

<sup>34</sup> What follows is taken from R. Jakobson, "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances," in: *Fundamentals of Language* (The Hague: Mouton, 1956), pp. 55-82.

interpretant referring to the code is linked to it by similarity (metaphor), and the interpretant referring to the message is linked to it by contiguity (metonymy). For example, the word "hammer" is linked by metaphor to the code where hammer stands for a "tool for driving nails" and linked by metonymy to the rest of the message ("Bring me the hammer," "This is a hammer," "Hammer," "Hammer?").

Selection (the relation of similarity) and combination (the relation of contiguity)—the metaphoric and the metonymic ways—are considered by Jakobson to be the two most fundamental linguistic operations, whether at the level of phonemes (like the *Fort! Da!*) or at the level of semantemes or words. In psychopathology he discovers that aphasia can be divided into variants of two broad types: contiguity disorder (where contextual, connective, and auxiliary words are the first to disappear) and similarity disorder (where the same contextual words are those most likely to survive). In the first, the patient may employ a telegraphic style, or he may be able to understand and say "Thanksgiving," for instance, but be totally unable to handle "thanks" or "giving." In the second, he might be unwilling or unable to name objects pointed to, but will perhaps offer some associated remark about them instead of the name. In the final chapter of his remarks on aphasia, Jakobson deals with "the metaphoric and metonymic poles" in the wider context of normal speech and literature:

In normal verbal behavior both processes are continually operative, but careful observation will reveal that under the influence of a cultural pattern, personality and verbal style, preference is given to one of the two processes over the other . . . .

In manipulating these two kinds of connection (similarity and contiguity) in both their aspects (positional and semantic)—selecting, combining and ranking them—an individual exhibits his personal style, his verbal predilections and preferences (pp. 76-77).

In literature, he continues, poetry is of course predominantly metaphorical, but the "realistic" trend in modern literature (for instance the rise of the "realistic" novel) is predominantly metonymic. Jakobson goes on to consider the application of this polarity in Freud: "A competition between both devices . . . is manifest in any symbolic process, either intrapersonal or social. Thus in an inquiry into the structure of dreams, the decisive question is whether the symbols and the temporal sequences used are based on contiguity (Freud's metonymic "displacement" and



synecdochic “condensation”) or on similarity (Freud’s “identification and symbolism”)” (p. 81). It will be seen that Lacan’s use of this polarity between metaphor and metonymy—the two processes cannot, of course, be actually separated from each other—is slightly different from Jakobson’s. Freud’s usage in this respect is ambiguous (t.n. 53), but Lacan’s equation of these terms with condensation and displacement is not incompatible with that of Freud, since the importance of metaphor and metonymy in the discourse is correlative to the importance Freud assigns to condensation and displacement in the formation of jokes, slips of the tongue or pen, dreams, and symptoms in general (t.n. 67): “. . . One . . . of these logical relations is very highly favoured by the mechanism of dream-formation; namely, the relation of similarity, consonance or approximation—the relation of ‘just as.’ . . . The representation of the relation of similarity is assisted by the tendency of the dream-work towards condensation.”<sup>35</sup>

Although Lacan’s formulations could be regarded as prefigured in the way Freud employed the concepts of “concatenations of pathogenic trains of thought” and of symbolic replacement (mnemonic symbols or symptoms) in explicating hysterical symptoms in the *Studies on Hysteria* (1893–95),<sup>36</sup> Lacan goes much further toward systematizing Freud when he assimilates the dream mechanism of displacement (“metonymy”) to desire and that of condensation (“metaphor”) to the symptom or substitute. For Freud, any means of “indirect representation” is a symptom, that is to say, a substitute for something else (cf. the term *Verschiebungersatz*: “formation of a substitute by displacement”). At this point in the development of his views, Lacan is in fact attempting to deal with specific linguistic concepts employed by Saussure and other linguists, the “vertical” *paradigmatic* mode of language and the “linear” (horizontal) *syntagmatic* mode, which is another way of stating the opposition of synchrony (“the axis of simultaneities”) to diachrony (“the axis of successivities”). But Saussure, as I have pointed out, applied the distinction between synchrony and diachrony to the *science* of language (*langue*), rather than to language itself, and certainly not to speech (*parole*). This is the effect of Saussure’s view of the chain of signifiers as strictly linear, temporal, and one-dimensional, which is obviously true

for the formal study of utterances, since one cannot say two words at once. It is to his concept of value as opposed to signification that one might turn for the germ of Lacan’s symbolization of a repressed signifier as  $\frac{\text{Signifier B}}{\text{Signifier A}}$ . A word, says Saussure (p. 160), has two qualities: exchange value (it can be exchanged for an idea or another word) and signification (its reference and opposition to other words). Thus “sheep” and “*mouton*” have the same signification, but not the same value, since the value of “*mouton*” in French can only be exchanged against “sheep-mutton” in English.

However these details may be, Lacan’s formulation can be related to these previously unsynthesized views in the following way, although he has never specifically done so in print:

←—METONYMY (desire, “displacement,” contiguity, the syntagmatic)—→

Cs. Pcs.	$\frac{\text{“Botticelli”}}{\text{“Signorelli”}}$	↑	METAPHOR (symptom, “condensation,”
Ucs.		↓	similarity, the paradigmatic)

The example does not have to come from psychopathology, of course, but it is on the Signorelli incident that this particular formulation heavily depends. One can decondense either of the terms, by using Freud’s own associations, to include Freud’s own desire for his mother (Eros) and his desire for the death of his rivals: his father, Fliess, and others, as well as his desire for his own death (Thanatos). The fact that this paralogism was first announced in a letter (t.n. 69) to Fliess (the master), and the fact that it occurred at the time that Freud (the slave) discovered the Oedipus complex, are not without significance in this heavily overdetermined symptom. The key term, the “switch word,” is of course *Signor*, meaning *Herr*. The last words toward which the metonymic displacement within these signifiers intend are in fact “death and sexuality,” and part of the result of this particular discovery of Freud’s, so fraught with meaning for him, was to give him the absolute mastery he desired. What also makes this example interesting, although I would think it an error to push it too far, is that in fact nothing but a new formulation, an exchange of structures, has been substituted for Freud’s own attempt to deal with it structurally.

Freud did in fact employ a schematic representation of a joke in the work on *Witz*, an example which Lacan has not failed to use and which

<sup>35</sup> *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *Standard Edition*, IV, 319–20.

<sup>36</sup> *Standard Edition*, II, 92; 152; 288; and elsewhere.

is similar enough to the representation of the Signorelli incident to make it worth introducing. One of Heine's characters meets Baron Rothschild, who, he says, "treated me quite famillionairely [*familionär*]." This example is designated by Freud as a "condensation accompanied by the formation of a substitute" (*Verdichtung mit Ersatzbildung*), making a "composite word," and he decondenses the pun as follows:<sup>37</sup>

- (1) 
$$\begin{array}{c} \text{FAMILI} \ddot{\text{A}}\text{R} \\ \text{MILIONÄR} \\ \hline \text{FAMILIONÄR} \end{array}$$
- (2) 'R. treated me quite *familiär*,  
that is, so far as a *Millionär* can.'
- (3) 'R. treated me quite *famili on är*.'
- (mili) (är)

One is immediately reminded of similar associations (as opposed to symbols)—in the poetry of Nerval, for instance.

The structural relationship between what is conscious and unconscious in both these examples can clearly be regarded as a relationship of *interpolation* which establishes the continuity of the conscious discourse. In the case of Heine's joke, the analogous interpolation from the "unconscious level" is discovered by reading the joke backwards; in the case of Signorelli, infinitely more profound, there is a gap in the discourse (the absence of the signifier "Signorelli") which Freud cannot adequately fill and whose existence torments him until somebody re-establishes the continuity of that discourse by telling him the name he cannot for the life of him remember. The principle of intentionality to which I have constantly referred is also involved, since as long as the name remained repressed, Freud had an "ultra-clear" but ineffable image in his mind of Signorelli's own self-portrait in the fresco at Orvieto: *The Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Hell, Heaven*, which played a central part in the repression. Thus he was quite correct in naming this image "Botticelli," since the name was only a distorted substitute for "Signorelli." And when the original name was restored to him, the image of the painter's sober face "faded away," along with Freud's anxiety. Thus the image of "Signorelli" was itself a screen memory, a

<sup>37</sup> *Standard Edition*, VIII, 16–20.

visual displacement of the abhorred themes of the fresco onto something apparently unimportant, an Italian painter whose name Freud knew as well as his own.

#### IV

##### *The Symbolic Order: Lévi-Strauss and Marcel Mauss*

Lacan's notion of the Symbolic order is primarily derived from anthropology, notably from Lévi-Strauss, as I have already indicated. Since this concept is so ambiguous in Lacan, it is to Lévi-Strauss that one naturally turns for clarification about the notion as a whole. It involves several features: a view of the unconscious different from the usual Freudian acceptance, the concept of structure as used in structural anthropology, the relationship between linguistic and social structures as systems of communication (t.n. 98), and the unconsciously determined phonological laws of distinctive features or phonemic opposition (Troubetskoy, Jakobson) (t.n. 119, 183, 184). Consideration of these points will also serve to clarify Lacan's direct allusions to Lévi-Strauss in the *Discours*.

It seems best to refer first of all to the early Lévi-Strauss's general concept of the unconscious as something imposing form on a content which is outside it. This view was expressed in an article seeking to explain the relationship between psychoanalysis and shamanism (no malice intended), which Lacan had read in 1949.<sup>38</sup> The "symbolic efficacy" of the title of the article refers to the shaman's proven ability, by reference to collective myths, actually to effect cures by taking the patient's sickness onto himself in a symbolic fashion and driving the evil out, or by his "psychological manipulation" of a sick organ. Lévi-Strauss employs his knowledge of Freud to clarify certain aspects of shamanism—and hopes that shamanism may one day help to clarify Freud. The principal difference between shamanism and psychoanalysis, he declares, even if neurosis should eventually turn out to be derived from a "physiological substratum," lies in "the origin of the myth which is found again in the one instance as an individual treasure, and received, in the other, from the collective tradition" (p. 223). He disputes the importance accorded in French psychoanalysis (Marie Bonaparte) to the reality of the

<sup>38</sup> What follows is taken from the last pages of "L'Efficacité symbolique" (1949) in: *Anthropologie Structurale* (Paris: Plon, 1958), pp. 205–26.

traumatic memory: "What should really be considered is whether the therapeutic value of the cure depends upon the reality of rememorated situations, or whether the traumatizing power of these situations is not the result of the fact that at the moment when they present themselves, the subject experiences them immediately in the form of a lived myth" (p. 223). "Traumatizing power" means not something intrinsic to these situations, but rather the propensity of certain events "coming forth in an appropriate psychological, historical, and social situation, to induce an affective crystallization which comes about within the mold of a pre-existing structure." "In relationship to the [actual] event or to the anecdote, these structures—or more exactly, these laws of structure—are really non-temporal" (p. 224).<sup>39</sup>

The same structures are to be found in pathological cases, in normal people, and in primitive cultures. Under the "catalyzing action of the initial myth," the psychic life and the experiences of the subject become organized "as a function of an exclusive or predominant structure."

The whole set of these structures, in my view, would form what we call the unconscious . . . . The unconscious ceases to be the ineffable refuge of individual particularities, the depository of a unique history, which makes of each one of us an irreplaceable being. The unconscious can be reduced to a term by which we designate a function: the symbolic function, a specifically human function, no doubt, but which is exercised in all men according to the same laws; which is in fact reduced to the ensemble of these laws (p. 224).

On this view, he remarks, we must make a distinction between the unconscious and the subconscious (*subconscient*), a distinction which is not to be found in the psychology of the 1940's:

The subconscious, a reservoir of memories and images collected in the course of each life,<sup>[40]</sup> becomes a simple aspect of memory. At the same time as it affirms its lasting nature, it implies its own limitations, since "subconscious" refers to the fact that memories, although retained, are not always available. On the other hand, the unconscious is always empty; or, more precisely, it is as much a stranger to images as is the stomach to the food which

<sup>39</sup> These remarks would now require interpretation in the sense of the existentialist project and the Freudian concept of deferred action, mentioned briefly in Section V. For Freud the value of the reality of the traumatic memory is that of a myth; it makes no difference whether it is real or phantasy.

<sup>40</sup> Lévi-Strauss notes: "This definition which has been so heavily criticized takes on meaning again by the radical distinction between subconscious and unconscious."

passes through it. As an organ of a specific function, the unconscious limits itself to the imposition of structural laws . . . on unarticulated elements which come from elsewhere: pulsions, emotions, representations, memories. One could therefore say that the subconscious is the individual lexicon where each of us accumulates the vocabulary of his personal history, but that this vocabulary only acquires signification, for ourselves and for others, in so far as the unconscious organizes it according to the laws of the unconscious, and thus makes of it a discourse. . . . The vocabulary is less important than the structure (pp. 224–25).

Whether the myth is recreated by the subject or borrowed from a tradition, he continues, it draws only the *material* of the images it employs from individual or collective sources (between which there are constant interpenetrations and exchanges), "but the structure remains the same, and it is through it that the symbolic function operates." Moreover the laws of the symbolic function, however diverse the material with which they deal, are "few in number," in the same way that the whole galaxy of words in all languages can be reduced to a very few phonological laws (p. 225). One notes that the distinction he makes between subconscious and unconscious is similar to Freud's distinction between the preconscious (ordinary memory, the area of language) and the unconscious, and that his notion of the unconscious could be compared to those passages in which Freud includes in the unconscious not only "after repression" but also the "primal repression," which was never conscious in the usual sense.

In the final part of *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*,<sup>41</sup> Lévi-Strauss examines the general problem of synchrony and diachrony in primitive societies. He has developed at length the thesis of the incest prohibition as inexplicably at the frontier between (biological) nature and (human) culture. His reaffirmation of Tylor's notion of the incest prohibition as a positive law is stated as the obligation undertaken by one family to give one member to another family. It follows from this view that it should be possible to formulate the marriage rules of primitive societies as systems of exchange in what is in fact an unconsciously determined system of communication. This is precisely what Lévi-Strauss sets out to prove.

This radical interpretation of Mauss's intuitions about the gift is further radicalized by the apparently scientific correlation between the

<sup>41</sup> Paris: PUF, 1949, pp. 592–617.

structures of kinship, and therefore the structures of society, and the distinctive features of the phonemic structures underlying language. With Mauss, Lévi-Strauss points out that it is not what is given, but the act of exchange which holds any society together, including our own. In a similar sense, we all know only too well how in normal conversation, it is the exchange of words and not their content which is important, since most of what we say consists of redundancies rather than of information. And this act of linguistic intercourse can no more be separated from the world of discourse into which we are born than an individual marriage—the exchange of a woman for one previously given or one to be given—can be separated from the “universe of rules” englobing the single act of giving. The marriage, setting up its participants as a new locus of other relationships, is “the archetype of exchange” (p. 599), and, for Lévi-Strauss, the attendant rules of kinship are not simply something necessary for society, but, like language, they *are* society.

This view leads him to reject the “theory of origins” (myth or fact) so damaging to Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* (1912–13), since, as Rousseau had also supposed, it supposes a mythical society preceding the necessary conditions of society. Yet in doing so he arrives at a modern comprehension of what Freud was trying to do, in terms (only faintly visible here) of the later “symbolic order.” This ahistorical view promised to account for the Lamarckian difficulties one encounters in Freud as well as for those of the genetic approach, and those of relating the individual to society: “Ontogenesis does not repeat phylogenesis, or vice-versa. The two hypotheses result in the same contradictions. One can only speak of explication from the moment that the past of the species is played out again, at every instant, in the indefinitely multiplied drama of each individual’s thoughts, doubtless because it is itself only the retrospective projection of a passage which has come about because it continually comes about” (p. 609). Thus Freud’s “myth of origins” paradoxically explains the present, not the past, and accounts not for the prohibition of incest, but rather for the fact that incest is unconsciously desired. Freud’s myth perhaps “translates, in a symbolic form, a dream which is both enduring and ancient.” But the power of this dream has nothing to do with any historical event. Thus the symbolic satisfactions through which, according to Freud, we commemorate our regret for the lost opportunities of incest, are, in the eyes of Lévi-Strauss, “the permanent

expression of a desire for disorder, or rather, for counter-order” (pp. 609–10).

These considerations lead Lévi-Strauss to emphasize in a Kantian sense Freud’s remarks elsewhere upon permanent structures in the human mind,<sup>42</sup> which are in apparent contradiction with the historical or evolutionist view of *Totem and Taboo*. These “hesitations” on the part of Freud, he says, reveal that psychoanalysis, which is a “social science,” is “still floating between the tradition of a historical sociology, which seeks, as Rivers did, the *raison d’être* of a present situation in a far-off past, and a more modern and more solidly scientific attitude, which expects knowledge of the future and the past from the present” (p. 611).

But there is one science, Lévi-Strauss goes on to say, in which diachronic and synchronic explanation come together, “because the first permits the reconstitution of the genesis of systems as well as bringing them to a synthesis, while the second brings out their internal logic and grasps the evolution which directs them towards a goal” (p. 611). This science is phonology, as developed out of the work of Troubetzkoy and Jakobson in the 1930’s. He pushes the analogy, if it is an analogy, as others had done, to the point of declaring that linguists and sociologists not only employ the same methods, but in fact study the same object. He quotes a remark of W. I. Thomas,<sup>43</sup> to the effect that exogamy and language have the same fundamental function: “communication with others and the integration of the group.” Whether the assimilation of the “same object” to the “same function” actually holds good is not discussed further at this point by Lévi-Strauss.

