

## Chapter 2

### *Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis*

#### OVERVIEW

This essay dates from mid-May 1948, when it was presented as a paper to the Eleventh Congress of the *Psychanalystes de langue française* (Brussels), in the form of a theoretical discussion of aggression following upon a more clinical discussion of the same theme. Composed, then, before the published version of the “Mirror Stage” essay, it is clearly complementary to the latter, for its principal theme is that the “notion of aggressivity” is a “correlative tension of the narcissistic structure” (1977, p. 22/116) with which the essay deals. In explaining this “correlative tension,” Lacan introduces many subordinate themes, from which we shall try to disengage it, though for the sake of clarity we shall follow Lacan’s own rather scholastic format: a short introduction followed by the exposition of five theses.

Lacan chooses as the starting point for his reflection the “aporia” that Freud was trying to deal with when, still attempting to understand man’s experience “in the register of biology,” he suggested the possibility of a “death instinct” (1977, p. 8/101). We recall the nature of that aporia: stubborn phenomena like the repetition compulsion, hatred, ambivalence, destructiveness

toward self and others (e.g., masochism, sadism) were difficult — if not impossible — to explain by a monistic theory of instinct. Freud’s suggestion, then, was that we conceive of two basic instincts in man, Eros and the destructive instinct: “The aim of the first of these basic instincts is to establish ever greater unities and to preserve them thus — in short, to bind together; the aim of the second is, on the contrary, to undo connections and so to destroy things. In the case of the destructive instinct we may suppose that its final aim is to lead what is living into an inorganic state. For this reason we also call it the *death instinct*” (1940, p. 148). The paradoxical notion of “death instinct” would remain a controversial issue among Freud’s disciples, and it is to this controversy that Lacan returns by cojoining the problem of man’s dis-integrating, destructive tendencies — and this is what we understand by “aggressivity” — with that of narcissism, at least as Lacan understands the term. This brings him to the formulation of his first thesis.

“Thesis I. *Aggressivity manifests itself in an experience that is subjective by its constitution.*”

Clearly the issue in the essay is aggressivity *in psychoanalysis*. However, this first thesis does not address the problem of aggressivity as such, but rather seems intended to establish the scientific respectability of any psychoanalytic theorizing at all. At the very outset of the essay, Lacan stated that his task was to prove “whether or not this notion [of aggressivity] can be developed into a concept capable of scientific use” (1977, p. 8/101), and in the first thesis he is at pains to explain how the psychoanalytic situation, although “subjective by its very constitution,” i.e., a “dialectical grasp of meaning” through a “verbal communication” between two subjects, can nonetheless meet the methodological demands of a positive science if the experience is shown to be “verifiable by everyone” (1977, p. 9/103). He then suggests that this is indeed the case, since “this experience, constituted between two subjects one of whom plays in the dialogue

the role of ideal impersonality. . . . may, once it is completed, . . . be resumed by the other subject with a third subject" (1977, pp. 9–10/103). Lacan's claims of verifiability and replicability here may not appeal very much to hard-nosed positivists, but at least Lacan pays his dues to their demands, enabling him to settle down to serious business. The second thesis deals with serious business.

"Thesis II. *Aggressivity in experience is given to us as intended aggression and as an image of corporal dislocation, and it is in such forms that it shows itself to be efficient.*"

Here Lacan begins at the periphery of the problem and moves slowly toward its center. More specifically, Lacan addresses the questions: How is the aggressivity of the patient manifested to the analyst? In what way is it effective? How is this effectiveness experienced by the subject?

The patient's aggressivity is discernible to the analyst as an "intention" that is manifest in countless ways through his behavior. What is meant here by "intention"? Characteristically, Lacan does not explain. Etymologically, of course, the word signifies a "tending," or "inclination," toward some object, and in normal parlance it involves some kind of action, whether in the sense of a project to be executed or a goal to be achieved. For contemporary phenomenology, the word suggests a tending, or inclination (i.e., orientation), of consciousness toward an object of consciousness. Lacan probably uses it in the latter sense, broadening this sense, however, so that it may refer to an unconscious as well as conscious orientation of the psychic structure.

What is the effect of such an intention, however unconscious, on the aggressive subject? Lacan sees it as influential on, even formative of, the subject — not to mention those dependent on the subject — no matter how constrained the subject's expression of aggressivity may be. This effect may be described in terms of "imprints" made on the psychic structure, imprints that

may be referred to as "images" to the extent that they give a transient and superficial inflection to fundamental tendencies already shaped by what have previously been called *imagoes*, which as such constitute the so-called "instincts" (1977, p. 11/104).

Images characteristic of aggressive intentions are, according to Lacan, those that involve in one way or another fragmentation of the body (witness certain ritualistic practices, the fantasies of children, the imagery of a Hieronymus Bosch, certain archaic dream images, etc.). These imagoes coalesce into a certain gestalt proper to aggression (1977, p. 12/105) with which Lacan will now deal.