Naturally rejecting the simplistic notion of language as an inert intermediary between men, he goes on to quote Cassirer (p. 613): “Language does not enter into a world of objective and complete perceptions, thence simply to add ‘names’ to individual objects, clearly distinct in relation to each other, ‘names’ which are purely exterior and arbitrary signs. On the contrary, language is itself a mediator in the formation of objects; it is in one sense the denominator par excellence.”<sup>44</sup> With the remark that “the conception of speech [*parole*] as

<sup>42</sup> For example, the universality of anxiety analyzed in “Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety” (1926), *Standard Edition*, XX.

<sup>43</sup> *Primitive Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1937), p. 182f.

<sup>44</sup> E. Cassirer, in the French translation: *Le Langage et la construction des objets* in: *Psychologie du langage* (Paris: Alcan, 1933), p. 23. See also Cassirer, *An*

*verbe*, as power and action, certainly represents a universal tendency of human thought" (cf. t.n. 80), Lévi-Strauss develops almost all the full implications of his thesis: that "the relations between sexes can be conceived as one modality of a vast 'function of communication,' including language" (p. 613), and draws on further anthropological evidence. Certain societies have strict rules against a number of actions which can apparently be subsumed under "abuses of language": "What does this mean except that women themselves are treated [in these societies] like signs, which are *abused* when they are not employed in the way reserved for signs, which is to be communicated?" (p. 615).

The passage from phonology to the discourse and back to anthropology is a slippery one, but Lévi-Strauss sets out forthrightly to complete it: "When we pass from the discourse to the marriage-tie, that is to say, to the other domain of communication, the situation becomes reversed. The emergence of symbolic thought must have required women to be things [reciprocally] exchanged like spoken words" (p. 616). This reciprocity, for Lévi-Strauss, is what explains how the incompatibility in the dual role of the woman of one's own family (whom one desires and who yet must be delivered up to the desire of another man) is resolved, since giving her up to another forges the reciprocal bond which is its purpose.

But women could never become a sign, and only a sign, since, in a world of men, she is nevertheless a person, and since, in so far as she is defined as a sign, one is obliged to recognize her as a producer of signs. In the matrimonial dialogue of men, a woman is never purely that of which one speaks, since . . . each woman maintains a particular value, which depends upon her maintaining her part in a dual relationship,<sup>45</sup> both before and after her marriage. In opposition to the word, which has totally become a sign, woman has remained both a sign and a value at the same time. Thus is explained, no doubt, how the relations between the sexes have been able to preserve that affective richness, that fervor and that mystery, which probably filled the whole universe of human communications originally (p. 616) (t.n. 80).

*Essay on Man* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 31f; and M. Leenhardt, "Ethnologie de la parole," *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1946); R. Firth, *Primitive Polynesian Economics* (London: Routledge & Sons, 1939), p. 317.

<sup>45</sup> This duality is to be viewed in the light of his previous remark, referring to the theory of games, that "mathematical studies confirm that in any combination involving several partners, the dual game must be treated as a particular case of a triangular game" [*jeu à trois*] (p. 574).

Part of the thesis of the "Introduction à l'oeuvre de Marcel Mauss"<sup>46</sup> is to establish the subordination of individual psychology to sociology in their respective roles as explanations of human relationships in society. It seems clear that the movement towards a social psychology from the thirties onward, both by the "neo-Freudians" and by independents like Harry Stack Sullivan (a friend of Sapir's)—who introduced the terms "interpersonal relations" and "significant others" into psychiatry, as well as the concept of the psychiatrist as the "participant observer"—reflected a defeat of the sociological aspirations of traditional psychoanalysis.

Lévi-Strauss notes that in 1924 Marcel Mauss had defined social life in an address to French psychologists as "a world of symbolic relationships," and goes on to declare that a "psychological formulation [of these relationships] is only a translation, at the level of the individual psyche, of a structure which is properly sociological" (pp. xv-xvi). "It is in the nature of society that it is expressed symbolically in its customs and its institutions; on the other hand, normal individual behavior *is never symbolic by itself*: individual actions are elements out of which a symbolic system, which can only be collective, is constructed. It is only abnormal behavior which, because it is de-socialized and more or less abandoned to itself, realizes at the individual level, the illusion of an autonomous symbolism" (pp. xvi-xvii).

After further discussion of these remarks, which set his views clearly apart from individual psychology, he provides the central notion from which the idea of the symbolic function is derived: "Every culture can be considered as an ensemble or set of symbolic systems, amongst which the most important are: language, marriage-rules, economic relationships, art, science, and religion" (p. xix). All these systems seek to express certain aspects of social and physical reality, he says, as well as the relationship between these two realities. But these symbolic systems are "fundamentally incommensurable" and "irreducible" the one to the other. The result is that "no society is ever integrally and completely symbolic; or, more precisely, that no society ever manages to offer all its members, and in the same degree, the means to fully employ themselves in the edification of a symbolic structure which, for the normal person, is only realizable on the level of social life. Properly speaking,

<sup>46</sup> In: Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et Anthropologie* (Paris: PUF, 1966 [1950]), pp. ix-lii.

it is the one we say has a healthy mind who alienates himself, since he consents to existing in a world which is definable only by the relation of self [*moi*] and other" (p. xx).<sup>47</sup>

Passing from these considerations, which he feels are conclusions we must draw from Mauss's work, to the notion of the "total social fact" in the *Essai sur le don* (1923), Lévi-Strauss deals first with one of the problems most personal to his own experience: the relationship of the observer to the observed in ethnology, and within our own social groupings. The ethnologist is involved in an attempt to identify with what is an alien object to him: "This difficulty would be insoluble, since subjectivities are, by hypothesis, incomparable and incommunicable, if the opposition between self [*moi*] and other could not be overcome at a certain level, which is also that where the objective and the subjective meet, I mean the unconscious" (p. xxx). He seeks to deal with this unconscious, in the terms which Mauss had already employed, as connected with the notion of mana, at the level of a sort of "fourth dimension" of the mind, where "the concept of 'unconscious category' and that of 'category of collective thought' would come together as one." "Thus the unconscious would be the mediator between self [*moi*] and other." Analyzing the unconscious would "put us in coincidence with forms of activity which are at one and the same time *ours* and *other*." This knowledge would of course be objective, in the sense that knowledge, for Lévi-Strauss, is always of an object, but it would lead to subjectification, since this is an operation of the same type as that which makes it possible in psychoanalysis "to reconquer for oneself our most alienated *moi*." Consequently the difficulty of the ethnologist in identifying with the alien other will perhaps be solved at the unconscious level of human conduct, just as it is apparently solved in psychoanalysis where the problem is the same: "that of a communication sought, at one time between a subjective *moi* and an objectifying *moi*, at another, between an objective *moi* and a subjectivity which is *other*" (p. xxi). In this way Lévi-Strauss seeks to develop a theory of intersubjectivity which will provide him with an objective scientific base for his relationship to the object he studies: other men. His concern will be all the more understandable if we recall the date at which he wrote. In the France of the

<sup>47</sup> Author's note: "This is at any rate the conclusion which it seems to me we must draw from the profound study by Dr. Jacques Lacan: 'L'Agressivité en psychanalyse,' *Revue Française de Psychanalyse*, No. 3 (July-September, 1948)."

late forties and early fifties, the existentialist and phenomenological theories of the intentionality of consciousness, along with their rejection of the unconscious, had seemed to show that our apprehension of the other was always as an object.

As for these unconscious structures which we share, the whole point, as Lévi-Strauss saw it, was to distinguish between purely phenomenological data ("the things themselves" of which we are individually conscious), which cannot be treated by science, and an infrastructure which is more simple than that data and to which that data owes all its reality, especially as this distinction had been employed in phonology by Troubetzkoy and Jakobson. Structural linguistics was founded on the notion of relationship and combination, the theory of binary phonemic oppositions having been solidly established by 1938. Mauss had already conceived of "function" in society as an algebraic idea, one social phenomenon being viewed as a function of others, their interrelationship being constant. Thus the later establishment of an identical series of ideas in the study of language could not but reinforce the probable success of applying the science of one domain<sup>48</sup> to another domain determined to become a science: "Like language, the social *is* an autonomous reality (the same, in fact); symbols are more real than what they symbolize, the signifier precedes and determines the signified" (p. xxxii)—but, for Lévi-Strauss, what is most crucial is to pass beyond the suggestion (which can be found in Mauss) that the relationship between signifier and signified, as Saussure is assumed to have put it, is an *arbitrary* one (p. xlv, note).

There are two problems here, however, and it is not entirely clear from the context whether Lévi-Strauss is making a clear distinction between them. What one might call a relationship between "appearance" (things) and "reality" (relationships) is being looked at in two different but complementary ways. Does "infrastructure" mean something "beneath" the phenomena (signifier over signified) or does it simply imply something existing in an unconscious mode *within* a "superstructure" (that is, the structure of the relationships of signifiers as functions

<sup>48</sup> The value of the use of notions from linguistics outside their own sphere is rather well brought out by Nicolas Ruwet (who is not a structural linguist) in an article on Lévi-Strauss: "Linguistique et sciences de l'homme," *Esprit* (November, 1963), pp. 564-78, where the whole question is reviewed and a number of misinterpretations, both of linguistic theory and of Lévi-Strauss, are cleared up.

of other signifiers, rather than the phenomena *qua* individual elements)? Since a structure is by definition unconscious and since Lévi-Strauss clearly defines the "reality" of "more real" in terms of scientifically discoverable "objective" relationships, it seems that he views the problem primarily from the second or "horizontal" or "immanent" viewpoint. Thus the reference to Saussure may be misleading—because one immediately thinks of the Saussurian diagram representing the sign as a "vertical" relationship and tends to forget Saussure's rather more subtle metaphor of the signifier and the signified as being related like the two sides of a piece of paper. Lévi-Strauss evidently wants to avoid falling into the unscientific mode of viewing social reality as equivalent to the ideology of the human beings involved in it and at the same time to define the structure of social relationships as immanent to the "language" of social reality, just as phonemes are immanent to a word, without, however, being the same as the word. One could simplify the whole problem—into which we have been led here by a particular concern for a particular category, the signifier—by asking simply whether the structure is arbitrary in relationship to what it structures (thus avoiding the awkward spatial metaphor). It seems, however, that the question could be even better stated in the terms of Carnap's theory of object language and metalanguage, calling a structure a particular kind of metastatement. From a purely epistemological point of view, one might add parenthetically that however Lévi-Strauss's use of the categories of signifier and signified is related to Saussure's or Lacan's employment of the same terms—there is clearly a confusing alternation of convergence and divergence in this respect—the statement that "the signifier precedes and determines the signified" is an assertion of the primacy of language over reality which is shared by Lacan.

The assimilation of the methods of phonology to anthropology is certainly not a self-evident step, and Lévi-Strauss's formulations have naturally raised a certain amount of criticism on purely theoretical grounds. It is not my intention to enter into this controversy in any detail, but it does seem clear that we must distinguish between models and analogies. Phonological oppositions are not employed by Lévi-Strauss as analogies to buttress an argument at another level; rather he is employing the notion of the relationship between the infrastructure of binary phonemic oppositions and the superstructure of morphemes as a model of the relation of "reality" (the underlying or immanent structure) to "appearance"

(phenomenological data). This methodological model is not employed because of some a priori theoretical or axiomatic necessity, but rather because it seems to *work*, and Lévi-Strauss has always left a hypothetical door open for a more adequate model should new information or new understanding require it. He is in fact entirely faithful to his own concept of *bricolage*—working with what is at hand, building an interpretation out of the available conceptual "odds and ends" which are used as instruments in a process of invention, without concern for their origin or homogeneity. Thus it seems that any one model he employs is indeed a model, whereas the totality of these models can be called a series of analogies. The problem, however, is to decide to what the analogies refer. As Jacques Derrida has pointed out in "La Structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines" (*L'Écriture et la différence* [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1967], pp. 409–28), Lévi-Strauss seeks in effect to break with a philosophical and epistemological tradition which has always in the past related the notion of structure to some privileged point of reference, some *epistemē*:

It would be easy enough to show that the concept of structure and even the word "structure" itself are as old as the *epistemē*—that is to say, as old as western science and western philosophy. . . . Nevertheless, up until the "event" which I wish to define [that is, the change in the use of the concept of structure], the structure—or rather the structurality of the structure— . . . has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this center was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure—one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure—but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the *freeplay* [*le jeu*] of the structure. . . .

. . . The center also closes off the freeplay it opens up and makes possible. *Qua* center, it is the point at which the substitution of contents, elements, or terms is no longer possible (pp. 409–10).

Lévi-Strauss's use of *bricolage*, however, especially in relation to the structure of a series of myths such as those analyzed in *Le Cru et le Cuit* (1964) results in a sort of decentered and self-criticizing discourse on myths which is itself a myth:

It is here that we rediscover the mythopoetical power of *bricolage*. In fact, what appears most fascinating in this critical search for a new status of the discourse is the stated abandonment of all reference to a *center*, to a *subject*, to a privileged *reference*, to an origin or to an absolute *archia* (p. 419).

. . . In opposition to the *epistemic* discourse, the structural discourse on myths, the *mytho-logical* discourse must itself be *mytho-morphic* (p. 420).

In a sense, Lévi-Strauss is simply denying the possibility for a being which is within a system to step outside it, and all the problems of the "impartial observer," such as that implicit in the Marxist view of ideology or that explicit in the nineteenth-century view of physics are involved. In another terminology, one could say that the lack of a center is equivalent to a lack of an ultimate, completely transcendental metalanguage which could comment on the relationships within language and between human beings. It will be clear to the reader that Lacan is very much a *bricoleur* in the sense that Lévi-Strauss uses the term, a judgment reinforced by Lacan's reply to a question in a recent conference. He had been employing the model of the Moebius strip to speak of the subject's relationship to himself, as well as using the theory of integers to discuss the theoretical ramifications of how the child discovers the Other (how he progresses from "one" to "two"). Taxed by a historian of science on the subject of his "analogies," Lacan simply replied: "Analogy to what?"

Lévi-Strauss's methodology, like Lacan's, involves a number of special assumptions (which Derrida compares to Rousseau's "brushing aside the facts" in his analysis of society, or to Husserl's "parentheses"). It is already clear that Lacan presupposes an undeterminable "break" between humanity and the animal world (without, of course, denying the possibility of continuity or the actuality of the animal functions of man). For Lacan, the split between nature and culture is defined by the difference between animal need and animal communication, on the one hand, and human desire and human language on the other. This methodological break is employed by him as an *instrument* of analysis, just as a similar break is employed by Lévi-Strauss, without any necessary acceptance of its transcendental *truth-value*. If we return to the essay on Marcel Mauss, we can see how this sort of presupposition is part of Lévi-Strauss's own developing theory, notably in his answer to the problem of the development of language:

. . . Language could only have been born in one fell swoop. Things were not able to set about signifying progressively . . . . At the moment when the entire Universe suddenly became *significative*, it was not for all that better *known*, even if it is true that the appearance of language must have precipitated the rhythm of the development of knowledge. There is therefore a

fundamental opposition in the history of the human mind between symbolism, whose nature is to be discontinuous, and knowledge, marked by continuity . . . .

The result of this difference is

that the two categories of signifier and signified were constituted simultaneously and jointly, like two complementary units; but that knowledge, that is to say, the intellectual process which permits us to identify in relationship to each other certain aspects of the signifier and certain aspects of the signified—one might even say: that which permits us to choose from the set of the signifier and the set of the signified those parts which present the most satisfactory relationships of mutual agreement between them—only began very slowly . . . .

Thus Lévi-Strauss can say: "The Universe signified long before we began to know what it was signifying . . ." Moreover, "the Universe signified, from the very beginning, the totality of what humanity could expect to know about it" (pp. xlvii-xlviii). The work of equation of the signifier in relation to the signified, he continues, given on the one hand by symbolism and pursued on the other by knowledge, is not fundamentally different in any kind of society, except insofar as the birth of modern science has introduced a difference of degree. Outside the specialized area of science, in his view, the human condition rests on a fundamental antinomy resulting from the fact that "from his earliest origins man has at his disposition an integrality of signifier whose allocation to a signified—which is given as such, but not in fact known—is a source of great perplexity to him."

Thus in his attempts to comprehend the universe, man has at his disposition "a surplus of signification." This he divides among things "according to the laws of symbolic thought," in order that "on the whole, the available signifier and the signified it aims at may remain in the relationship of complementarity which is the very condition of the use of symbolic thought" (p. xlix). From these considerations, Lévi-Strauss posits the notion of *mana* as the zero-symbol in the system of symbols which go to make up any cosmology, as "a sign marking the necessity of a symbolic content supplementary to that with which the signified is already loaded, but which can take on any value required, provided only that this value still remains part of the available reserve [of "floating signifier"]" (p. xlviii) (t.n. 98).