"Thesis III. *The springs of aggressivity decide the reasons that motivate the technique of analysis.*"

The task now is to determine more precisely the nature of this gestalt. Once more Lacan circles around the central issue, i.e., the "springs of aggressivity," by discussing the technique the analyst uses to discern this gestalt, i.e., the original imago out of which aggressivity rises as from a source.

This technique consists essentially of assuming an attitude by which the analyst becomes "as devoid as possible of individual characteristics," hence a "depersonalized" "ideal of impassibility" (1977, p. 13/106). The purpose is to elicit the patient's aggressivity because "these intentions form the negative transference that is the initial knot of the analytic drama" (1977, p. 14/107). The point is that aggressive intentions together with their intentional correlates reactivate some archaic imago in the subject which "has remained permanent at the level of symbolic overdetermination that we call the subject's unconscious" (1977, p. 14/108). This can be observed easily enough, for example, in cases of hysteria, obsessionism, phobia, etc.

The hoped-for effect of the analyst's technique is to avoid offering to the patient an idea of the analyst's person that can be co-opted into the defensive maneuvers of the patient's ego. Ego here is, of course, to be understood not as the *perception-conscious-*

ness system of Freud's metapsychology but rather as "that nucleus given to consciousness, but opaque to reflexion, marked by all the ambiguities which, from self-satisfaction to 'bad faith' (*mauvaise foi*), structure the experience of the passions in the human subject" (1977, p. 15/109). The approach is admittedly a roundabout one "that amounts in fact to inducing in the subject a controlled paranoia," i.e., a mechanism of projection that can be "properly checked" (1977, p. 15/109).

Lacan concludes by introducing the issue of the subject's experience of another subject like himself, an issue that brings us at last to the heart of the matter and that is treated in the following thesis.

"Thesis IV. *Aggressivity is the correlative tendency of a mode of identification that we call narcissistic, and which determines the formal structure of man's ego and of the register of entities characteristic of his world.*"

Finally, Lacan comes to the point. He proposes to seek out the "springs of aggressivity" but so far has dealt with that to which they give rise (namely, aggressive intentions) and the technique of searching for them. Hence the treatment of the problem so far has been more descriptive than theoretical. To speculate now about the ultimate *source* in the subject of these aggressive intentions is "to make the leap from the phenomenology of our experience" — understood in the loosest sense, to be sure — "to metapsychology" (1977, p. 16/110).

Lacan immediately tries to make this "leap" look less hazardous to the empirically minded in his audience by calling it a "requirement of thought" — the result of a need to propose a "formula of equivalence" when the passage from description to explanation proves impossible through a process of quantification. This is a critical point, of course, that Lacan slips blithely by: to what extent and in what way can *any* "formula of equivalence" that cannot be derived with mathematical rigor from empirical data be considered a "requirement of thought"? On the answer to such questions depends the validity of all metapsychology,

not to mention Lacan's whole enterprise in particular. But the issue is too big for further comment here.

The thesis itself is fairly straightforward. We are already familiar (Chapter 1) with the "*mode of identification that we call narcissistic*," i.e., the identification of the subject with the reflected (hence alienating) image of itself that "*determines the formal structure of man's ego*" (1977, p. 16/100). In other words, the "I is an other" (1977, p. 23/118). If anything is added here to the description of this "first stage of the dialectic of identifications," it is perhaps Lacan's emphasis on the affective aspect of it: "It is in this erotic relation, in which the human individual fixes upon himself an image that alienates him from himself, that are to be found the energy and form on which this organization of the passions [*passionnelle*] that he will call his ego is based" (1977, p. 19/113).

We recall, too, how Lacan understands this primal identification to determine "the register of entities characteristic of [man's] world," i.e., "things" as differentiated from both the ego and other subjects. In the "shifting field" of our experience certain gestalten emerge, to which are assigned the same "attributes of permanence, identity, and substantiality" that are assigned to the ego itself (1977, p. 17/111). The result is that the experience of objects is correlative with the experience of the ego. In itself this experience is dialectical, but the movement is frozen by the "formal fixation" of these attributes like a film that is "suddenly stopped in mid-action" (1977, p. 17/111).

By way of example, Lacan suggests how a series of paranoid states "in which we find all the successive envelopes of the biological and social status of the person, retains the original organization of the forms of the ego and of the object. . . experienced as events in a perspective of mirages, as affections with something stereotypical about them that suspends the workings of the ego/object dialectic" (1977, p. 17/111). In any case, Lacan sees this process of stagnation and fixation of both ego and object as "akin to the most general structure of human knowledge," and it is in this sense that he speaks of knowledge as "paranoiac" (1977, p. 17/111).