*The Symbolic Order: Lacan and Freud*

The transition from these notions of a symbolic function, reflected in the individual by the symbolic relationships of the group, to Lacan's notion of the Symbolic order seems fairly clear. Lacan's use of the term tends to rely heavily upon the ambiguity of the use of the term "symbolic" in psychoanalysis and in anthropology. But insofar as Lacan seeks to relate the Symbolic order primarily to Language and the family rather than to intragroup communication and society in general, or to a semiology, he employs it to buttress his concept of the unconscious as the "discourse of the Other." Nevertheless, the twin aphorism of the unconscious as "structured like a language" betrays an ambiguity he has not seen fit to resolve. The ambiguity derives in part from Freud, for whom the concept of the unconscious shifts between something seemingly biological—an infrastructure, at any rate (the so-called instincts)—and the more obviously psychic representation of this level (*Triebrepräsenz*), between memory in the very wide sense (including "inherited" memories) and simply the repressed, which may also include the "deepest" level (the primal repression). It is sometimes equated with all that is not in consciousness (*Pcs. Ucs.*), sometimes only with that not immediately available to (*Pcs.*) memory. Lacan's view of the unconscious is essentially a combination of the dynamic view (metaphor) and the economic view (metonymy). He supposes an unconscious discourse interfering with the conscious discourse, and responsible for the distortions and gaps in that discourse. In one sense, there is an unconscious subject (barred from consciousness) seeking to address itself to another unconscious subject (the Other). In another sense, this unconscious discourse is that of the Other in the subject who has been alienated from himself through his relationship to the mirror image of the other. But whether one can actually say that the unconscious is a discourse, or that it is structured like a language, depends upon the level at which one views the unconscious. What is involved is the fundamental contradiction implied by the notion of censorship, or whatever it is in the subject which makes his symptoms twisted signifiers or twisted signs. The dream, for instance, is not the unconscious, but rather the distortion (*Entstellung*) of the unconscious dream thoughts as they regress to the level of perception. The subject's verbalization of the dream is his intentionalization of these images, and, outside the level of "natural" symbolism, it is always the dream text—which only ac-

counts for that part of the dream which is actually remembered—which is interpreted, not the dream itself. Within analysis, this seems invariably to be that part of the dream which is addressed to the significant other whom the analyst, through transference, represents. Thus Freud can interpret a patient's one-word dream: "Kanal" and find that it is derivatively directed at himself through his work on jokes, by means of a play on words. The "channel" refers to the "Pas de Calais," as he discovers from the dreamer; the ridicule depends upon the pun: "Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas."<sup>40</sup> The only part of the dream which was originally remembered was the "nodal point" aimed at the analyst.

But it is surely not the unconscious which imposes laws like those of condensation, displacement, and symbolism upon the conscious discourse or the subject's symptomatic acts. It is rather whatever it is that seeks to deny the recognition of unconscious wishes while still obeying the compelling need of the subject to communicate them "to him that hath ears to hear," as Lacan puts it—or in other words, to the significant other to whom those wishes were originally directed in a nondistorted form. Whatever its content may be, no wish is really intransitive, nor can it remain intrasubjective. One can certainly say that the unconscious speaks *through* the conscious discourse, but whether one can then employ this factual description as a metaphor about the unconscious itself is not easy to decide. Aphorisms have the merit of revealing truth in a striking way, but they must by their very nature be both ambiguous about their truth and a simplification of it. This leads one to remark that Lacan's tendency to depend on the aphorism may well lead the reader to regard Lacan, even more imperiously than he may already regard Freud, as literary or cultural phenomenon, outside whatever importance his theories may have in their own right. Thus Lacan's style is perhaps symptomatic not just of the man, but also of his time—and *préciosité* is a recurrent phenomenon in French literature, especially during periods of intellectual reorganization.

With this in mind, we can perhaps better understand why Lacan has chosen to express ambiguous ideas and unresolved difficulties in an ambiguous and perhaps ultimately impenetrable style. It is not possible, for instance, to define the Other in any definite way, since for Lacan it

<sup>40</sup> *Standard Edition*, V, p. 517, note 2. Lacan refers to this example in his introduction to the commentary on the Freudian *Verneinung* (1956).

has a functional value, representing both the "significant other" to whom the neurotic's demands are addressed (the appeal to the Other), as well as the internalization of this Other (we desire what the Other desires) and the unconscious subject itself or himself (the unconscious is the discourse of—or from—the Other). In another context, it will simply mean the category of "Otherness," a translation Lacan has himself employed. Sometimes "the Other" refers to the parents: to the mother as the "real Other" (in the dual relationship of mother and child), to the father as the "Symbolic Other," yet it is never a *person*. Very often the term seems to refer simply to the unconscious itself, although the unconscious is most often described as "the locus of the Other." In this sense the concept of "Otherness" is valid and important, because the identity and difference of "the other" in the Imaginary relationship is a false kind of "otherness" in the human world: a relationship to objects, not to subjects. In this sense the unconscious is the Other for the subject, since it is the unconscious subject who tells the truth, and the test of truth in human relations is not the reality or perception it represents, but intersubjectivity. The unconscious, in its necessary dialectical relationship to the unconscious of others, is the test of the truth of the message. As the locus of the code, the unconscious is not "within" the subject; it is the third position through which the sender is provided with a receiver. As I interpret it, in the sense that all messages, articulated or not, involve us in a dialogue mediated by the locus of the code (the unconscious), the desire to communicate rather than the content of the communication is surely what enables Lacan to reformulate the notion of "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other" by defining the idea as "Your concern is with the Other in the discourse," for it is by the Other that you are unconsciously controlled (t.n. 59, 79). This is true in the purely formal sense that our choice of messages is limited by the code; it is also true in the existential sense that the conscious subject has only a limited control over the content of his messages, and less over their reception. In any event, not even an apparent monologue can take place without the mediation of "Otherness."

What is surely essential to keep in mind about Lacan's use of the terms "unconscious" and "Other" is their relationship to the concept of *trans-subjectivity* that he emphasizes in the *Discours*, which entails a correlative: the position of both unconscious and Other as third terms in any dual situation. Like Lévi-Strauss, Lacan seeks to rebut the notion of the uncon-

scious as an individual, intrapsychic entity, and to restore it as a function to the collectivity which in fact creates and sustains it. Beyond the Kantian universality and apparently innate nature of the (mythical) "fixations" established at the level of the primal repression, and whatever the individual factors involved, it is clear that at least the after repression of the unconscious is constituted in and by the subject's relationship to what is other. Its advent as such seems therefore to be indistinguishable from the advent of phonemic organization (and desire) in the child. R. D. Laing has recently spoken of repression as inconceivable outside an interpersonal relationship, which is surely what Lacan is saying in the *Discours* when he defines the unconscious in the early part of Chapter I as "that part of the concrete discourse insofar as it is *transindividual*, which is not at the disposition of the subject to re-establish the continuity of his concrete discourse." Discourse requires both a sender and a receiver, as well as a message mediated by a code in a reciprocal interpretation or "reading": it *is* transsubjective. The concrete discourse suffers from *lacunae*, distortions, negations, and disavowals generated by its *relationship* to the unconscious, however difficult it is in fact to formalize the evidence we have of that relationship. In a more specific sense, it can hardly be doubted that Lacan was thinking of the Signorelli incident when he coined this definition. It will be recalled by the reader familiar with the incident that the *lacuna* in Freud's discourse at this point came about in a *conversation* concerning death and sexuality. Freud tells us that he was concerned with consciously wishing to *suppress* certain information on the subject of sex because of the social niceties required in a conversation with a stranger. The suppression then became converted into a profound repression of something with no manifest relationship to death or sexuality at all. In other words, Freud's first extended analysis of repression was explicitly an example of transsubjective repression. Because of Freud's concern for that aspect of the discourse of the Other represented by conscious social constraints, his avoidance of a specific topic turned into something far more significant, as a result of its association with the profoundest of unconscious prohibitions derived from the Other. From the moment that the repression operated—however difficult it is to conceive of this extraordinary mechanism—"Signorelli" *became* the discourse of the Other; in its simplest form, it was a message saying on the one hand: "You want to kill your father and sleep with your mother" (report aspect); and on the other: "Do not kill your father and sleep with your mother" (command aspect),

neither of which can possibly be understood in the terms of atomistic individualism or the biological need of an individual. To employ a Lacanian expression, one could say that it was from the Other behind the other (Freud's companion) that the repression came, for the driving force of a repression is as unconscious as what is repressed.

Lacan is more precise about the Other when he calls it the "locus of the signifier" or "of the Word," since he is obviously talking about the collective unconscious without which interhuman communication through language could not take place. Thus in "La Chose freudienne" (1955) he defines the Other as "the locus where there is constituted the *je* which speaks as well as he who hears it [speak]" (p. 248). Lacan's point is surely that even outside the formal necessity of a collective unconscious as constituted through the objectively determined code of language itself, the unconscious, as the repository of personal and social myths, as the locus of socially approved hostilities, illusions, and identifications, could not be otherwise than collective. And even if for Freud these collective characteristics, outside the unconscious aspects of the introjected superego, seem ultimately to depend upon a theory of inherited racial memories like that of the "myth of origins" in *Totem and Taboo* (and we do inherit myths, for it is the structure of society and the individual which generates them, and not vice versa), Freud's answer to Jung's particular heresy is itself unanswerable: "the unconscious is collective anyway." Consequently the unconscious Symbolic relationship between "Es" and "Es" would seem to be governed by the Other as the locus of the symbolic function itself, which is by definition collective, whereas the Imaginary (but not necessarily entirely conscious) relationship of self and other remains a dual one insofar as it is not mediated by the Other (cf. Lacan's remarks on telepathy at the end of Chapter I of the *Discours*). One is led to suspect that the substitution of the words "the unconscious" for "the Other" in many of Lacan's formulations will produce an adequate translation, provided it is remembered that the unconscious in question may be the unconscious of the other or the "collective" unconscious (see the passages of the text referred to in t.n. 50, 51). In this second sense, however, when the unconscious is viewed by Lacan as the "locus of the signifier," he may in fact be referring to the "topological substratum" of the "signifying chain"—or in other words, to the combinations and substitutions of the distinctive features at the phonological level, which is another level of

the collective unconscious. (Cf. his remarks on stochastics, kinship, and numbers in the *Discours*.)

On the other hand, the notion of "the Other" makes clearer sense in some contexts if Lacan is deliberately not distinguishing between repression and disavowal (see Section V) when he speaks of the *Spaltung* of the subject (Freud's *Ichspaltung*: "splitting of the ego"). He refers to the notion of *Spaltung* as "le sujet en *fading*": either the barred subject in the process of fading "in the *coupure* of demand" ( $\$ \diamond D$ ) or the barred subject in the process of fading "before the object of desire" ( $\$ \diamond a$ ), respectively the pulsion and the phantasy. The  $\diamond$  refers to the relationships: "envelopment-development-conjunction-disjunction," in other words, to the relationships expressed by the "Z" of the Schema L ("La Direction de la cure" [1961], p. 196, n.1; see also the Seminar of November, 1958–January, 1959), and the  $\$$  seems simply to refer to the Other subject in the subject's division from himself. (The *a* now denotes an object of identification rather than simply the image of another person in his totality—see t.n. 183.) Freud, of course, makes two structural divisions: the first and earliest between id and ego in neurosis (governed by repression) and the later one between two or more "egos" in psychosis (governed by disavowal). The immediate difficulty is that if this reading of Lacan's text is correct, and quite apart from the obvious change in terminology since the *stade du miroir*, Lacan is no longer talking about the same Freudian unconscious as he is elsewhere, the unconscious we might legitimately conceive of as the "primary system" somehow between the id and ego (t.n. 66). The fact is that there is more than one "unconscious" in Freud's structural view of the subject, a position forced upon him by the primacy of empirical data in his work. It is unfortunate, therefore, that Lacan's reformulations so often leave the reader to decide which particular psychoanalytical referent or referents will clarify any particular Lacanian statement. The lacunae of the unpublished seminars inevitably put the reader in the position of reading Lacan as the discourse of the Other. Certainly the transformation of *l'autre* into *l'autre (petit a)* (after the introduction of *l'Autre* in the late fifties), thence into the shorthand, *le petit a*, and finally, notably in the "Schema R" in Section VI, into *l'objet petit a* (which is the subject of his more recent seminars) is correlative to more and more explicit statements derived from the Kleinian observations of children. But in 1953 Lacan was less concerned with his theory than with his impact: hence the abstractions of the

*Discours*, which become more explicitly part of established psychoanalytical positions in the later works.

Distinguishing the Other—as a category of Otherness, or as related to the “significant others”—from the other (or present counterpart) is methodologically useful. The analyst may be viewed as the (neutral) other who is constituted as the Other by the subject (who is not talking to *him*) on the basis of the original or primordial constitution of the subject by Otherness. This is why self-analysis absolutely requires another to whom the subject’s discourse is apparently addressed—just as Fliess served this function in Freud’s self-analysis. The subject begins by addressing a *discours imaginaire* to the analyst: it is addressed to the projection of an internalized *imago* who isn’t there. This view, dependent upon an implicit, if selective, interpretation of Freud, is an important correction to the atomistic individualism Freud inherited from the nineteenth century and which he in fact exploded without, it seems, fully realizing what he had done. In this context, Lacan naturally turns to the work on jokes and reads it seriously, because the joke is not only structurally equivalent to a derivative of the unconscious, employing mechanisms similar to those involved in any kind of symptom, including the dream, but it also necessarily involves someone to whom it must be told (the “third person”—t.n. 78), without which it may be comic, but cannot be a joke. Lacan’s introduction of the notion of the Other is of value here, since Freud expressly says that what distinguishes mechanisms like condensation, displacement, and indirect representation in the dream from the same mechanisms in jokes is that jokes are of a social nature, whereas dreams are not. Freud describes the dream as “having nothing to communicate to anybody else; it arises within the subject as a compromise between the mental forces struggling in him, it remains unintelligible to the subject himself, and is for that reason totally uninteresting to other people.” A dream is a wish, whereas a joke is “developed play.” But their function is not in fact so dissimilar: “Dreams serve predominantly for the avoidance of unpleasure [*Unlust*], jokes for the attainment of pleasure; but all our mental activities converge in these two aims.”<sup>50</sup> Today one would say that the dream wish is certainly addressed to someone; it is part of an interhuman discourse, which, although expressed intrasubjectively, will also be expressed intersubjectively.

<sup>50</sup> *Jokes and the Unconscious* (1905), *Standard Edition*, VIII, 179–80.

The very fact of the dream presupposes the existence of others; its message can be used for or against others; one of the “mental forces” within the subject *is* another. Obviously someone is trying to tell someone something; the dream wish is addressed ambiguously to the (significant) other and distorted in such a way as to hide the truth expressed. It is not a monologue, and it is the task of the analyst in the end to reveal to whom the dream is speaking.

To sum up: in view of the multiple ways in which Lacan employs “the Other,” we might supplement the suggested translation of *l’Autre* as “the unconscious” or “Otherness” by the expression “Thirdness.” Thus in a recent broadcast over French radio, Lacan defined the Other as follows: “The Other with a big ‘O’ is the scene of the Word insofar as the scene of the Word is always in third position between two subjects. This is only in order to introduce the dimension of Truth, which is made perceptible, as it were, under the inverted sign of the lie.”

Lacan’s view of the dream as communication is not entirely an addition to Freud, however, for when Freud introduced the concept of the “splitting of the ego” in his later works, he laid emphasis upon the message of the dream, which, in psychosis, may actually provide a straightforward and undistorted interpretation of the subject’s delusions for him. In this instance the dream is a message from the level at which “reality” is recognized to the coexisting level at which it is disavowed, the two attitudes existing in simultaneous contradiction. Moreover, even in acute cases of hallucinatory psychosis, the subject will speak of a “normal” person in the corner of his mind, watching the psychosis pass by like a spectator.<sup>51</sup>

This view of the dream returns us to Lacan’s use of the Symbolic. If no man’s actions are symbolic in themselves, as Lévi-Strauss asserts, then their symbolic nature is dependent upon the Other (upon the unconscious and the other). Even if the subject is “talking to himself,” the category of the Other plays its part. But in the analytical relationship itself there is always another waiting to assume the function of the Other; thus the subject’s dreams become an external dialogue, whether the analyst replies or not. The dialogue is symbolic in that it is one unconscious seeking out another unconscious—demanding countertransference in fact—since the Other is the guarantor of Truth.

<sup>51</sup> See Chapter VIII of the posthumous *Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1940), *Standard Edition*, XXIV, notably pp. 201–4.

The Symbolic has wider connotations also. In another sense it is exactly equivalent to Lévi-Strauss's notion of the "world of rules" and the "symbolic relationships" into which we are born and to which we learn to conform, however much our dreams may express our wish for a disorder or a counterorder. The "familial constellation" into which we arrive as strangers to humanity is already part of it. The Symbolic is the unconscious order for Lacan, just as it is for Lévi-Strauss, however divergent their intentions. Thus it designates a symbolic structure based on a linguistic model composed of chains of signifiers (some of which, however—the somatic symptoms, for instance—are in fact signs). And in the same way that Lévi-Strauss's concept of the "symbolic function" in human society depends upon the *law* which founds society (the law of incest), so Lacan's notion of the Symbolic order depends upon the law of the father. This is his notion of the Symbolic father, or what he calls the Name-of-the-Father—that is, a signifier in a linguistic model—which is related to his theory of psychosis (t.n. 96).