Now the core of Lacan's thesis is that aggressivity is the "correlative tendency" of this identification by which the ego (and its world) is constituted. He argues the point in two ways. According to the first argument, aggressivity arises when the ego encounters another subject like himself and there awakens in him a desire for the object of the other's desire (1977, p. 19/113)—a far-reaching Hegelian notion that will be treated more fully elsewhere. Prior to this moment, the infant, as the experiments of Charlotte Bühler and the Chicago school have shown (1977, pp. 17–18/111–112), experiences himself as "undifferentiated" from his counterpart, united to him in a confused identity, while internally there is a "conflictual tension" (is this what will later be called "need"?) that precedes the awakening of "desire." To illustrate, Lacan mentions a frequently cited example of aggressivity that he calls here "ambivalent" and that appears under the guise of "resentment." It is the incident mentioned by St. Augustine in which the infant, still unable to speak, shows clear signs of jealousy of his foster brother. Lacan designates aggressivity in this sense as "aggressive relativity," which marks the ego from its very origin, and he suggests that it is only to be expected that it will be manifest in "each great instinctual metamorphosis in the life of the individual" where the encounters with others that mark the "subject's history" will cross the path of the "unthinkable innateness of his desire" (1977, pp. 19–20/114). So aggressivity originates in the threat posed by the other in the triangular relationship of self-other-thing.

There appears to be a second way of conceiving primitive aggressivity, however, and it emerges as Lacan enlists the authority of Melanie Klein to corroborate his own position. Citing the fact that she shows us "the extreme archaism of the subjectification of a *kakon*," Lacan sees her as "push[ing] back the limits within which we can see the subjective function of identification operate" (1977, p. 21/115). This appears related to the early origin of the superego as self-critical agency. For the subject, the experience is one of depressive devaluation in the light of the ego as object of narcissistic identification. In this way we again

see "the notion of an aggressivity linked to the narcissistic relation" as such (1977, p. 21/115). We understand Lacan also to mean that when the unifying image of the ego integrates the "original organic disarray," the subject experiences a "peculiar satisfaction" that "must be conceived in the dimension of a vital dehiscence that is constitutive of man," i.e., a peculiar compensation for a radical gap, lack, or separation operative from birth (1977, p. 21/116). This "narcissistic passion" generates enormous energy in the ego. We infer—but here we go beyond the explicit text—that this energy converts into primitive aggressivity whenever the integration—i.e., the fragile unity—of the ego is threatened. In this way, we take literally the assertion that aggressivity is "a correlative tension of the narcissistic structure" (1977, p. 22/116) and hypothesize that the aggressive imago of the *corps morcelé* (fragmentation) is the inversion of the gestalt of the ego (unification).

At this point Lacan moves on to certain corollaries of his thesis that permit him to take account of "all sorts of accidents and atypicalities" in the coming-to-be of the subject. First and most important is the relevance of the thesis for the development of the Oedipus complex.

The essentials of this development are familiar enough. We know that the infant experiences the parent of the same sex as a rival and resolves the rivalry by identifying with that parent (i.e., by "reshaping" himself according to the introjected imago of the parent) in what Freud calls a process of "sublimation" (1977, p. 22/117). However, Lacan claims that this "secondary identification" with the rival cannot be accounted for structurally unless "the way is prepared for it by a primary identification that structures the subject as a rival with himself" (1977, p. 22/117), as in the hypothesis of the ego as mirror image. Be that as it may, the rivalry is resolved by the "pacifying function" of the introjected imago, whereby the normal thrust of genital libido ("libidinal normativity"), which "operates as a supersession [*dépassement*]. . . of the individual in favour of the species," is conjoined with an accommodation to the societal demands associ-

ated with the imago of the father ("cultural normativity"), thus accounting for the "cultural subordination" of man (1977, p. 24/118). This is indeed a "sublimation," but what is sublimated is precisely the aggression toward the parent. This is the significance Lacan sees in the primordial myth constructed by Freud in *Totem and Taboo* (1913).

"Thesis V. *Such a notion of aggressivity as one of the intentional co-ordinates of the human ego, especially relative to the category of space, allows us to conceive of its role in modern neurosis and in the 'discontents' of civilization.*"

Perhaps the importance of this final thesis simply consists in the fact that Lacan felt constrained to formulate it, as if to reaffirm his concern for the social dimension of man, even when dealing with the most elementary processes through which the individual is formed.

That the subject's experience of the reflected image of itself as ego is "especially relative" to its experience of space is evident enough, for the encounter with the image takes place within *reflected* space—whence a "spatial symmetry in man's narcissistic structure"—which is then expanded to include "the field of the other" and thereby "rejoins the objective space of reality" (1977, p. 27/122). But this reflected space is marked by the "imagery of the ego" and is to that extent "*kaleidoscopic*" (1977, p. 27/122), i.e., distorted in myriad ways. In any case, it is in this context, perhaps, that it is possible to see some correlation between the "instinct of self-preservation" and the "vertigo of the domination of space" (1977, p. 28/123)—we understand this to mean the struggle for "survival of the fittest"—in which Darwin saw the seeds of aggressivity.