*The Name-of-the-Father: Lacan and Psychosis*

The Symbolic father is not a real or an Imaginary father (*imago*), but corresponds to the mythical Symbolic father of *Totem and Taboo*. The requirements of Freud's theory, says Lacan, led him "to link the apparition of the signifier of the Father, as author of the Law, to death, or rather to the murder of the Father, thus demonstrating that if this murder is the fruitful moment of the debt through which the subject binds himself for life to the Law, the Symbolic Father, insofar as he signifies that Law, is actually the dead Father."<sup>52</sup> This primal of all primal scenes is related in Freud to the "primal repression," for which Lacan substitutes the terms "constituting metaphor" or "paternal metaphor." It is through the failure of this paternal metaphor, according to Lacan, that the psychotic is induced to foreclude (*verwerfen*) the Name-of-the-Father. Since the Name-of-the-Father has never been successfully repressed, it is rejected, and with it, asserts Lacan, the whole Symbolic order. If the subject employs figures of speech and metaphors in his delusions, it is because the signifier and the signified have coalesced for

<sup>52</sup> "Traitement possible de la psychose" (1958), pp. 24–25. This article, which is a summary of Lacan's interpretation of the case of Schreber analyzed by Freud and of Schreber's own book, *Memoirs of my nervous illness* (1903), develops the notion of the Symbolic and the Law in detail.

him to the point that he cannot tell symbol from the thing symbolized, or word from thing presentation. In some respects his discourse may resemble what linguists call autonomous messages, that is to say, messages about words rather than messages employing words. But eventually he will lose all his metalinguistic capacities, or so it will seem from outside.

In the seminar of March–April, 1957, Lacan clarifies somewhat the notion of the symbolic function of the father. "Through the Oedipus complex," says Lacan, "the child takes on the phallus as a signifier, which supposes a confrontation with the function of the father." Whereas the girl's passage through this stage is relatively simple, the boy's is not. The Oedipus complex must permit him to identify himself with his own sex and must provide for him to accede to the position of a father, through what Lacan calls the "symbolic debt." He has the organ; the function must come from the Other (the Other beyond the other represented by his father, says Lacan): the Symbolic father.

. . . The boy enters the Oedipus complex by a half-fraternal rivalry with his father. He manifests an aggressivity comparable to that revealed in the specular relation (either *moi* or other). But the father appears in this game as the one who has the master trump and who knows it; in a word, he appears as the Symbolic father. The Symbolic father is to be distinguished from the Imaginary father (often . . . surprisingly distant from the real father) to whom is related the whole dialectic of aggressivity and identification. In all strictness the Symbolic father is to be conceived as "transcendent," as an irreducible given of the signifier. The Symbolic father—he who is ultimately capable of saying "I am who I am"—can only be imperfectly incarnate in the real father. He is nowhere. . . . The real father takes over from the Symbolic father. This is why the real father has a decisive function in castration, which is always deeply marked by his intervention or thrown off balance by his absence . . . .

Castration may derive support from *privation*, that is to say, from the apprehension in the Real of the absence of the penis in women—but even this supposes a symbolization of the object, since the Real is full, and "lacks" nothing. Insofar as one finds castration in the genesis of neurosis, it is never real but symbolic, and it is aimed at an Imaginary object (pp. 851–52).

The notion of the primal repression (*Urverdrängung*) is difficult enough in Freud; it remains to be seen whether Lacan's view of the primal metaphor helps to clarify it. Freud was led to suppose the existence of a primal repression in his metapsychology by the empirical fact that repression works in two ways: on the one hand the repressed idea is

pushed out of consciousness; on the other, it is attracted into the unconscious by the ideational representatives already there. This double movement seems in fact to have operated in the Signorelli incident, where Freud's conscious desire to suppress his thoughts on death and sexuality seems to have been converted into a repression lasting several days because of the attraction exerted by unconscious representatives of Eros and Thanatos.

The primal repression stands for Freud at the level of the constitution of the unconscious (for Lacan, the creation of the barrier) at some time during the child's advent to humanity. It has all the characteristics of a mythical supposition, like that through which Lévi-Strauss supposes language to have been constituted in one fell swoop, or that in which he posits the incest prohibition as the determining factor in the progress from nature to society. It is unlikely that any of these notions will ever be verifiable. But as a methodological supposition in Freud's metapsychology, the primal repression is that which denies to consciousness or to the preconscious certain primordial instinctual representatives in certain forms, and which seems to account for certain types of universal repression (of the death instinct, perhaps). But since he also views the psychotic as speaking his unconscious discourse directly ("treating words like things," that is, like the thing presentations of the unconscious), the notion of a miscarriage of the primal repression—whose duty it is to establish an (undefined) "fixation," according to Freud—in psychosis is not entirely foreign to the text of Freud. Lacanian analysts have thus sought to describe this fixation in terms of an anchoring or fixing of the "non-verbal" unconscious chain of the discourse which would allow the symbolization essential to the conscious chain to take place.<sup>53</sup>

Outside these seemingly irresolvable theoretical difficulties, the fact that the theory of psychosis in psychoanalysis is closely related to the function of the father in the Oedipal triangle puts Lacan's theory of the paternal metaphor well within the Freudian tradition. And his insistence on its linguistic aspects is also derived from the Freud who said of Schreber's case: ". . . It is a remarkable fact that the familiar principal forms of paranoia can all be represented as contradictions of the single proposition: 'I (a man) love him (a man),' and indeed that they exhaust

<sup>53</sup> See: Leclaire and Laplanche, "L'Inconscient," *Les Temps Modernes*, No. 183 (July, 1961), pp. 81-129, notably p. 115.

all the possible ways in which such contradictions could be formulated."<sup>54</sup> (This remains true whether one regards homosexuality as a cause or as a symptom in psychosis.)

In seeking to view the Symbolic as providing a means of anchoring our personal appropriation of language to the linguistic code controlled by the Other (t.n. 183), Lacan is pleased enough, since Lévi-Strauss, to call this theory a myth. The notion of anchoring is logical enough. Certainly, if the meaning of a word is always another word, a determined perusal of our linguistic dictionary will eventually return us to our starting point. Perhaps language is in fact totally tautologous in the sense that it can only in the end talk about itself, but in any event, Lacan has suggested that there must be some privileged "anchoring points" (the *points de capiton*), points like the buttons on a mattress or the intersections in quilting, where there is a "pinning down" (*capitonage*) of meaning, not to an object, but rather by "reference back" to a symbolic function. The tautologous, "unanchored" *glissement* of the signifier over the signified is in fact an aspect of certain types of schizophrenic language, where the correspondence of the subject's language to the "reality" accepted in normal discourse has somehow become unhinged, so that one may discover the schizophrenic at the mercy of binary semantic oppositions structurally similar to the child's first semantic or phonemic acts, but in which the opposition is valued over the content. The similarity is not an actual one—that is, there is no question of real regression—but, as Jakobson has noted in his influential article on aphasia (1956), in certain kinds of aphasia the patient loses first what the child learns last—usually shifters relating him to his entourage—and retains to the end what the child learns first.

In their article on the unconscious Leclaire and Laplanche have this to say about the constitution of the Symbolic order:

It is here that J. Lacan introduces his theory of the '*points de capiton*' through which, at certain privileged points, the signifying chain, in his view, comes to fix itself to the signified. It would be incorrect to see in this theory a surreptitious return to a nominalist theory, where the function of controlling the circulation of language might be considered as having devolved on to a link with some 'real' object, or on to what certain modern experimenters call 'conditioning.'

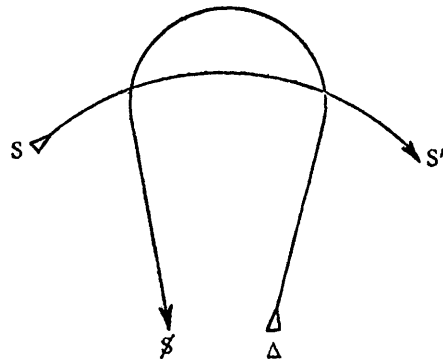
<sup>54</sup> *Standard Edition*, XII, 62-65.

In dealing with their use of the “primal metaphor,” Leclaire and Laplanche go on to quote from one of Lacan’s unpublished seminars (1958), noting that the possibility of meaning in language is absolutely dependent upon the nonunivocity of words, for otherwise no substitutions (definitions, metaphors, synonyms) could take place:

“Between the two chains . . . those of the signifiers in relationship to all the ambulatory signifieds which are in constant circulation because they are always in a process of transposition [*glissement*], the ‘pinning down’ I speak of, or the *point de capiton*, is mythical, for no one has ever been able to pin a signification on a signifier; but on the other hand what *can* be done is to pin one signifier to another signifier and see what happens. But in this case something new is invariably produced . . . in other words, the surging forth of a new signification . . .” (p. 112).

In Lacan’s “Subversion du sujet et dialectique du désir” (1966), the *point de capiton* is defined in purely linguistic terms as that by which the signifier brings the indefinite *glissement* of signification to a stop. The diachronic function of the *point de capiton* in the sentence, according to Lacan, is that function which describes the process of signification in speech. The signification of a sentence remains “open” until its final term (including punctuation). Each term is anticipated by those which precede it in the construction of the sentence, and, inversely, the *meaning* of the sentence is *retroactively* revealed by a sort of reading backwards from the end.

This progressive-regressive movement is symbolized in a diagram (*Ecrits*, p. 805):



in which the vector  $S \rightarrow S'$  represents the “support of the chain of signifiers” (the passage of the subject) and  $\Delta \rightarrow \sigma$ , the reading backwards which Lacan expresses by saying that the subject receives his own message from the Other in an inverted form (t.n. 147). This “general formula of transsubjective communication” is clarified elsewhere by another diagram in which the *loci* where the vector  $S \rightarrow S'$  crosses  $\Delta \rightarrow \sigma$  are defined respectively as the locus of the message and the locus of the code. In other words, for the complete message of the conscious subject to be understood (by the emitter or by the receiver) at any level at all, there must be an unconscious reading in reverse at the *end* of the message, a reference to the locus of the code *after* the complete message has been received (the message consisting if necessary of a series of significant “bits”). This reading backwards is the interpretation of the message (cf. *Ecrits*, p. 56), and the general notion of the *point de capiton* outside any particular sentence or discourse is that fixed relationship to a symbolic function which is the prerequisite for any messages at all to pass between subjects. It is this “fixation” which is rejected in advanced psychosis, where all attempts to communicate apparently cease but speech may not.

Lacan’s interpretation of psychosis and its relation to the Symbolic order stems in part from widely accepted conclusions about the language of psychosis, as expressed, for example, in the following passage from Kurt Goldstein, where the latter is comparing schizophrenic language and the language of patients with brain damage. The patient’s capacity for abstract attitudes and abstract thought is impaired:

. . . The process of disintegration in the direction of concrete behavior does not prevent the arousal of ideas and thoughts; what it actually affects and modifies is the way of manipulating and operating them. Thoughts do arise, but they can only become effective in a concrete way: just as the patient cannot deal with outer-world objects in a conceptual frame of reference, so he deals with ideas simply as things which belong to an object or situation. Concepts, meaning, categories—other than situation means-end relations—are not within his scope.

And later:

Concrete behavior means that in our behavior and activity we are governed, to an abnormal degree, by the outer-world stimuli which present themselves to us, and by the images, ideas, and thoughts which act upon us at the moment . . . . The demarcation between the outer world and [the schizo-

phrenic's] ego is more or less suspended or modified in comparison with the normal . . . . He does not consider the object as part of an ordered outer world separated from himself, as the normal person does.<sup>55</sup>

It will at once be seen how Goldstein's view matches Freud's metapsychological remarks on the language of schizophrenia in 1914 and 1915. Although Freud generally regards condensation and displacement as distinguishing marks of the primary (unconscious) psychical process and considers language to be part of the (conscious and preconscious) secondary process, his distinction between word presentations and thing presentations (t.n. 66) enabled him to account for both the similarities and the differences between dream language and schizophrenic language. In the dream the dream thoughts regress "through the unconscious" to images (thing presentations) and are modified by condensation and displacement in the process. In schizophrenia on the other hand, "words are subject to the same process as that which makes the dream-images out of latent dream thoughts—to what we have called the primary psychical process. They undergo condensation and by means of displacement transfer their cathexes to one another in their entirety. The process may go so far that a single word, if it is especially suitable on account of its numerous connections, takes over the representation of a whole train of thought."<sup>56</sup> "The dream-work too," he adds, "occasionally treats words like things, and so creates very similar 'schizophrenic' utterances or neologisms." But there is an important difference between the two "languages": "In [schizophrenia], what becomes the subject of modifications by the primary process are the words themselves in which the preconscious thought was expressed; in dreams, what are subject to this modification are not the words, but the thing-presentations to which the words have been taken back. In dreams there is free communication between (*Pcs.*) word-cathexes and (*Ucs.*) thing-cathexes, while it is characteristic of schizophrenia that this communication is cut off."<sup>57</sup> Thus at the end of the article on the unconscious he states simply that an attempted characterization of the schizophrenic's mode of thought would be to say "that he treats concrete things as though they were abstract" (p. 204).

<sup>55</sup> "Methodological Approach to the Study of Schizophrenic Thought Disorder" (1939), in: *Language and Thought in Schizophrenia*, ed. J. S. Kasanin (New York: Norton, 1964), pp. 20–21, 23.

<sup>56</sup> "The Unconscious" (1915), *Standard Edition*, XIV, 199.

<sup>57</sup> "The Metapsychology of Dreams" (1915), *Standard Edition*, XIV, 229.

In speaking of the "paternal metaphor," Lacan is dealing with the wider theoretical justification of his view of the role of *Verwerfung* in psychosis.

The notion of *Verwerfung* springs from Freud's use of the term in the Wolf Man's "rejection (repudiation) of castration in the sense of repression" (t.n. 104)—and as Lacan notes in the *Discours*, the Wolf Man did eventually become psychotic. From the terminological point of view, the notion of *Verwerfung* is to be related to the more strictly discursive term *Verleugnung* (disavowal), which is that upon which Freud relies in his discussion of the psychoses after about 1923. The idea is sometimes expressed as "a withdrawal of cathexis [*Besetzung*] from reality," related to the so-called loss of reality in psychosis. *Verleugnung* is central to his remarks on fetishism (1927)—which, as a perversion, is closer to psychosis than neurosis—where he makes the distinction between "repression" (*Verdrängung*) and "disavowal" (of castration).<sup>58</sup> That his views depend upon an interpretation or value judgment—the castration complex—as well as upon observation, does not of course necessarily invalidate their more general application, especially since the concept of repudiation is intimately connected with the function of judgment itself in his metapsychological article of 1925 on the *Verneinung*. Lacan, as I have noted, relates the whole question to the phallus, the partial object, castration, and frustration.

Insofar as the *Verleugnung* is both a "disavowal of reality" connected with the "splitting of the *Ich*" in the later articles on neurosis and psychosis, as well as a disavowal of castration, the use of the term does seem to be comparable to the use of the term *Verwerfung* in the much earlier analysis of the Wolf Man (1914). Moreover, although Freud does speak of repression in connection with the psychoses, this usage seems to be the result of an incompletely formalized distinction, since his considered view is that repression is the operative factor only in neurosis. And indeed Freud does note in the very first paragraph of the article "Repression" (1915)<sup>59</sup> that "repression is a preliminary stage of condemnation."

The German terms involved are variously translated in the *Standard*

<sup>58</sup> "Fetishism" (1927), *Standard Edition*, XII, 152.

In the article "Anatomical Sex-distinction" (1925), *Standard Edition*, XIX, Freud describes disavowal as "a process which in the mental life of children seems neither uncommon nor very dangerous but which in an adult would mean the beginning of a psychosis" (p. 253).

<sup>59</sup> *Standard Edition*, XIV, 148.



*Edition.* Provided we keep in mind the normal fluctuation that is constitutive of Freud's terminology and hypotheses, it seems that "rejection," "repudiation," "condemnation," "negative judgment," "condemning judgment"—the various renderings of *Verwerfung*, *Verurteilung*, and *Urteilsverwerfung*—are synonymous in the text of Freud. In both the case of little Hans (1909), and the case of the Wolf Man (1918 [1914]), "repression" is distinguished from "condemnation" or "condemning judgment."<sup>60</sup> And in the 1925 article on "Negation," of which Lacan's commentary (1956) is the first to deal systematically with the concept of *Verwerfung* (t.n. 23), Freud states that: "A negative judgment [*Verurteilung*] is the intellectual equivalent of or substitute [*Ersatz*] for repression; its 'no' is a hallmark, a certificate of origin as it were, something like 'Made in Germany.'" Through the mediation of the "symbol of negation" (*Verneinungssymbol*), thought frees itself from the consequences of repression and enriches itself with a content which is essential for its accomplishment.<sup>61</sup> This conception, notes the editor, goes back at least to the work on jokes (1905), where Freud points out that there is no way of telling whether any element in a dream which has a possible contrary is actually positive or negative. No process resembling "judging" seems to occur in the unconscious, he goes on: "In the place of rejection by a judgment, what we find in the unconscious is 'repression.' Repression may, without doubt, be correctly described as the intermediate stage between a defensive reflex and a condemning judgment."<sup>62</sup>

In Freud's metapsychology, the *Verneinung* to which the negative judgment is related is described as the "derivative of expulsion" from the "primary *Ich*," a concept described elsewhere in the article on negation by the verb *werfen* (eject). Affirmation (*Bejahung*) is correlative to introjection. This idea is central to Lacan's view of "repudiation," and, as Laplanche and Pontalis note in their article "*Forclusion*," Freud had said of psychosis in 1894 that it involved a much more energetic and successful "means of defense" against "incompatible ideas" than "repression" or "transposition of affect" in neurosis and hysteria: "Here, the ego rejects [*verwirft*] the incompatible [*unverträglich*] idea together with

<sup>60</sup> See, for example: *Standard Edition*, X, 145; and XVII, 79–80 ("eine Verdrängung ist etwas anderes als eine Verwerfung").