Hegel, of course, saw the seeds of human aggressivity differently. For him, the basic human conflict is the struggle for recognition—struggle unto death—which is seen in paradigmatic form in the dialectical struggle between master and slave.

But however we understand the seeds of aggressivity philo-

sophically, we face its consequences concretely when dealing with the "barbarism" of our age, which Lacan speaks of as the "modern neurosis," made up of many elements (1977, p. 26/121). One form of it is "psychotechnique," i.e., the domination of our lives by the machine—a "technical enterprise at the species scale" (1977, p. 27/122).

But if the enterprise is "at the species scale," then it is as wide as the "living space" of the species, which space is not that studied by physics but by psychoanalysis, insofar as it is structured by the mirror stage and is therefore distorted.

Be that as it may, we see human aggressivity adapting to the circumstances of this space on "the species scale" most dramatically in the phenomenon of war, which, curiously enough, seems to be "the midwife of all progress" (1977, p. 27/123). Yet war, to the extent that it is seen as a phenomenon of "species scale," is external to the individual and is made possible by the limitations of the individual—i.e., seeds of aggressivity that Melanie Klein speaks of as "internal bad objects" (1977, p. 28/123). These are projected in the category of space (1977, pp. 15, 28/109, 123). Corresponding to them in the category of time are different forms of anxiety, manifest in sundry ways (e.g., flight, inhibition) (1977, pp. 15, 28/109, 123). Where these two tensions intersect is that point in the human being where there is a primordial cleavage (*déchirement*), the opening up of a gap (dehiscence) in him that is a sign of both the plenitude and finitude that Freud, in resorting to biological terminology, called the "death instinct" (1977, p. 28/124). As such, it is probably the deepest explanation we can find for the "barbarism" of the "modern neurosis."

#### MAP OF THE TEXT

##### Introduction

##### A. Aggressivity as a scientific notion

1. can be used to objectify facts
2. and establish a field where we can regard facts in co-varying relationships.

- B. Psychoanalysis is our common field
  - 1. as an open system
    - a. whose gaps Freud expressed via the "death instinct,"
      - i. which is central to the notion of aggressivity
    - b. and is subject to ongoing discussion and elaboration.
- C. Our responsibility to present-day psychology
  - 1. lies in providing the categories implicitly used by behaviorists in the laboratory
  - 2. and in providing the underlying notions for psychodrama and play therapies.

"Thesis I. *Aggressivity manifests itself in an experience that is subjective by its very constitution.*"

- A. Psychoanalytic action grows out of verbal communication
  - 1. i.e., "in a dialectical grasp of meaning."
    - a. This dialectic presumes a subject manifesting himself to the intention of another
      - i. despite the subject's pseudo-obsolescence in physics.
    - b. A subject is necessary to understand meaning;
      - i. conversely, a subject can be understood.
- B. Psychoanalytic experience can form the basis of a positive science if:
  - 1. the experience can be verified by everyone,
  - 2. the experience is replicable,
  - 3. and thus apparently universal.

"Thesis II. *Aggressivity in experience is given to us as intended aggression and as an image of corporal dislocation, and it is in such forms that it shows itself to be efficient.*"

- A. In psychoanalytic experience we feel the pressure of intention.
  - 1. We find it in symptoms, fantasies, dreams;
  - 2. we measure it in the tone and gaps of discourse and behavior.

- B. The efficacy of aggressive intention is obvious
  - 1. in its formative effect on subordinates,
    - a. leading to castration and death
    - b. and installing the image of the Punisher:
      - i. images determine individual inflections of tendencies just as imagoes constitute matrices for "instincts."
- C. Aggressive intentions are given "magical" efficacy by imagoes,
  - 1. specifically, imagoes of the fragmented body.
    - a. Social practices reveal a specific relation between man and his body.
    - b. Children's play expresses aggressive images.
    - c. Bosch's work is an "atlas" of aggressive images.
    - d. They appear in dreams during psychoanalysis.
  - 2. These all flow from the structure of aggressivity,
    - a. with its symbolic and imaginary qualities
      - i. whose effect on identification is lost by the behaviorists.

"Thesis III. *The springs of aggressivity decide the reasons that motivate the technique of analysis.*"

- A. To the verbal dialectic Freud added:
  - 1. the rule of free association,
    - a. allowing the analysand to progress in a blind intentionality;
  - 2. no predetermined duration;
  - 3. an impassive, depersonalized, apathetic listener,
    - a. avoiding the trap of the patient's revenge.
- B. But Freud's technique brings into play the subject's aggressivity toward us.
  - 1. In the negative transference, archaic imagoes are de-repressed.
  - 2. The aroused aggressive intention reactualizes the imago, i.e.,

- a. in hysteria;
- b. in obsessional neuroses and phobias.
- 3. We operate without giving the aggressive intention any support through our elaborations.
- C. Such aggressive reactions are characteristic of the ego,
  - 1. not the ego in Freud's perception-consciousness system,
  - 2. but the phenomenological essence he recognized in negation:
    - a. the ego as opaque, ambiguous, pretentious, misunderstanding, and opposing the subject.
- D. Rather than making a frontal attack, psychoanalysis detours from the ego
  - 1. by inducing in the subject a "controlled paranoia"
    - a. in which bad internal objects are projected.
      - i. This corresponds to the spatial dimension,
      - ii. while anxiety corresponds to the temporal dimension.
  - 2. The imago is revealed only if our stance is like a pure mirroring surface,
    - a. but seeing in the analyst an exact replica of oneself, as in didactic analyses, can cause severe anxiety.

"Thesis IV. *Aggressivity is the correlative tendency of a mode of identification we call narcissistic, and which determines the formal structure of man's ego and of the register of entities characteristic of his world.*"

- A. The aggressive tendency is fundamental to paranoia.
  - 1. Tendency is a metapsychological concept,
    - a. allowing us to objectify aggressive reactions through the formula of libido.
  - 2. In tandem coordination the aggressive reaction, which reflects a particular form of paranoia, parallels the delusion representing a specific stage of mental genesis.
    - a. Thus the aggressive reaction is arranged in a continuous series

- b. that reveals earlier biological and social links,
- c. as marked by earlier ego-object structures,
- d. which are experienced as stereotyped mirages, thereby suspending the ego-object dialectical relationship in fixed moments of stagnation.
- 3. Human knowledge is paranoid,
  - a. fixing the ego and objects as permanent,
  - b. introducing a gap between man and his environment
    - i. through which he extends his power
      - (a) by giving his objects multiple use and meaning;
      - (b) by using his objects as defensive armor,
    - c. corresponding in its archaic forms to mental stages of objectifying identification.
- B. States of identification in the child include:
  - 1. undifferentiation from the other,
    - a. in which aggressivity serves not only exercise and exploration but also social relativity,
      - i. on which occasions the child anticipates the functional unity of his body;
  - 2. captation by the image of the other.
    - a. In the first stage, the image in the mirror
      - i. is experienced as an ideal imago, salutary for the original distress of fragmentation and prematurity.
    - b. Thereafter the human form appears in transitivity,
      - i. wherein children playing as actor and spectator, seducer and seduced, are identified with one another.
- C. The ego's erotic relation to its image is a structural crossroads.
  - 1. It is the source of the energy and the form of the ego as organization of erotic passion.
    - a. The form is crystallized in the conflicting tension internal to the subject (i.e., marking the subject as in conflict),

- i. and leads to desiring what the other desires,
  - (a) eventuating in aggressive competitiveness
  - (b) and the formal mapping of the triad of the other, the ego, and the object,
- ii. and which makes instinctual change in the individual a challenge to his delimitation (by the ego).
- b. The form of his ego can never be attained, even by the genius.
  - i. The consequent depression engenders formal negations,
    - (a) in which subject and other become confused in the ego's paranoid structure.
  - ii. In resentment is revealed our aggressivity toward the image of the other,
    - (a) in whose absorption are reactivated images of primordial frustration.
- c. The cartography of Melanie Klein reveals
  - i. the interior space of the mother's body;
  - ii. imagoes of the father and siblings in rivalry with the subject;
  - iii. the influence of bad internal objects
    - (a) whereby the reevocation of inferiorities can disconcert the subject, fragmenting the ego.
  - iv. In the primordially of the "depressive position," we see the earliest formation of the superego.
- 2. Aggressivity is tied to the narcissistic relation and to the ego's systematic miscognition and objectification.
  - a. In this relation a peculiar satisfaction comes from the integration of an original organic disorder.
    - i. This satisfaction must be seen in the context of a vital gap constitutive of man.
      - (a) This gap rules out any preformed environment
      - (b) and is a kind of negative libido affirming the priority of discord to harmony.