<sup>61</sup> *Standard Edition*, XIX, 124.

<sup>62</sup> *Standard Edition*, VIII, 175.

its affect and behaves as if the idea had never occurred to the ego at all."<sup>63</sup> This is clearly the germ of the much later technical use of the term *Verleugnung* to describe the psychotic's "incomplete attempts at detachment from reality." "The disavowal is always supplemented by an acknowledgment; two contrary and independent attitudes always arise and result in the situation of there being a splitting of the ego [*Ichspaltung*]."<sup>64</sup> This split differs from that in neurosis, where it is repression which occasions a split between "ego" and "id," since the contrary attitudes in psychosis are entirely at the level of the concrete discourse. Laplanche and Pontalis note the other terms used by Freud in similar ways: *ablehnen*<sup>65</sup> and *aufheben*.<sup>66</sup>

Lacan develops the concept of *Verwerfung* out of the case of the Wolf Man and the metapsychology of the *Verneinung*, which he describes as "mythical." Laplanche and Pontalis point out that Lacan's view corresponds to Freud's constant attempts to define a defense mechanism proper to psychosis. In the case of Schreber, for instance, the concept of projection, which is for Freud on the one hand the counterpart of introjection, and on the other, a defense typical of paranoia, is first viewed as a rejection toward the exterior and distinguished (as a symptom) from the "return of the repressed" in neurosis. But Freud goes on to correct himself: "It was incorrect to say that the perception which was suppressed [*unterdrückt*] internally is projected outwards; the truth is rather . . . that what was abolished [*das Aufgehobene*] internally returns from without" (*loc. cit.*). This conception is the key to Lacan's commentary on the *Verwerfung* (1956). In demonstrating how the Wolf Man interpreted the "primal scene" (parental intercourse, real or phantasied, *a tergo*) *nachträglich*, that is to say, how it became meaningful for him, Freud shows how the "literal" interpretation by the subject—at an age before he could conceive of castration—co-existed in the adult with the deferred interpretation of what he had seen, in the light of castration.

<sup>63</sup> "The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence" (1894), *Standard Edition*, III, 58.

<sup>64</sup> *An Outline of Psycho-analysis* (1940 [1938]), *Standard Edition*, XXIII, 204. See also the unfinished paper on the splitting of the ego in the same volume (pp. 275–78) where Freud comments: "The whole process seems so strange to us because we take for granted the synthetic nature of the processes of the ego" (p. 276).

<sup>65</sup> "Turning away," "keeping at a distance," for example, in: "Repression" (1914), *Standard Edition*, XIV, 147; and in: "The Unconscious" in the same volume, p. 203.

<sup>66</sup> "Suppress and conserve," usually translated "abolish" or "lift." See the case of Schreber, *Standard Edition*, XII, 71; and the article on negation already cited.

"He rejected [*verwarf*] castration and held to his theory of intercourse by the anus . . . . He would have nothing to do with [castration], in the sense of repression. This really involved no judgment upon the question of its existence, but it was the same as if it did not exist."<sup>67</sup> Thus two contrary ideas existed side by side at the level of the discourse, the disavowal and the acknowledgment. Lacan formulates his view on the basis of the "primary process" in the child, as described in the article on negation, involving two operations: "the *Einbeziehung ins Ich*, the introduction into the subject, and the *Ausstossung aus dem Ich*, the expulsion outside the subject,"<sup>68</sup> which, as I have already pointed out, are related by Freud to *Bejahung* and to *Verneinung*, respectively. Since the rejection of castration by the Wolf Man was in Freud's words "as if it did not exist," and since part of Freud's argument in the article on negation is to describe the function of judgment (*Urteil*) as (1) affirming (*zusprechen*) or disaffirming (*absprechen*) attributes to things, and (2) asserting or disputing the existence of a presentation in reality (*Realität*), Lacan seeks to view affirmation or introjection as a "primordial symbolization" of reality, and negation or expulsion as "constituting the Real [for the subject] as the domain which exists outside symbolization" (p. 48). *Verwerfung*, as a form of negation, consists therefore in *not* symbolizing what should have been symbolized—castration, in the case of the Wolf Man. The *Verwerfung* consequently amounts to a "symbolic abolition" (p. 46): "The *Verwerfung* therefore cut short any manifestation of the Symbolic order [for the Wolf Man]. That is to say, it cut short the *Bejahung* which Freud posits as the primary process in which attributive judgment is rooted, and which is nothing other than the primordial condition for something out of the Real to offer itself to the revelation of being, or, to employ a Heideggerian term, for it to be 'let be'" (p. 47). But what was not "let be" in that aborted *Bejahung*? Since the subject, in Freud's words, wanted to know nothing about castration "in the sense of repression," Lacan proposes that it was this very meaning itself which was lost in the incomplete symbolization. With castration not repressed, there was nowhere for the "return of the repressed" (the symptom) to return to (as it returns to the subject's

<sup>67</sup> *Standard Edition*, XVII, 84.

<sup>68</sup> "Réponse au commentaire de J. Hyppolite sur la *Verneinung* de Freud" (1956), p. 48.

"history" in normal neurosis). And if Freud means what he says about affirmation and negation, then what was wrongly rejected (expulsed), that is to say, what never "came to the light of the Symbolic," *must logically appear in the Real* (the domain outside symbolization). In Freud's words: "what was abolished internally returns from without."

And this is precisely what happened. ". . . The castration which was 'cut out' [forecluded] of the limits even of the possible by the subject," Lacan continues, "and furthermore, by this very fact, withdrawn from the possibilities of the Word, will appear erratically in the Real—that is to say, in relationships of resistance with no transference—or, as I would put it . . . it will appear as a punctuation without a text" (p. 48). What happened was that unlike the neurotic symptom which is always an interpretation of what is repressed (for example, "Botticelli") and which provides a form of defense or gratification in itself, the equivalent incident in the Wolf Man's case was a hallucination. In one version he thought he had cut his finger off; in another, he cut into a tree and blood oozed from the wound. In both incidents the subject was horrified to the point of *speechlessness*. This, says Lacan, is an "interversion" of the Signorelli incident: "In the latter, the subject lost the disposition of a signifier; in the present case, he halts before the strangeness of the signified" (p. 50). Both correspond to gaps in the Symbolic order, where "the voids are as significant [*signifiants*] as the plenums." The hallucination itself in this instance is not simply Imaginary, because it is a symbol which has been originally cut out of the Symbolic itself.

". . . Reading Freud today, it certainly seems that it is the gaping of a void which constitutes the first step of his whole dialectical movement [that is, the Signorelli incident of 1898]. This seems certainly to explain the insistence of the schizophrenic in reiterating this step. In vain, since for him all the Symbolic is real" (p. 52). Thus—to quote Laplanche and Pontalis—foreclusion as a psychotic mechanism is to be considered as "a primordial rejection of a fundamental 'signifier' (for example: the phallus in so far as it is a signifier of the castration complex) from the symbolic universe of the subject." It differs from repression in that (1) "the forecluded signifiers are not integrated into the unconscious of the subject," and that (2), "they do not come back 'from the interior,'" as in the return of the repressed, but return "in the heart of the real, singularly in the hallucinatory phenomenon."

Lacan's view of the loss of reality (*Realitätsverlust*)<sup>69</sup> in psychosis is therefore that of a loss of symbolic reality. In the widest sense, this seems to be a double-pronged idea. On the one hand the psychotic's difficulties in relating to people around him would correspond to a loss of the "symbolic function" of which Lévi-Strauss speaks. Thus the psychotic's world, in the extreme case, is totally nonsymbolic; he has withdrawn not from reality, but from human reality (t.n. 102). On the other hand, the very common instances in aphasia (of which Goldstein speaks), where the subject has lost the "divine power of abstraction [*Verstand*]," in Hegel's terms, is clearly related to his inability to employ what Lévi-Strauss calls *la pensée symbolique*. The aphasiac who cannot classify different colored and different shaped pieces of card or cloth has lost the taxonomic power of human thought, which appears to be universal in all societies and especially developed in the *pensée sauvage* of the so-called primitive cultures. What he has lost, it seems, is the power of *mapping* external reality which we exert by placing that reality on a symbolic "background." This is in effect the loss of the ability to intentionalize reality; the psychotic is simply too close to it. Thus, in speaking of amentia (an acute type of hallucinatory confusion), Freud points out that "not only is the acceptance of new perceptions refused [by the ego], but the internal world, too, which, as a copy of the external world, has up till now represented it, loses its significance [*Bedeutung*] (its cathexis)." <sup>70</sup> And later:

But, whereas the new, imaginary external world of a psychosis attempts to put itself in the place of external reality, that of a neurosis, on the contrary, is apt, like the play of children, to attach itself to a piece of reality—a different piece from the one against which it has to defend itself—and to lend that piece a special importance and a secret meaning which we (not always quite appropriately) call a *symbolic* one. Thus we see that both in neurosis and psychosis there comes into consideration the question not only of a *loss of reality* but also of a *substitute for reality*.<sup>71</sup>

In Lacan's terminology, the substituted reality in neurosis or psychosis could be called metonymic (a displacement from one instance of reality

to another) or metaphorical (a symbolic substitute), except that the "loss of reality" in psychosis would amount to a loss of the ability to distinguish the system of signifiers from the system of signifieds, and thus the coalescence of what for the neurotic is still symbolically separated. Lacan's view is thus also an interpretation of Freud's distinction between normal language (sustained by repression)—where both word presentations and thing presentations are found—and schizophrenic language (dependent on rejection)—where, as in the unconscious, only thing presentations are found, according to Freud. The loss of the abstractive power of thought in psychosis would correspond to the loss of the ability to handle word presentations in their normal symbolic way, since they have coalesced with the conscious and unconscious thing presentations. At the same time, what Freud describes as communication between (*Pcs.*) word cathexes and (*Ucs.*) thing cathexes has been cut off—what we call "meaning" has become "detached" from what we call "reality" (the reality of the *Vorstellungen*) by the fact that the psychotic can no longer distinguish one from the other.

And here at least one aspect of the multivalency of the structural view vindicates itself as an especially successful shorthand. If Lacan means "things" by "the signified," the psychotic is handling signifiers like signifieds (words like things); if Lacan means "images," the psychotic is handling words like unintentionalized images. On the other hand, if Lacan means "the unconscious discourse," there has been a crossing of the bar between consciousness and the unconscious in the psychotic: he speaks Freud's schizophrenic language. Yet again, if the psychotic is at the mercy of any kind of binary opposition, and he often is, then the semantic values of his discourse have "regressed" to phonemic values; Lacan can speak of the "unconscious chain of signifiers" (the signified is ultimately a signifier) and mean a series of opposing distinctive features governed by the compulsion to repeat (the *Fort! Da!*) and its relation to the phantasy.

To sum up rather simply: repression is thwarted by the coalescence between consciousness and the unconscious in the psychotic (who *says* he wants to murder his father and sleep with his mother); the subject has to protect himself and attempt his own cure by a different process: rejection (condemnation) or disavowal (he does *not* want to kill his father; his father wants to kill him . . .). And in the light of these views, however systematically simplified they may be for the purposes

<sup>69</sup> For Freud, this concept goes back to the Draft K in the correspondence to Fliess (1896). See: *The Origins of Psychoanalysis* (1954), p. 146. The "alteration" or "malformation" of the *Ich* at this date is not without relevance to the much later idea of the splitting of the ego.

<sup>70</sup> "Neurosis and Psychosis" (1924), *Standard Edition*, XIX, 150–51.

<sup>71</sup> "Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis" (1924), *Standard Edition*, XIX, 187.

of this exposition, one especially interesting idea is revealed: that for Freud "the withdrawal of cathexis," and perhaps the whole notion of cathexis itself, has ultimately to be interpreted in terms of meaning (intentionality). Reality doesn't lose its significance for the psychotic, it loses its signification.

## V

*The Belle Âme: Freud, Lacan, and Hegel*

Lacan makes constant reference in his earlier works to the dialectic of the *belle âme* (*die schöne Seele*) in the *Phenomenology*, which is a repetition at another level of the confrontation of the master and the slave. The *Phenomenology* is in fact a repeated dialectic of the confrontation of self and other. This confrontation is external in the dialectic of the master and the slave, or in that of the noble consciousness and the base consciousness, or in that of the sinning and the judging consciousness, or in that of the active consciousness and the *belle âme*. It becomes internal, for instance, through the internalization of these conflicts within the unhappy consciousness. Although the otherness involved is sometimes itself or "the world" in a modern phenomenological and existential sense, and although the various stages of the journey of consciousness are tied to historical and literary models, the level of abstraction and the quality of intuitive psychological insight is such as to allow a more or less coherent reading in terms of "interpersonal relations" mediated by the discourse. The traditional reading of the *Phenomenology* has always had either to accept or to gloss over the implied necessity or causality of the movement from one moment of the over-all dialectic to another—which reminds us that Hegel is primarily describing what *has* happened (in history) and not what must happen (for us). But there is another Hegel waiting to be read today: the man who accomplished an extraordinary *tour de force* in a conceptual coalescence of the diachronic and the synchronic, the man who showed precisely what Goethe meant to say by "man remains the same but humanity progresses [changes]." It is for this reason that the man who *also* reads Hegel the way he would read Proust will always come to a wider comprehension of the *Phenomenology* than the man who reads him *only* as he would read Kant.

Moreover, the role of necessary alienation (*Entäusserung*) through otherness in the dialectical formation of the human "personality"—ex-

plicitly or implicitly dependent upon a repeated desire for recognition—is clear enough, and not necessarily to be confused with the use of a stronger word (*Entfremdung*) in the Marxian or modern sense. Jean Hyppolite has summarized the notion of formation lying behind Hegel's systematic elaboration of alienation in the following terms:

. . . The two terms formation [*culture: Bildung*] and alienation [*Entäusserung*] have a very similar meaning [for Hegel]. It is by the alienation of his natural being that a determinate individual cultivates and forms himself for essentiality. One might put it more precisely by saying that for Hegel self-formation is only conceivable through the mediation of alienation or estrangement [*Entfremdung*]. Self-formation is not to develop harmoniously as if by organic growth, but rather to become opposed to oneself and to rediscover oneself through a splitting [*déchirement*] and a separation.<sup>72</sup>

The dialectic of the *Phenomenology* is a dialectic of cognition, mis-cognition, and recognition, based on the notion that through consciousness of the other one attains consciousness of self on the condition of being recognized by the other. But this recognition is further to recognize that one's self is the other or that the other is oneself. Hegel seeks an intersubjective recognition, that is to say, a reconciliation of the opposition of self and other. The repeated reversal of opposites is like what the French would call *un jeu de miroirs*; the role of identification is constitutive in these reversals. The similarity of the dialectic to the actual progress of an analysis was first noted by Lacan in the "Intervention sur le transfert" in 1951, where he analyzes Freud's countertransference onto Dora in Hegelian terms (t.n. 159). There is an unconscious in the *Phenomenology* which would bear analysis in the light of Freud; equally interesting, perhaps, would be the application of the discursive mechanism of *Verneinung* (t.n. 11) both to Hegel's conception of negativity and to the repeated denials or repressions of the truth expressed by the various stages of the consciousness on its journey toward absolute subjectivity.

Freud does in fact extend the notion of *Verneinung* to a conception constitutive of judgment itself, and in the discussion of the relationship of the *Verneinung* to repression, he is very naturally led to employ the Hegelian terms of dialectical negation (*Aufhebung*) as well: "The content of a repressed presentation or thought can thus make its way through to consciousness on the condition that it lets itself be negated. The *Ver-*

<sup>72</sup> *Genèse et structure de la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit* (Paris: Aubier, 1946), II, 372.

*neinung* is a way to take cognizance [*Kenntnis*] of what is repressed; indeed it is already a 'lifting and conserving' [*Aufhebung*] of the repression, but not for all that an acceptance [*Annahme*] of what is repressed."<sup>73</sup> In another terminology, one would say that repression in history is constitutive of our essential social myths—such as the myth of the American Revolution, for instance. In Freud's article, moreover, the whole concept of negation (which is a fact of the discourse) is related to death, exactly as the time of the discourse in Hegel is so related:

Affirmation—as an equivalent of unification [with external reality]—belongs to the Eros; negation—the derivative of expulsion [from the "primary ego"]—belongs to the instinct of destruction [the death instinct].<sup>[74]</sup> The pleasure in universal denegation, the negativism of many psychotics is very probably to be understood as a symptomatic-mark or sign [*Anzeichen*] of the defusion of the instincts [*Triebentmischung*] through the withdrawal [*Abzug*] of the libidinal components (*ibid.*).<sup>75</sup>

These similarities between Hegel and Freud require a much closer examination than it is possible to enter into here. But it is not surprising to find Norman O. Brown calling for an interpretation of Freud in the light of Kojève's commentary on Hegel's concept of time and for an interpretation of Hegel in the light of the Freudian doctrine of repression and the unconscious. He goes on to point out that "It is not the consciousness of death that is transformed into aggression, but the unconscious death instinct; the unconscious death instinct is that negativity or nothingness which is extroverted into the action of negating nature and other men."<sup>76</sup>

To return to the Hegelian dialectic: Kojève notes its circularity. In fact, however, it is more like a spiral whose two ends are synchronically (or structurally) identical but which are separated diachronically in time by History—that is to say, by the Sage's coming to be conscious of his own absolute mortality. Detached from the unacceptable philosophy of nature which underlies Hegel's dialectic, and with no necessary acceptance of the final transcendence and reconciliation, the *Phenomenology* remains one of the truly profound psychological works of the nineteenth century.