- b. From the narcissistic passion the ego obtains the energy it places at the service of the reality principle.
- c. In his inheritance of the ego as perception-consciousness system, Freud failed to recognize the ego's distorting role in sensation and language.
- d. Aggressivity, in conclusion, appears to have its source in narcissism as it structures superego oppression and desire for recognition.
- D. Aggressivity as "correlative tension of the narcissistic structure" sheds light on development.
  - 1. The Oedipus complex is a secondary identification reshaping the subject.
    - a. This presupposes a primary identification that structures the subject as the rival of himself.
      - i. The oedipal situation shapes the "instinct" in conformity with one's sex.
    - b. It also has a pacifying function,
      - i. linking individual development to cultural norms represented in the imago of the father.
      - ii. In oedipal identification the subject transcends his primary aggressivity to affectively assume his neighbor.
  - 2. The original identification with the ego has misshaped the subject.
    - a. All subjective activity is reduced to the being of the ego,
      - i. denying the dialectical truth of "I is an other."
    - b. Levels of the I are discordant.
    - c. The ego resists the treatment of symptoms just as it excludes tendencies that are to be reintegrated.
    - d. These tendencies bound up with oedipal failures are ego successes.
  - 3. Genital oblativity is not altruism.
    - a. Genital libido subordinates the individual to the species,
    - b. thus effecting sublimation and cultural subordination in the oedipal resolution:



- c. it thereby maintains the narcissistic structure in an aggressive tension.
- d. The problem of relating ego to other in "selfless" love is an old one.
- 4. Aggressivity is involved in all regressions and libidinal transformations.
- 5. Partial drives are ambivalent.
  - a. They are hostile yet reach out to the other.
- 6. The imago of one's own body has bearing on lateralization and inversions.

"Thesis V. *Such a notion of aggressivity as one of the intentional co-ordinates of the human ego, especially relative to the category of space, enables us to conceive of its role in modern neurosis and the 'discontents' of civilization.*"

- A. The prominence of aggressivity in our culture is manifest in:
  - 1. its confusion in ordinary morality with the virtue of strength;
  - 2. its use, seen as a development of the ego, which use is regarded as indispensable
    - a. in contrast to the practice of *yang* in Chinese morality;
  - 3. the high regard for the idea of life struggle.
    - a. In basing natural selection on the animal's conquest of space,
      - i. Darwin simply projected Victorian imperialism and capitalism.
- B. Hegel saw aggressivity as basic to human ontology in these terms:
  - 1. Our history can be deduced from the master-slave conflict.
    - a. The subject is nothing before the ultimate Master — death.
    - b. The natural individual and natural values are to be negated

- c. and transformed in the struggle for the recognition of man by man,
- d. and therefore the satisfaction of human desire is possible only when mediated by the desire and work of the other.
- C. Our barbarism is due to:
  - 1. the relativization of society that comes with cross-cultural documentation,
    - a. whereby we also destroy the cultures we study;
  - 2. the absence of cultural forms and rituals;
  - 3. the abolition of the polar male and female cosmic principles;
  - 4. the promotion of the ego-individual leading to isolation;
  - 5. our psychotechnology, which subordinates man to the machine.
- D. Spatial symmetry lies in man's narcissistic structure
  - 1. and is the basis for a psychological analysis of space,
    - a. in terms of the animal's social mapping of space
    - b. and the mirror experience of space
      - i. wherein "the imagery of the ego develops,"
        - (a) confounding the physicist's view of space.
  - 2. War is man's tool for adapting to space
    - a. and the internal space of bad objects adapts man to war.
    - b. Spatial domination subordinates the preservation of life
    - c. because the fear of death, the Master, is subordinate to the narcissistic fear of injury to one's own body.
- E. The subjective tension in the dimension of space intersects with anxiety developed in the temporal dimension.
  - 1. Here lies the relevance of Bergson and Kierkegaard to Darwinian naturalism and Hegelian dialectics.
  - 2. At this intersection man assumes his original gap,
    - a. but thereby founds his world in a suicide
    - b. in the experience of the death instinct.

3. This gap or split in emancipated modern man reveals a neurosis of self-punishment with its personal and social hell.

## NOTES TO THE TEXT

- 11g/105 The ogive and glass spheres appear to be details of Bosch's paintings. See, for example, his *Triptych of the Garden of Delights*.
- 12b/105 In "Some Reflections on the Ego" Lacan (1951, p. 13) states that these images appear in analysis at a particular phase of treatment, herald a very archaic phase of the transference, and lead to a marked decrease in the patient's deepest resistances.
- 12h/106 Encouraging analysts to shorten or lengthen each analytic session on their own judgment was a major source of friction within the International Psychoanalytical Association (see Turkle, 1975, p. 338).
- 13g/107 The identity of this "establishment figure" (*tel grand patron*) is unknown to us.
- 14b/107 The sense seems to be that in the transference an imago acts to switch off behavior which formerly shielded the ego from a function or body part that constituted an aspect of the patient's unconscious identification (as in the following example of the girl with falling sickness).
- 15a-c/ 108-109 Lacan makes the same points in "Some Reflections on the Ego" (1951, pp. 11-12, 15).
- 15d/109 Readers unfamiliar with Melanie Klein will find a useful introduction and bibliography in Segal (1967).
- 16a/109 As noted in the previous essay, the double is an omen of death. The point may be that competitiveness becomes intensified, murderous rivalry becomes suicidal, when the mirroring presents an exact replica, thus recalling and threatening the original identification with the mirror image, which "structures the sub-

- ject as a rival with himself," as Lacan will go on to say (1977, p. 22/117).
- 16b/110 Perhaps the oppressive action of bad internal objects is common to these states.
- 16d/110 Libido has quasi-mathematical symbolic utility, described by Freud as "a quantitative magnitude" but "not at present actually measurable" (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1967, p. 239).
- 17b/111 Lacan seems to say the aggressive reaction discloses an original costructuring of ego and object experienced as being in a stereotyped, frozen relationship.
- 17d/111 While in the case of animals objects have largely immediate salience for consumption, in man's case they are given a permanence that reflects the imputed stability of the ego, and have become part of instrumental and symbolic networks.
- 17g/111 See Chapter 1 for references (note 5e).
- 18a-b/ 112 Lacan here acknowledges a substantial debt to Wallon, who brought together themes of the unifying mirror image, identification, the category of space, the double, captation by the image of the other, and themes of domination and submission in the research of Charlotte Bühler (see Wallon, 1934, especially Part II, Chapter IV, "Le corps propre et son image exteroceptive," and Part III, Chapter II, "Sociabilité syncrétique"). Wallon views the children's motor behavior as expressions of "reciprocal stimulations" and "reciprocal attitudes" that form part of the structure of the situation in which the two children are identified with one another (pp. 192-193), rather than as acts of personal hostility.
- 19c/113 In the French text *organisation passionelle* has a more explicitly erotic ring than "organization of the passions."
- 19d/113 The origin of desire, the rise of competitiveness, and the forming of relationships involving ego, other, and objects are not clearly explained here. At bottom is

the form of the ego, somehow "crystallizing" in internal conflict and tension: perhaps the division between subject and reflected image, perhaps the correlation between the unifying ego and the infant's bodily turbulence and fragmentation. If the latter can be called "need," Lacan may be referring to the development of desire from need (he takes this up in more detail in the next essay).

20c/114 As we saw earlier, identification is at the root of the paranoid structure. Here ego and other become identified: whereas the first moment involved the denial of the subject's reality and the other's worth, now the subject's worth and the other's reality are negated. The *belle âme* represents a stage in Hegel's dialectic of self-consciousness in which internal disorder is projected onto the world and repudiated.

Freud discusses the principal forms of paranoia as represented by contradictory variants of the proposition "I (a man) love him (a man)," and describes them as delusions of persecution; erotomania, and delusions of jealousy (1911c, pp. 63-64). Lacan appears to be referring to this text, since elsewhere (in the "Discourse at Rome") he mentions the "persecutory 'interpretation'" in which denied feeling emerges under the form of a negative verbalization (1977, p. 85/298).

20d/115 Augustine's observation also appears in "Some Reflections on the Ego" (1951, p. 16). The images of primordial frustration may include the separations of birth and weaning (as suggested in Lacan's article on the family [1938]).

21a/115 In contrast to acausal Humean associations, accidental associations in the subject's history are contingent but effective. They serve later on to disunify the subject by threatening the original identification.

21b/115 The oppressive superego operates by characterizing

the subject as ugly and evil (*kakon*).

21d/116 The word "dehiscence" refers to "a bursting open," with biological and botanical references to: (a) "the opening of an organ along a suture or other definite line for the purpose of discharging its contents"; (b) "the bursting open of a capsule [or] pod. . . at maturity" (*Webster's New International Dictionary*, 1960, p. 690). In Lacan's use the emphasis seems to be on a rupture or gap, a kind of basic fault penetrating human existence. He later uses the notion of *béance* to express the gaping abyss linked with the origin of desire.

21e/116 We must keep in mind that when Lacan speaks of the "reality principle" he means the ego's distorting, negating, and oppositional manner of adjusting things to suit its own rigid style—especially its resistance to the growth of the subject.

23c/117-118 An "ara" is a macaw bird. The point seems to be that identity based on the stagnant, fixated ego has no room for dialectical truth in which dynamic relations between terms are posited in Hegelian fashion.

23d/118 The issue appears to be the confusion of the subject as spoken (i.e., the subject of the grammatical statement) and the subject as speaking, together with the tendency of different languages to persevere in this confusion.

24a/118 If, as Lacan has just said, "the Oedipal identification is that by which the subject transcends the aggressivity that is constitutive of the primary subjective individuation" (1977, p. 23/117), then the ego's aggressive exclusion, negation, and opposition to "tendencies" bound up with symptoms are the result of oedipal failure; on the other hand, they mark the success of the ego in resisting the inroads of "cultural normativity" and the reshaping of secondary identifications.