<sup>73</sup> "Negation" (1925), *Standard Edition*, XIX, 239. Translation slightly modified.

<sup>74</sup> "Die Bejahung—als Ersatz der Vereinigung—gehört dem Eros an, die Vereinigung—Nachfolge des Ausstossung—dem Destruktionstrieb." See the commentary by Lacan and Hyppolite (1956).

<sup>75</sup> See Section IV, on the "withdrawal of cathexis."

<sup>76</sup> *Life against Death*, p. 102.

Indeed, its very repetitions of similar structures beg to be considered in the light of the psychoanalytical compulsion to repeat.

It is worth noting at this point that René Girard's pioneering work on identification, rivalry, and mediated desire in the novel, from Cervantes to Proust,<sup>77</sup> was once thought by some to have been influenced by Lacan, at a time when Lacan was generally unknown in the United States. But it was the Hegelian, Freudian, and existentialist sources which were similar in the two writers, whereas the approach and conclusions remain fundamentally different. Girard is concerned among other things with what he calls the "Romantic solipsist," exemplified with especial éclat by the Roquentin of Sartre's *La Nausée* (1936), whose influence it is unnecessary to go into. It is a similar desire for autonomy *against* the other which is to be found in the *pour soi* of *L'Être et le Néant* (1943). The existential hero of that period has also been interpreted as an example of Hegel's unhappy consciousness (the internalization of the master-slave dialectic), but, given the diachronic repetition which is so characteristic of the *Phenomenology*, one may find the Romantic solipsist even more precisely defined in the dialectic of the *belle âme*—and for the very good reason that Hegel is dealing with a whole tradition of the Romantic "literature of the self," beginning with Rousseau's great novel, the *Confessions*, and including Goethe's *Werther*, his "Confessions of a noble soul" in *Wilhelm Meister*, and the Karl Moor of Schiller's *Brigands* (whose prototype is to be found in Diderot's *contes*). These characters are inevitably linked to the master and the slave, to the noble and the base consciousness, in Diderot's *Neveu de Rameau* and *Jacques le Fataliste*.

Karl Moor, the "ethical bandit," the Romantic Robin Hood, is for Hegel the epitome of the sentimental subjectivism to be found in Rousseau and in Goethe's *Werther*. His identification with the individual versus society and the alliance of his personal well-being with the well-being of humanity makes him the figure most characteristic of what Hegel calls the law of the heart (*das Gesetz des Herzens*). His essence is to be *pour soi*, negating the *en soi* of social necessity.

The heartfelt identification with the universal well-being of humanity by the individual governed by the law of the heart passes into madness

<sup>77</sup> *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque* (Paris: Grasset, 1961). Translated by Yvonne Freccero as: *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966).

(*Verrücktheit*) when he discovers the opposition and indifference to his good intentions of those he wishes to save from themselves. His madness is the delusion of his self-conceit (*der Wahnsinn des Eigendünkels*); he projects his inner perversity (*Verkehrtheit*) onto the other and seeks to express (*aussprechen*) it as other (pp. 266ff.; I, pp. 302ff.). He condemns individuality in the other, but not in himself.

The structure of the individual subjected to the law of the heart is repeated in a slightly different way at the later "moment" of the *belle âme*. Hegel condemns the *belle âme*—which he had not done in the theological writings of his Romantic youth—and Lacan equates the *belle âme* with the subject in analysis, giving a widely accepted interpretation of the Alceste of Molière's *Le Misanthrope* in the process (t.n. 111). This is to condemn the subject of the *parole vide* or, in Girard's view, the subject who has not discovered himself through the *expérience romanesque* in the others he condemns. The early Lukàcs, for another, a man who is personally seeking to escape the fate of the Hegelian *belle âme*, attempts to view the contradictions of the novel of "abstract idealism" (*Don Quixote*) and those of the novel of "romantic disillusion" (*L'Éducation sentimentale*) as coming to a sort of synthesis in the *Bildungsroman* (*Wilhelm Meister*).<sup>78</sup> Whatever the success or persuasiveness of this or other attempts at dealing with the alienation of the individual from himself and from society inside or outside literature, the similarity between psychoanalysis, the novel, and the *Phenomenology* is unavoidable, if only because of their mutual influences and intersecting structures.

The transformation of the consciousness into the *belle âme* begins with the dialectical moment when this consciousness, certain of himself, discovers himself in his discourse, creates an *en soi* of his Self, and thence discovers his autonomy to be an abstraction:

Language is the consciousness of self which is *for others*, which is immediately *present as such* and which, as this *consciousness of this self*, is *universal* consciousness of self. It is the Self which separates itself from itself and becomes objectified [through speaking of itself] as pure *Ich bin Ich* and which, in this objectivity, fuses immediately with the others and is their consciousness of self . . . . However, language comes forth as the mediating

<sup>78</sup> *Die Theorie des Romans* (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1966 [1920]). For similar reasons of the common influence, Lucien Goldmann has been able to draw parallels between the early Lukàcs and Girard's independent interpretation.

element of the independent and recognized consciousnesses of self . . . (pp. 458, 459; II, pp. 184, 186).

Faced with the poverty of its object (its Self), the consciousness is divided between its subjectivity and its own existential poverty: "The absolute certitude of self changes therefore immediately for it as consciousness into a dying echo, in the objectivity of its being-for-itself; but the world thus created is its *discourse* [*Rede*] which it has heard similarly non-mediate and whose echo keeps on coming back to it . . ." (p. 462; II, p. 189). The consciousness lives in the anguish of sully its purity by action or contact: "The hollow object it creates for itself thus fills it with the consciousness of the void. Its occupation is a nostalgic aspiration which simply loses itself . . . —it becomes an unhappy *belle âme* . . ." (*ibid.*).

The *belle âme* is a consciousness which judges others but which refuses action. In his vanity, the *belle âme* values his ineffective discourse above the facts of the world and expects it to be taken as the highest reality (p. 469; II, p. 195). He is recognized (like the master) by the active consciousness which he judges, but he is recognized as an equal. The active consciousness, "drawn by the vision of itself in the other" (p. 471; II, p. 198), "confesses itself openly to the other" and waits for the other (the *belle âme*), apparently on the same level as the active consciousness, "also to repeat its discourse, and to express in this discourse his equality with it. The active consciousness waits for the being-there [of language] which effects recognition" (*ibid.*).

But the reply of a similar confession does not follow the confession of the evil: "This is what I am." The judging consciousness [the *belle âme*] . . . refuses this community . . . it rejects continuity with the other. Thus the scene is reversed. The confessing consciousness sees itself repelled and sees the other's wrong, the other who refuses to bring his interior life out into the being-there of the [intersubjective] discourse, opposes the beauty of his own soul to the [other's confession of] evil, opposes to the confession the obstinate attitude of the character always equal to itself and the muteness of one who retires into himself and refuses to lower himself to the level of the other . . . .

This *belle âme* cannot attain to equality with the [other] consciousness . . . he cannot attain being-there . . . (pp. 469, 470; II, pp. 196, 197).

Thus the *belle âme* refuses the world and attains, not being, but non-being, "an empty nothingness." ". . . The *belle âme* therefore, as consciousness of [the] contradiction in his unreconciled immediateness,

is unhinged to the point of madness and wastes away in a nostalgic consumption" (*ibid.*).

### The "False-Self System"

The *belle âme* is a schizoid personality: his fundamental question is the question of his being in an expressly existential sense. He not only asks: "What am I in my being?" but he fears the loss of the very void he discovers he is. His relationship to being-in-the-world and to being-with-others can very aptly be characterized as the "splitting of the ego" (the self)—into many possible "parts"—which is described by R. D. Laing as the opposition of an "inner-self system" to a "false-self system." Not that this inner-self is somehow absolutely true, unalienated, or authentic, or free of the necessity of the mask we all wear, but rather that it is less inauthentic. The *belle âme* fears the other because he wants so much to be the other, but being the other means losing himself. The whole paradox of identification is involved: seeking to be identical to the other, or seeking to possess the other's identity, is to lose one's own identity. The possibility that self-identity may simply be a more than usually all-persuasive myth need not detain us here. Hegel's point is that the "normal" relationship of being-with-others is both subjective and objective, whereas the *belle âme* seeks to preserve an unsullied subjectivity because of his fear of what modern psychologists would call the necessary and normal depersonalization (as opposed to Marxian reification) which is part of our interpersonal relations.

Thus Laing's existential approach to schizoid personalities on the basis of his own clinical experience provides an implicit analysis of the character of the *belle âme*, which Rousseau, for one, knew only too well. Schiller's *belle âme* had indeed been a "beautiful and noble soul," one in which moral duty was a matter of nature. For Goethe, however, in his middle years, the *belle âme* depended on the "noblest deceptions," on "the most subtle confusion of the subjective and the objective."<sup>79</sup> Hegel, thinking of Novalis, of the Romantic notion of pure subjectivity and immaculate beauty, of Fichte's *Ich bin Ich*, has developed the notion further: "The *belle âme* lacks the power of alienation, the power to make himself a thing and to support being" (*ibid.*, p. 462; II, p. 189).<sup>80</sup> For

<sup>79</sup> See: Hyppolite, *Phénoménologie*, II, p. 176, note 74; p. 189, note 95.

<sup>80</sup> "Es fehlt ihm die Kraft der Entäusserung, die Kraft, sich zum Dinge zu machen und das Sein zu ertragen."

Hegel, the Spirit will eventually reconcile the split, revealed by the understanding, between the subjective and the objective, or between what Laing would call the "disembodied" and the "embodied" self, or between what the Romantic would call the official self and the unconscious or supernatural immediate unity of soul and nature. But the *belle âme*, in Freud's terms, has recognized the split by *disavowing* it in his discourse.

Thus the *belle âme* refuses necessary alienation and becomes more or less estranged from others and from the world as a result. He becomes alienated in the sense that *aliénation mentale*, *Geistesgestörtheit*, and derangement are employed in the vocabulary of psychiatry. Without mentioning the *belle âme*, Laing elucidates his view of this alienation and the schizoid "loss of reality" as follows:

The false-self system to be described here exists as a complement of the 'inner' self [of the schizoid personality] which is occupied in maintaining its identity and freedom by being transcendent, unembodied, and thus never to be grasped, pinpointed, trapped, possessed. Its aim is to be a pure subject, without any objective existence. Thus, except in certain possible safe moments the individual seeks to regard the whole of his objective existence as the expression of a false self. Of course . . . if a man is not two-dimensional, having a two-dimensional identity established by a conjunction of identity-for-others, and identity-for-oneself, if he does not exist objectively as well as subjectively, but has only a subjective identity, an identity for himself, he cannot be *real*.<sup>81</sup>

The "false-self system" is, of course, more complex. Laing goes on to distinguish between three types of false self: the normal *persona*, the "false-front" of the hysteric (both part of Sartrean *mauvaise foi*), and the truly schizoid false self. Unlike the others, this last is experienced as alien to the subject; moreover, it does not serve as a vehicle for gratification of the desires of the "inner" self, as a similar construct may do in neurosis (p. 96).

The *belle âme* desires the absolute recognition of his subjectivity; he refuses reciprocity with the active consciousness. But for Hegel the coalescence of the subjective and the objective, of the universal and the particular, await the *belle âme* in the world of the absolute spirit. Unlike Freud, Hegel believes that "the wounds of the spirit are cured without leaving scars" (p. 470; II, p. 197), and the dialectic moves on to a new reversal: the renunciation of the pure self, and the acceptance of the

<sup>81</sup> *The Divided Self* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1965 [1960]), pp. 94-95.

objective self (for others), in the recognition on the part of the *belle âme* of his own inner baseness and hypocrisy, which leads to his pardon in “the reciprocal recognition of the absolute spirit” (p. 471; II, p. 198). (See t.n. 110.)

Hegel had skirted the problem of reciprocal recognition at the level of the master and the slave, but now of course he is approaching the goal of the *Phenomenology*. Kojève, in his remarkable commentary on the role of death in the *Phenomenology*, has this to say about that goal (cf. t.n. 125):

It is only in knowing himself to be irremediably mortal that the Sage can attain the plenitude of satisfaction [*Befriedigung*].

. . . This last consequence of Hegelianism is psychologically less paradoxical than it may seem at first sight. Certainly, the idea of death does not augment the *well-being* of man. . . . But it is the only thing which can *satisfy his pride*, that is to say, which can provide precisely the ‘satisfaction’ that Hegel has in mind. For Hegelian ‘satisfaction’ is nothing other than the full satisfaction of the anthropogenous and human desire for Recognition (*Anerkennen*), the satisfaction of man’s desire to see all other men attribute an absolute value to his *free* and *historical individuality* or to his *personality*. It is only in being and feeling himself to be mortal or finite, that is to say, feeling himself as existing in a universe without a beyond or without God, that Man can affirm and obtain the recognition of his liberty, his individuality ‘unique in the world’ (p. 551).

A great deal more should be said about the individual and his absolute desire than is possible here. The problem is not an ontological or even a primarily metaphysical one. In a schizoid society, it can only be fundamentally ideological. The existentialist outlook, for instance (but not, I think, Laing’s modification of it), which owes so much to the right-wing Hegel, seems for all its “realism” to fall into the toils of the noble self-deceptions of the *belle âme*. Kojève is certainly not free from them, nor is the Heidegger who influenced him so much. And in spite of the obvious existential elements in Lacan’s own work, his rejection of much of Sartre’s viewpoint is surely the result of his experience of the noble souls on both sides of the analytical couch. Yet, considering to what extent the existential views of responsibility and commitment permanently changed our views of psychoanalysis, philosophy, and literature by emphasizing both consciously and unconsciously the problem of the *belle âme* and his relationship to oppressive social institutions, it is somewhat ironic to see how French “structuralism”—which has now replaced both

phenomenology and existentialism as intellectually fashionable—is in fact a regenerated disavowal of that problem. (Until very recently, of course, influential figures in psychoanalysis and literary criticism on both sides of the Atlantic had been doing the same thing for decades.) If Lacan shows Sartre’s phenomenological premises to have been largely misguided, the Sartrean problematic of freedom and responsibility, individual and community, is still there. The structural approach has brought new understanding to *les sciences de l’homme*, and especially to psychoanalysis, but its own premises preclude a certain concern for the ideological problem of finding acceptable forms for the sublimation of individual desires in a repressive civilization. Certainly the goal which both the concept of sublimation and the expectations of the analytical cure imply—the goal of reconciliation (*Versöhnung*)—cannot be defined in psychology alone or in sociology alone, or entirely inside or outside a social and political morality still structured on our sadomasochistic desire to dominate the others we have chosen for our personal or societal scapegoats.

## VI

### The “Schema R”

This would be an incomplete summarization of what seem to me the more important of Lacan’s views and antecedents, if I were to leave out the Schema R that expands and completes the earlier Schema L (t.n. 49) and the concept of the *stade du miroir*. It is introduced as an element of Lacan’s commentary on Schreber’s book and Freud’s reading of it; thus it seeks to take into account the question of the “paternal metaphor” in psychosis. Later in the commentary (“D’une question préliminaire à tout traitement possible de la psychose” [1959]) it is employed in a twisted form to represent Schreber’s delusions and the respective relationships between the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real as Lacan sees them in Schreber’s text.

The diagram on page 294 is a more detailed representation of the simplified “Z” in t.n. 49.

Like all of Lacan’s formulations and diagrams, and deliberately so, the Schema R is designed to be read in various ways. The key, as well as what follows, are the results of my reading of Lacan and of other readings of the schema, notably those of André Green and J.-A. Miller in *Les Cahiers pour l’Analyse*, Nos. 1–2 and No. 3 (1966)—neither of which, unfortunately, is entirely conclusive.



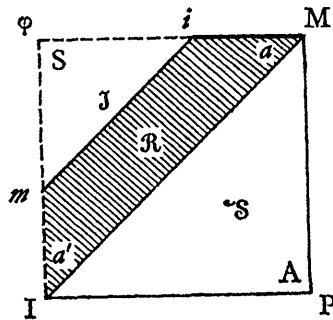


SCHÉMA R :

## KEY

- S the subject  
 I the Imaginary (at upper left)  
 R the Real (shaded area)  
 S the Symbolic (at lower right)  
 a the figure of the Imaginary other of the *stade du miroir*  
 a' the identification of the (child's) ego through the identification with the ideal of the ego (the paternal *imago*)  
 φ the phallus (Imaginary object)  
 I the ideal of the ego  
 P the position of the Name-of-the-Father in the locus of the Other  
 M the signifier of the primordial object (*das Ding*—cf. Freud on negation)—the mother, who is the *real Other*.  
 i } the two Imaginary end-points of all later narcissistic relationships,  
 m } the ego (*m*) and the specular image (*i*).  
 iM the axis of desires (object choice)  
 mI the axis of identifications (narcissism)  
 SA the *metaphorical* relationship between the subject and the Other or between the phallus (φ) and the Name-of-the-Father (P)—cf. Schema L.

The broken line delimits the Imaginary.