24g/119 The emphasis seems to be on the ego's aggressive resistance to growth and change, blocking the lifelong coming-into-being of the subject.

- 25b/120 Compare Sartre (1943, pp. 361–412).  
 25c/120 For a description of the classical “beautiful and good” ideal (*kalos kagathos*) see Jaeger (1939, p. 416, fn. 4, and elsewhere).  
 26b-c/  
 121 The essential commentary on desire and the master-slave dialectic remains Kojève’s first chapter (1939), which Wilden (1968) calls “especially influential” (p. 193). A brief summary, not a substitute, may send the reader to Kojève (and Hegel) for further clarification. Kojève stresses the role desire plays in bringing man back to himself (e.g., desire to eat something, a basic “I want,” a basic affirmation of “I” in relation to “not-I”), as opposed to knowledge, where man is absorbed by what he knows and where only the object is revealed. Thus in desire the “I” is formed and revealed as a subject related to an object. Again, unlike the passivity of knowledge, desire leads to action, to consuming the object, destroying or assimilating it, basically negating its given nature. This negating action also transforms the subject into what it consumes (as in eating). The “I” as desire is empty; it becomes what it assimilates—thingish or animal, a natural “I,” if it is directed only toward things.

The mere “sentiment of life” (the awareness of being alive) of an animal must be distinguished from human self-consciousness, which, instead of being directed toward thingish or animal objects, must be directed toward a nonnatural entity, something that goes beyond the given. The only thing that goes beyond given reality is desire itself.

Thus the only adequate object of human desire is another desire. To desire another desire is to desire to be the object of another desire, to be recognized by another desire as self-consciousness. Only another self-consciousness can recognize a self-consciousness as being what it is. To be itself, self-consciousness

must go outside of itself and find itself in another.

To be truly human, however, really to transcend the merely animal concern for preservation of life, man must risk his animal life for the sake of his human desire. It is by this risk that man is given proofs of being essentially different from animal reality. This leads to the fight to the death for recognition, insofar as each seeks to impose himself as autonomous value on the other. Kojève describes it in this way:

Man’s humanity “comes to light” only in risking his life to satisfy his human Desire—that is, his Desire directed toward another Desire. Now, to desire a Desire is to want to substitute oneself for the value desired by this Desire. For without this substitution, one would desire the value, the desired object, and not the Desire itself. Therefore, to desire the Desire of another is in the final analysis to desire that the value that I am or that I “represent” be the value desired by the other: I want him to “recognize” my value as his value. I want him to “recognize” me as an autonomous value. In other words, all human, anthropogenetic Desire—the Desire that generates Self-Consciousness, the human reality—is, finally, a function of the desire for “recognition.” And the risk of life by which the human reality “comes to light” is a risk for the sake of such a Desire. Therefore, to speak of the “origin” of Self-Consciousness is necessarily to speak of a fight to the death for “recognition” [1939, p. 7].

Here we see the place of Lacan’s stress on the ego’s aggressiveness, negation, and development through opposition. It is a fight to the death, then, in the effort to reject a thingish or animal mode of consciousness. Proving that the other is also willing to risk his life is

to ensure that he is also truly human and is therefore capable of giving human recognition to one's self-consciousness. But killing the other or being killed would make recognition impossible. The resolution of the fight for recognition lies in working out a master-slave arrangement as a living solution to the master's desire for recognition as autonomous self-consciousness. The solution, however, is provisional, and the Hegelian dialectic moves on.

Kojève's analysis is fundamental to a reading of Lacan and will appear more and more useful for clarifying later texts.

- 26d/121 If "Spartacus" is correctly suggested by "Spartacism," the sense would be that the rebellion of the worker is spawned by the Hegelian doctrine as transposed by Marx and Lenin. This finds support in Rosa Luxemburg's Spartacist party, a group of radical German socialists which became the German Communist Party in 1919 to promote the dictatorship of the workers.
- 27a/122 The reference to the hornet escapes us. "Original dereliction" is a reference to the Heideggerian notion of thrownness (*Geworfenheit*).
- 27c/122 Lacan appears to be dealing with the way others and objects are discovered in the mirror as "the threshold of the visible world" (1977, p. 3/95), and with space as a social category, rather than as the Darwinian field for individual conquest. The "kaleidoscopic" quality suggests the "beautiful form" (*kalos eidos*) of the gestalt image perceived in the distorting mirror.
- 27d/ 122-123 The once-simple space of physics has indeed yielded to conceptions as wide-ranging as the classical cosmogonies.
- 28e/ 123-124 The anxiety of bodily fragmentation (the intersection of the spatial and temporal tensions?) is overcome by the identification with the mirror image, and this constitutes a negation of the subject, a kind of suicide, as well as the constitution of the world as having ego attributes.