Beginning from the position of the (child) subject—identified as in classical analytical theory with the phallus—one notes the two lines of interest which link him to the ideal of the ego (I) and the signifier (M) of the real Other, the mother. The first represents the nonsexual relationship of identification with an ideal (being the other), described in

Section I; the second, the libidinal relationship of desire for the mother as an object (having the other). At the same time the primordial triangle of father-child-mother represented as I-S(φ)-M is given at a secondary level (*m-S-i*) representing all the later identifications, narcissistic relationships, and Imaginary captures in which the subject may be involved. The solid line joining *i* and M represents the *real* relationship between the child and the primordial object (the mother or a part of her body) at a time when the child cannot distinguish himself from “reality.” This is of course in keeping both with Freud’s remarks, previously referred to, in the article on the *Verneinung* as well as with Lacan’s view of the Real as outside symbolization, since for the mother to symbolize “reality” she must become a signifier in the Symbolic for the subject, introjection and expulsion being neither Real nor Imaginary. On the other hand, the relationship between ego (*m*) and the ideal of the ego (I) is shown as a broken line; it is always Imaginary. Thus the distance between *m* and I and that between *i* and M represent the distinction the subject has achieved between the primordial relationships of being and having (I and M) and later ones; this delimits the Real for the subject. In psychosis this delimitation becomes warped or twisted. The Real and the Imaginary are represented more closely related to each other than is each to the Symbolic, Lacan’s intention presumably being to assert the primacy of the Symbolic over both, since they derive their structure from it (the signifier precedes and determines the signified).

The *objectal* movement of the subject’s desire toward the mother is complemented by the mother’s desire. Her desire (the desire of the Other) that he *be* the phallus (the signifier of the desire of the Other) so that she may have it is met by the child’s desire to conform to her desire (to be what his mother wants him to be)—in the Lacanian view the neurotic or psychotic subject has to learn that this is what he wants to be and precisely what he cannot be. The *identificatory* movement towards the ideal is a pure alienation along the lines of the *stade du miroir*, but again the subject meets a contrary law: his desire to be the father (in the father’s place) complements the rivalry which his relationship to the mother also sets up. Naturally the respective lines of interest represent any number of intermediate positions, whether from the static or the historical point of view.

The Name-of-the-Father in this formulation means rather precisely

what it says. P represents the Word of the father as employed by the mother—in other words, it represents the authority of the father upon which she calls in her dealings with the child. Thus is the Symbolic father the figure of the Law to which the real or Imaginary father may or may not conform. The anaclitic and primary relationship of the child to the mother is mediated by the “object *a*” (apparently complemented in the relationship to the *imago* of the father by its image in *a*). Originally the child is involved in an identification with another springing from his identification with objects at a stage where he does not distinguish between object love and identification love; it is at this point, in Lacan’s view, that the progressive splitting of demand from need and the resulting birth of desire occur. It is at this point—structurally speaking—that the mother introduces into the child’s view of “reality” the fact of the lack of object upon which desire depends. This lack of object is an absence; the Imaginary other (*a*) is now only a substitute for it, since a lack cannot be “specularized” (cf. t.n. 183). Weaning, for instance, sometimes described in psychoanalysis as a primordial form of castration—inaccurately it seems, since the “castration” of the “castration complex” is not and cannot be real—is an especially significant discovery of absence for the child. With the constitution of the lack of object, need gives rise to demand and desire.

In 1966 Lacan added a note to the Schreber article explaining that the Schema R is to be read in three dimensions (*Ecrits*, pp. 553–54), the shaded area representing the projection into two dimensions of a Moebius strip. In a supplement to the second edition of the *Ecrits*, published separately in *Les Cahiers de l'Analyse* Nos. 1–2, J.-A. Miller adds the remark:

The surface *R* is to be taken as the flattening out of the figure obtained by joining *i* to *I* and *m* to *M*, that is, by the twisting which characterizes . . . the Moebius strip. The presentation of the schema in two dimensions is thus to be related to the cut which enables the strip to be laid out flat. It will be realized that the line *IM* cannot refer to the relationship of the subject to the object of desire: the subject is only the cutting of the strip, and what falls out of it is called ‘the object *a*.’ This verifies and completes the formula of Jean-Claude Milner on [Lacan’s] ‘ $\$ \diamond a$ ’ [the diamond standing for a relationship like that of the Z-shaped diagram in t.n. 49]: ‘the terms are heterogenous, whereas there is homogeneity attached to the places’ (*Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, No. 3, p. 96). That in fact is the power of the symbol (pp. 175–76).

Miller’s remarks on the Schema R *in toto* are as follows:

This construction requires a double reading:

1) It can be read as a representation of the subject’s static states. Thus one distinguishes the following: (*a*) the triangle *I* resting on the dual relationship of the *Moi* to the Other (narcissism, projection, captation), with the phallus ( $\phi$ ), the Imaginary object, “with which the subject identifies himself . . . along with his living-being [*avec son être du vivant*]” (*Ecrits*, p. 552), that is to say, how the subject represents himself to himself; (*b*) the field *S*, with the three functions: the Ideal of the Ego *I*, where the subject takes his bearings in the register of the Symbolic . . . , the signifier of the object *M*, and the Name-of-the-Father *P* in the locus of the Other *A*. One could regard the line *IM* as doubling the relationship of the subject to the object of desire by the mediation of the signifying chain, a relationship which Lacan later writes as  $\$ \diamond a$  (but the line immediately reveals its inadequacies); (*c*) the field *R* framed and maintained by the Imaginary relation and the Symbolic relationship.

2) But it is also the history of the subject which is noted here. On the segment *iM* are placed the figures of the Imaginary other, which culminate in the figure (or face) of the mother, the real Other, the primary exteriority of the subject, which in Freud is called *das Ding* (cf. *Ecrits*, p. 656). On the segment *mI* succeed the Imaginary identifications forming the *Moi* of the child until he receives his status in the Real from the symbolic identification. Thus one finds a specified synchrony of the triangle *S*: the child at *I* is linked to the mother at *M*, as desire of her desire; in third position one finds the Father borne along by the vehicle of the mother’s Word (p. 75).

To this summary should be added the transformation of the schema to represent Schreber’s delusion, but the details upon which it is based are too complicated to be included here. It can simply be said that the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father at *A* (lower right) engenders problems related to the phallus to which it is linked metaphorically at *S* (upper left): Schreber’s desire to become a woman, his fear of being “unmanned,” his desire to be the bride of God, and so forth. The interested reader should refer to the *Ecrits*, to Freud, and to Schreber’s fascinating book if he wishes to make his own judgment about the adequacy of the demonstration. The further developments of Lacan’s diagrammatic representations can be found in some detail in the published seminars and in the recent article: “Subversion du sujet et dialectique du désir” (1966).

Given his probable distance from the *Ecrits*, the reader may find the foregoing rather less than illuminating. However, he can certainly see the dangers inherent in Lacan’s analogies: in the absence of concrete

studies or case histories, they may lend themselves to ever more refined abstraction while the empirical evidence upon which they are based remains uncritically accepted. Nevertheless, the exigencies of hypothesis are such that the building of a theory often depends upon the privileged value conferred upon particular and perhaps seemingly insignificant evidence. Certain metaphysical decisions, recognized or unrecognized, are always at the basis of hypotheses; their task is to serve the creative function of myths. Thus the *Fort! Da!* has for Lacan the value of a myth. At the same time, since the structural approach is originally dependent upon analogies (which may not be analogies) and upon a theory of reflection (which may not be a theory of reflection), it will naturally bring together any fields or disciplines which seem to reveal similar *structures*—in the first place linguistics and anthropology, with Lévi-Strauss, and now mathematical logic and psychoanalysis, with Lacan. It is this very search for similar structures which is the strong point of the structural approach for its supporters and the weak point for its detractors.

### Conclusion

It was with some misgiving that I finally decided to include the preceding section on the Schema R. In the first place, as the reader will no doubt have gathered, I am not entirely convinced of the precise relevance of the mathematical analogies employed by Lacan, mainly because of the inconclusive way in which they are presented. Secondly, the reader will surely have noted as well as I that the algebraic symbols employed are not simply multivalent—which would be perfectly acceptable, given the requirements of the representation—but that they seem to be employed without explanation in contrasting ways, at times within the same context. It is perfectly possible that I have misunderstood Lacan; on basic questions it is difficult not to. However, it was important to include the schema for the sake of supplementing the consideration of identification and narcissism with which this essay began.

This essay is necessarily incomplete, since on the one hand it is restricted by my own interests and understanding and since, on the other, Lacan is still writing and teaching; at least a decade of seminars remains unpublished. Moreover, as the reader who tackles the original text will discover, there is really no substitute for reading Lacan himself—provided the reader is interested enough to put the necessary time and

energy into it. What seems to me especially significant about that text is not so much the “system” as the remarkable number of genuine and original insights encompassing, renewing, and bringing into relation a large number of the facets of contemporary thought, from phenomenology through existentialism to “structuralism.” On the other hand, there is not the personal commitment and engaging honesty of the early Sartre or the laborious logical progress of the Heidegger of *Sein und Zeit*, nor is there the sweeping vision of Hegel or the ambiguous caution of Freud. Readers with a distaste for Heidegger’s fragmentation of the German language or for Sartre’s less than rigid logic, his repetitious style, or his emotional *engagement* are likely to turn purple when confronted by Lacan. Ideologically speaking, Lacan’s theories rest upon a bourgeois psychology which is only one of the many faces of the middle-class psychologies he attacks. At the moment it remains a psychology for intellectuals, not for people. All there is, in fact, is a *revolution in psychoanalytical thought* whose repercussions in other areas cannot as yet be properly estimated—and a curious phenomenon called Jacques Lacan.

In my attempt to introduce the English-speaking reader to Lacan and to the intellectual context in which he formulated his views, there have been many aspects that lack of space has prevented me from considering in detail. I should have liked to deal at some length with the early Sartre, for instance, whose somewhat misdirected critique of Politzer’s Freud did not prevent him from developing a brilliant analysis of *mauvaise foi* (a synthesis of role-playing, the false self, *Verneinung*, and *Verleugnung*). Moreover, Sartre’s theory of the existential project, derived from Heidegger, demands analysis in the light of the concept of deferred action in Freud, since for Freud the intentionalization (cathexis) of a past memory projects the subject into a future different from that which was possible while the comprehension or signification remained deferred. As Marcuse has said in different terms, without the concept of repression, man’s past must be viewed as static (*en soi*); with repression, the past becomes a dynamic projection of future possibilities (*pour soi*). Perhaps it is even true that the old comparison between psychotics and “primitive” man (or children), vigorously and convincingly combatted by Lévi-Strauss, is partially connected with the thwarting of repression in psychosis, resulting in a sort of synchronic fixation of structures in the psychotic’s life.

The reader will have noted to what extent Lacan was writing against the existential Sartre in the 1950's. In effect, Lacan was seeking to answer the questions which existentialism had posed. Sartre's concern for our recognition of our *mauvaise foi*, and his attempt to deal with it in terms of consciousness alone, is surely one of the questions implicit in Lacan's promotion in 1954 of the Freudian concept of the discursive *Verneinung*. Certainly Sartre's "existential psychoanalysis" was essentially but unwittingly derivative. However, it depended ultimately on the almost total intellectual rejection of Freud—partly for ideological reasons of responsibility resulting from the existentialist discovery of "total evil" during the Nazi occupation and partly because of the sheer incompetence of the French analytical movement—by the French against whom Sartre was writing. Nevertheless, Sartre paid the Freud he knew the compliment of seeking seriously to refute him, and in the process he regenerated the questions which Freud left his Einstein to solve. Freud has certainly not yet met his Einstein, but it is interesting to note the existence of a specific question in Sartre—apart from the question of his early distinction between the *je* (the later *pour soi*) and the *moi* (the later *en soi* of the "Wesen ist was gewesen ist") on the basis of a Husserlian intentionality of consciousness (consciousness is always consciousness of . . .) and a prereflexive *cogito*—that is to say, the presence in his work of the question of the relationship of repression to the symptom, in almost precisely the terms which Lacan employs to give his own answer to it: "If the complex really is unconscious, that is, if the sign is separated from the signified by a barring [*barrage*], how would it be possible for the subject to *recognize* it?"<sup>82</sup>

In another sense, Lacan's work is also the beginnings of an answer as to why the problem of language is hardly treated at all by Sartre in his early work. Except for a page or so in *L'Être et le Néant*, where he simply notes that language is intersubjective and a manifestation of the master-slave dialectic, before moving on to assimilate the Heideggerean notion of "I am what I say" to his own notion of human behavior: "I am what I do" (*ibid.*, p. 440), the early Sartre seems to subordinate language entirely to questions of consciousness. Moreover, Lacan's refusal of the primal *cogito* is surely related to the fact that Sartre and Merleau-Ponty between them so radicalized the notion as to destroy its psychological premises.

<sup>82</sup> *L'Être et le Néant* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943), p. 661.

In a sense the omission of any detailed remarks on the positive and negative influence of Sartre on Lacan is just as well at the present time, since the journalistic furor in Paris which followed publication of Lacan's *Écrits* in 1966 resulted in the creation of a tendentious opposition between Sartre and Lacan. This in itself was a derivative of the debate over "structuralism," history, and dialectical and analytical reason between the Sartre of the *Critique de la raison dialectique* (1960) and the Lévi-Strauss of *La Pensée Sauvage* (1962) (which is dedicated to Merleau-Ponty), and their respective cohorts.

It seems wiser to wait until the shouting has died down if we wish to put this debate into any sort of perspective. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile remarking that Lévi-Strauss has recently withdrawn from his previous invasion of other domains in the human sciences, and certain of Lacan's minor revisions to the *Discours* in 1966 consisted of toning down over-enthusiastic judgments about structural anthropology in 1953 and 1956.

Let me indicate briefly an example of the present direction of non-psychoanalytical studies of Freud in France and their detachment from the phonological notion of binary opposition which is so evident in Lacan.

In a recent article on the numerous metaphors employed by Freud to represent the mind, Jacques Derrida, manifestly influenced both positively and negatively by Lacan, seeks to interpret them in relation to the partial solution of the problem of memory offered by the metaphor of the "magic writing pad" (t.n. 108): the endlessly erasable children's plaything in which the original script is always retained in its pristine newness by the underlying wax, while new "perceptions" are constantly inscribed upon it. Dreams and memory for Freud, as we know, are a succession of comparisons with pictograms, hieroglyphs (*Bilderschriften*), the palimpsest, the double inscription (*Niederschrift*), *Wortvorstellungen*, the rebus, sentences and paragraphs blacked out by the censorship in Russian newspapers, and so forth. While dealing with many of the more strictly mechanistic and spatial metaphors employed by Freud (archeology, the telescope, the microscope, the camera, the various "systems" in the mind, the different *topoi*, and so forth), Derrida seeks to emphasize the metaphor of *writing* in Freud, noting the implication of a postscript, or supplement, in the concept of *Nachträglichkeit*. Of course there are considerable difficulties here, since writing is the most highly developed form of the discourse while memory seems to

be the unarticulated and undifferentiated *absence* which we intentionalize. For the observer, memory is what is absent from the here and now and thus what has to be inferred; for the subject, it is the nature of memory's passage from absence to a particular kind of presence—the way in which the subject *reads* it—which governs his future possibilities.

Whatever the relationship between the neurological metaphors and the psychological metaphors with which neurology and psychology seek to formalize the structure and behavior of the mind, it is clear that there are repeating neurological circuits in the brain which can be considered structurally similar to the memory circuits of cybernetics. And as Derrida points out, this structural similarity is prefigured in the concept of the *facilitation* (*Bahnung: frayage*) of the "traces of reality" (*die Spuren der Realität*) in the neurological model built up by Freud in the *Project* of 1895. (When one discovers—*nachträglich*—in that extraordinary document the notion of feedback, as well as so many other conceptions essential to modern psychology and to the later Freud, one begins fully to understand the nature of *reading*, and especially the nature of reading Freud.) Derrida sees the metaphorical dimension of the *trace* as that which unites Freud's earliest discussion of memory to the metaphor of writing in the last model he employed, the "magic writing pad." *L'écriture* is, however, a rather special notion for Derrida, an aspect of his work which I shall not introduce here.

The import of Derrida's tentative analysis is indicated well enough by his own preliminary questions: "What is a text? And what must the psychic be for it to be represented by a text?"<sup>83</sup> For Derrida, insofar as the temporality of a text is historical and not linear (as unrecorded speech is essentially, but not constitutively, linear), that is to say, insofar as a text can be read backwards, comprehended at a glance, written up and down, or from right to left, or permanently modified after it has been written (like a dream),<sup>84</sup> it calls for a method of interpretation allied to the interpretation of the discourse rather than to the interpreta-

tion of speech—in other words, an interpretation bound by the laws of writing rather than by the laws of linguistics. If the distinction sometimes seems rather too nice, it is surely motivated by the necessity of escaping the dilemmas of formalistic binary oppositions as well as by the fact that literature, history, and philosophy are discursive and not linguistic forms.

In the domain of anthropologically oriented psychoanalysis, Marie-Cécile and Edmond Ortigues have made a significant contribution to the metapsychology of the Oedipus complex in a recent book *Oedipe Africain* (1966). Their work is the result of psychoanalytical therapy among the Africans of Senegal in a situation where the combined influence of colonialism, urban living, and a loosely structured native society have created family relationships so diverse that a mother may not remember how many children she has had and a father may not see his son for years at a time. "Father" and "mother" for the native child may have no biological significance, and "brother" or "uncle" includes people we would hardly consider relatives at all, situations common enough outside Western society.

The significance of the Ortigues' work lies in their use of Lévi-Straussian and Lacanian theses to confront the problem of employing the Western "civilized" notion of the Oedipus complex in this sort of society. Their point is that once the complex is viewed as Lacan views it—in other words, as a structure of intersecting relationships where the *loci* are "empty places"—it is indeed possible to speak of an Oedipal structure in Senegalese society. What is of especial interest is their theoretical justification, derived from Lacan, for the necessity of the "fourth term" in the Oedipus complex, the term which mediates (and thus grounds) the dual relationships between its three self-evident positions (father, mother, child). Just as Lévi-Strauss had pointed out that the transformation of the biological family into a societal unit in "primitive" societies is absolutely dependent upon the fourth term—the maternal uncle who *gives* his sister to the father (his brother-in-law) and thus provides for the exchange of women outside the family—the Ortigues note that the transformation from "nature" to "culture" in psychological terms similarly depends upon a fourth term, the image of the phallus, which founds, structures, and mediates the relationships of the biological family and converts it into a *human* family:

<sup>83</sup> "Freud et la scène de l'écriture," *Tel Quel*, No. 26 (Summer, 1966), p. 12. The text is part of a lecture given at Dr. André Green's seminar at the *Institut de Psychanalyse*. Derrida's position is partly indicated by his opening words: "If the Freudian break-through is historically original, it does not derive its originality from a pacific coexistence or a theoretical complicity with [a certain type of] linguistics, at least in its congenital phonologism" (p. 11).

<sup>84</sup> Thus Corneille does more than repeat the old dream-books when he says: "C'est en contraire sens qu'un songe s'interprète." *Horace*, I, iii (l. 223).

The fourth term which originally founds the relationship between the child, the mother, and the father is symbolically situated at the intersection of the body image and the words [*paroles*] which name and recognize. This is what psychoanalysis designates as the specific function of the phallus. What is mythically designated in this way is only designated by its place—between the image and the name, between the lost object and the promised object, at the frontier of the unnameable. This place is empty . . . but [it] is marked by its function . . . (p. 72).

Since the phallus “signifies the lack of object,” it reveals the “irreducible necessity” of an intermediary between persons in any relationship.

Moreover, the “empty” fourth terms in both cases—the maternal uncle or the phallus—are interconnected: in the “sister.” The incest prohibition is both positive (“give your sister”) and negative (“do not desire your mother, your sister”); in the first case it regulates marriage ties (*alliance*); in the second it regulates kinship (*parenté*).

Therefore, when the incest prohibition names the ‘sister,’ it is not in order to designate a term which is already totally constituted as an ‘object’ but rather in order to signify the smallest difference at which it becomes forbidden ‘legitimately’ to transform ‘virgin’ into ‘wife,’ ‘nature’ into ‘culture,’ ‘savage heart’ into ‘mistress of the house’ . . . And does the maternal uncle not similarly represent the *minimum* difference without which it would be impossible for a family to constitute ‘marriage ties’? Here, as in linguistics the value of each term is always a difference (pp. 81–82).

Just as the maternal uncle mediates the marriage tie between his brother-in-law (to whom he is related by that tie) and his brother-in-law’s wife (for whom he is a blood relative) in the same generation—that is to say, horizontally—the phallus mediates the “horizontal” relationship between man and wife in the same generation. And just as the maternal uncle is the mediator between parent and child in succeeding generations related by the marriage tie, so the phallus mediates that “vertical” relationship between generations related by blood. The “horizontal” debtor-creditor relationship is real, whereas the “vertical” relationship is what Lacan calls the “symbolic debt”—the exchange between father and son, where the child who *is* the phallus for his mother comes through the Oedipus complex to *have* the phallus for another woman.

Although the Ortigues’ use of these Lacanian formulations still leaves many fundamental questions unanswered, their refutation of the concept of the Oedipal structure as a simple series of “attitudes” between real persons, and their replacement of this notion by that of more or

less unchanging relationships between *loci* leads to a persuasive development of the Freudian and Lacanian view of the “dead father,” something especially important in societies like the Senegalese, in which the relationship of the present generation to its ancestors is consciously and carefully formulated.

If one wished to archeologize the Oedipus complex, it could be said that in the tribal society it is the collectivity which assumes the responsibility for the death of the father [and not the son]. In the first place, traditional Senegalese society states that the place of each person in the community is marked by reference to an ancestor, the father of the lineage. The society states that death has made the father of the lineage equivalent to the pure authority of a name, equivalent to the law of speech [*parole*] which fixes each in his place: the ancestor is the guarantor of custom and of the communal law. The reference to the names of ancestors is the geometric locus of all the occupiable places in the society; it defines the right of entry into each lineage. The sire of Ego has not had to take the place of the former legislator, since this place must remain empty. . . .

Senegalese society neutralizes as it were the diachronic series of generations by establishing the law of the fathers. In fact the phantasies of the death of young Oedipus are turned towards his collaterals: brothers or relations by marriage. Instead of being displayed vertically or diachronically as a conflict between successive generations, aggressivity tends to unfold in horizontal lines within the limits of the same generation. . . . The solution [to the problems of the Oedipus complex] consists in one’s being integrated into an age group which is supposed to be the immutable repetition of all the others preceding it. For Ego a drama is repeated which has always taken place before, which has been lived by the preceding generation . . . and which long before was already as if it were there as a destiny which is inherited at the same time as the spirits of his ancestors.

Thus the Ortigues conclude that although there is indeed an “Oedipe africain,” the “anteriorization” and “mythologization” of the Oedipus complex by this society renders the complex inaccessible as a clinical entity. One might conclude that it is there, but that the society itself has already employed it as an a priori myth in the same way that the clinical entity is employed a posteriori in an essentially mythical way by the psychoanalyst in order to help the subject answer the question of who or what he is. Correctly employed, the myth of the Oedipus complex in its widest sense will tell the subject why his anxiety or his guilt is ultimately dependent upon an ontological question which has to be reformulated not in the terms of *who* he is, but rather in the terms of *where* he is. To employ Heideggerian language, the “who” of Dasein is the un-

answerable question, whereas the “where” of Dasein is revealed in almost every word he speaks: the “who” of Dasein is the shifter “I,” which is a locus and not a person.

Several additional points should be made. First, Lacan’s pronouncements are obviously much more detailed than it has been possible to indicate here; further, I have ignored many of his mathematical formalizations, either because I cannot test their validity or because they are not presented very clearly; thirdly, I have said very little about the more recent aspects of his work. It should be emphasized also that my references to Hegel, Heidegger, Lévi-Strauss, and other thinkers are made with the double intent of what I would call text and context. There are textual similarities, direct references, and formulations derived or modified from many sources in Lacan; at the same time there is a context of contemporary thought centered around language and linguistics, with repercussions on anthropology, psychoanalysis, literary criticism, and philosophy. If Michel Foucault places ethnology and psychoanalysis in the van of contemporary thought, pervading all the other human sciences with their methods and their axioms, it is because of what Lacan and Lévi-Strauss have accomplished.

But Lacan is not a Heideggerean or a Hegelian or a structural linguist—he is a Freudian psychoanalyst. However much he may borrow from other disciplines and other thinkers, there is always an essential distinction to be made: that philosophy, or literature, or psychology are not “forms” of psychoanalysis, since there is only one form of psychoanalysis—and it rests squarely and firmly upon the base Freud built for it. To whatever extent Freud’s specific formulations may be changed or modified, there is nothing in Lacan which is not ultimately viewed from the privileged status accorded to Freudian theory in the Lacanian corpus. For example, although the similarities between Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, the *Bildungsroman*, and psychoanalysis are fertile and interesting, the Hegelian subject is not and cannot be the equivalent of the Freudian subject. The reader will have noted in the *Discours* that while Lacan uses the Hegelian notion of labor as what frees the slave from the master-slave dialectic, he does not *accept* it as a valid premise for the analytical dialectic. The obsessional neurotic, for instance, knows better than anybody else how to use his “labor” (his “working through”) to maintain himself in the position of slavery he has chosen. Similarly Lacan refers to the concept of the “cunning of reason” in Hegel’s philosophy of his-

tory (t.n. 131), but he notes the difference between the “mirror-game” of the *Phenomenology* and the working through of an analysis:

The promotion of consciousness as essential to the subject in the historical sequel of the Cartesian *cogito* is for me the deceptive accentuation of the transparency of the *Je* in action at the expense of the opacity of the signifier which determines the *Je*. Through Hegel’s own rigorous demonstration, the *glissement* by which the *Bewusstsein* serves to cover over the confusion of the *Selbst* eventually reveals the reason for his error in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*.

The very movement which offsets the phenomenon of the spirit towards the Imaginary relationship to the other . . . reveals its effect: that is to say, the aggressivity which becomes the beam [*fléau*] of the balance on which will become centered the decomposition of the equilibrium of counterpart to counterpart in the Master-Slave relationship, a relationship which is pregnant with all the tricks [*ruses*] through which reason sets its impersonal realm in motion. [ . . . ]

The struggle which sets [this inaugural servitude] going is wisely called a struggle of pure prestige, and the stake, life itself, corresponds nicely to the danger of the premature birth generic [to our species], which Hegel knew nothing of, and which I have put at the origin of the dynamics of the specular capture (“Subversion du sujet,” *Ecrits*, pp. 809–10).

Lacan goes on to point out that since the whole dialectic of the master-slave relationship depends upon the slave’s refusal of gratification (*jouissance*) (because of his fear of death) and his consequent acceptance of slavery, what is forgotten is that “the [final] pact is in every case preliminary to the violence” of the so-called struggle to the death, and that it is this tacit agreement which perpetuates the dialectic. Thus the slave can never escape his alienation, and the notion of the “cunning of reason,” which supposedly informs the labor through which the slave will attain mastery, is an error.

Lacan is speaking at both the psychological and the political level, for he is attempting to show the impossibility of the final reconciliation of the *Phenomenology*, whether it is viewed at the individual or at the societal level. Given the Freudian notion of the discovery of difference and the “lost object,” reconciliation (return to “One”) is psychologically impossible either for the individual in relation to himself or in relation to the group to which he is linked both by identificatory ties and by the interaggressivity of the master-slave relationship itself. The subject-object relationship of the Imaginary order precludes anything but a phantasmatic “return to unity”; the goal of the *Phenomenology* is illusory.

This goal is absolute Knowledge (*Wissen*), and it is precisely in their relationship to Knowledge that the Freudian and the Hegelian subject differ. For Hegel, one can say that Truth is immanent in the progress of the dialectic towards Knowledge; for Freud, however, Truth is the unanswerable question of the "Who (or what) am I?" This desire to know, in the Freudian view, is fundamentally sexual:

. . . In Hegel it is desire (*Begierde*) which carries the charge of that minimum of liaison to 'antique' knowledge [*connaissance*] which the subject must retain in order for Truth to be immanent to the realization of Knowledge. Hegel's 'cunning of reason' [cf. t.n. 131] means that from the beginning and to the very end, the subject knows what he wants.

It is here that Freud reopens the splice between Truth and Knowledge to the mobility out of which revolutions come—and in this respect: that at this point desire is knit with the desire of the Other, but that in this knot lies the desire to know ("Subversion du sujet," *Ecrits*, p. 802).

In other words, for the Freudian subject, the distinction between Truth and Knowledge results from the question of recognizing the result of the lifting of the veil of Maia (t.n. 107).

In respect of Lévi-Strauss, nothing has been said about the later development of his views, notably his realization that a kinship system is not on an unconscious level equivalent to that of the phoneme, since many natives are able to analyze it in its own terms, and his later statements that the distinction of nature from culture should be considered only a methodological distinction. Moreover, he has also attempted to distinguish his structuralism from the formalism it more obviously resembled in his early works: ". . . In opposition to formalism, structuralism refuses to oppose the concrete to the abstract and to confer on the second a privileged value. *Form* is defined by opposition to a matter which is alien to it. But structure has no distinct content: it is the content itself, apprehended in a logical organization which is conceived as a property of the real."<sup>85</sup> Lévi-Strauss's strong tendencies to confer a privilege of purity on the natural sciences thus set him in a certain opposition to Lacan, although their mathematical propensities are somewhat similar.

What seems now a particularly fruitful future enterprise is to seek to read Lacan (in part) in the terms of Anglo-Saxon communicationally

oriented psychotherapy and at the same time to see how many of Lacan's theses extend and amplify the theoretical work of people like R. D. Laing and Gregory Bateson in England and in the United States. The phenomenological and existential basis of many of these theorists, coupled with their interest in schizophrenia as a disease of communication, has led them to employ models derived from cybernetics and general systems theory to explain communicational contexts in the terms of *loci* and relationships. The notion of *feedback* (essentially what lies behind the notions of dialectic and transference), the "black box" concept of the subject (viewed as a locus of input and output), and Carnap's theory of object language and metalanguage provide an independent clarification of much of what Lacan is saying in his own terms. From their stated basis that all behavior is communication, the communications theorists may be readily interpreted in the light of the Lacanian categories of the signifier, and the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real. Moreover, the notion of metalanguage and its logical consequence—that *the symptom is a statement in a metalanguage about an object language*—provides a solution to some of the problems of "reflection" which have cropped up in my own attempt to analyze the Lacanian standpoint. From this point of view, one can define the Other simply as the rest of the system in which the subject is involved, and the analysis will tend to concentrate on the relationship between a whole series of levels of communication (including the level of the phantasy) rather than upon any one level or any one element. What is of even greater nicety is that the notion of levels of communication (logical types) avoids the problems of reductionism, since it is clear that every level of statement has its own validity and cannot be reduced to any other level (in whatever way it may be related to it)—for the relationship, in Lacan's terms, is *metaphorical*. The further point might perhaps be made that insofar as Carnap's theory of metalanguage and Russell's theory of types presuppose, like all theories of logic, an *ideal speaker*—what for Chomsky would be the "fluent speaker" against whom the linguist measures grammar and syntax—it could be said that in the widest sense of Lacan's view of the Other as "the locus of the message," or "the locus of the Word," this ideal speaker is in fact Lacan's Other. In brief, it is clear that in spite of the differences in method and in point of departure, there is a significant convergence in context between these Anglo-Saxon writers and Lacan, especially in the use of models derived from outside psychology proper as well as in what

<sup>85</sup> "La Structure et la forme," *Cahiers de l'institut de science économique appliquée*, No. 99 (March, 1960), pp. 3–36.



is essentially a phenomenological approach—but an approach based on a phenomenology of language rather than on the phenomenology of consciousness as it was developed by the early Husserl and his followers.<sup>86</sup>

This book has been worked on and written like a mosaic of many layers, reflecting to a certain extent Lacan's own *modus operandi*. I can only express my hope that the pattern of the book does not prevent the reader from coming to terms with it. I must nevertheless ask his indulgence with the evolution of my own understanding as it is represented here—I don't know now whether the book could have been written in any other way. The reader will have noted now and then my reservations about Lacan's expression of his views and his approach to his public. Difficult as it may be, however—for I cannot think of a more irritating author—we must give Lacan his due. In spite of all the reservations one might make, there is no discounting the unique value and wide influence of Lacan's work in France. By the mere fact of going back to the German text and reading it seriously in a contemporary framework, he converted the limited, medical, and positivist approach of French analysts into something with repercussions in all the spheres of *les sciences de l'homme*. It seems banal to say it now, but Lacan introduced us to another Freud, and a whole new generation of analysts and psychiatrists bear his imprint. Apart from the obvious ramifications of the concept of the *stade du miroir* and the importance of his rebuttal of the notion of the "autonomous ego" (a Trojan horse, says Lacan), he has introduced us to the less than obvious fact that psychoanalysis is a theory of language. Not that Freud had not been read seriously and carefully before, but I doubt whether any other commentator has been as daring and as innovating as Lacan. Lacan's work has surely resulted in the final demise of the *cogito* that Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre once struggled with, besides giving us the wherewithal to brush away the last vestiges of the atomistic, linear, and essentially solipsistic psychology inherited by the modern world, and to replace it by analyses of relationships, dialectical

<sup>86</sup> Unfortunately, I became fully aware of the wide development of communicationally-oriented therapy only after this book was already in the press; consequently, I have not been able to employ its insights to clarify and exemplify those portions of the preceding analysis where they would have been especially helpful both to myself and to the reader. I can only refer the reader to a recent book which provides an admirably lucid account of what a number of leading psychologists have derived from communications theory and related sources, notably since the late fifties: Paul Watzlawick, Janet Beavin, and Don Jackson, *The Pragmatics of Human Communication* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967).

opposition, and communication. At the time of writing, Lacan's weekly seminar at the Ecole Normale is still strictly standing room only. My personal debt to Lacan remains very great—let me employ the words of Louis Althusser, the neo-Marxist philosopher, to acknowledge it:

It is to the intransigent, lucid, and for many years solitary, theoretical efforts of Jacques Lacan that we owe today the result which has drastically modified our *reading* of Freud. At a time when what Lacan has given us which is radically new is beginning to pass into the public domain, where anyone may make use of and draw advantage from it in his own way, I must insist on recognizing our debt to an exemplary lesson in reading, which in some of its effects, as will be seen, goes far beyond its original object.<sup>87</sup>

And when all is said and done, even if the curious mixture of penetration, poetry, and wilful obscurity in the *Ecrits* seems designed to force the reader into a perpetual struggle of his own with the text, perhaps there is a method even in that madness. Lacan has always told his readers that they must "y mettre du sien," and as Hanns Sachs once said: "An analysis terminates only when the patient realizes it could go on for ever."

<sup>87</sup> *Lire Le Capital* (Paris: F. Maspero, 1965), I, 15.