

Chapter 4
*The Freudian Thing,
or the Meaning of the Return to Freud
in Psychoanalysis*

OVERVIEW

Lacan refers to this essay as an “amplification” of a lecture he gave at the Neuropsychiatric Clinic in Vienna on November 7, 1955, a little more than two years after his “Discourse at Rome.” We find that language remains fixed in the central place given to it at Rome, while ego psychology comes under severe attack as Lacan attempts to delineate authentic Freudian psychoanalysis according to his re-reading of Freud.

The use of *thing* (*la chose Freudienne*) in his title here allows Lacan to make a number of points. Mannoni (1971) remarks that the Lacanians found it was necessary to work on Freud’s theory “like a thing,” an expression Freud himself used in a letter to Fliess (1887–1902, pp. 129, 133). In French, *la chose Freudienne* also refers more generally to “the Freudian matter” or “the Freudian business.” In this essay it more specifically indicates the transpersonal but material agency of language from which

“it speaks” in the unconscious. Concretely, in this essay Lacan does make a thing speak. His style here is a bit more flamboyant, even theatrical, as he presents, in this operatic city, truth speaking from center stage, protagonists, a talking desk, an interlude, and the mythical figures of Actaeon and his hunting dogs in pursuit of Diana, representing truth in her nakedness.

The essay is divided into 13 sections (we have given them a numbered sequence), each with its own title. Some are suggestive of the romantic novel (“The adversary,” “[The] imaginary passion”) or silent film captions (“Resistance to the resisters”). While the titles appear loosely to punctuate the flow of thought, some broad divisions are offered to provide further unification. The first section is Lacan’s *mise en scène*, positing as the essay’s central theme that as a result of Freud’s discovery “the very centre of the human being was no longer to be found at the place assigned to it by a whole humanist tradition” (1977, p. 114/401). The next five sections deal with the relations between truth and the signifier. Section VII is titled “Interlude,” and as the longest section it can be seen as the turning point of the essay, putting into question the place of the ego and of consciousness in relation to meaning. The outcome of such questioning leads Lacan to assert that the ego is no different from the nearby desk as far as discourse is concerned. The five sections following the Interlude deal with the distinction between the ego and the Other, “between the field of the ego and that of the unconscious” (1977, p. 142/433). The final section is an exhortation regarding the role language should play in the formation of analysts. There is a balance, then, in the essay’s structure (1-5-1-5-1) which is not evident at first.

I

Situation in time and place of this exercise

In 1955 Austria (and Vienna) achieved reunification with neutral status after the post-World War II division into four zones of occupation. Lacan appears to allude to this when he

speaks of Vienna making itself heard once again through its opera and thereby “resuming what had always been its mission, namely, to create harmony at this point of cultural convergence as only it knew how” (1977, p. 114/401). Lacan has come to this “eternal city of Freud’s discovery” to herald the return to Freud. Such heralding is not without conflict, however, for Lacan is quick to note the failure of the International Psycho-Analytical Association to commemorate the house where Freud worked. He also launches, almost immediately, into his usual criticism of American psychoanalysis. The same war that divided Vienna drove emigrants to the United States, where “a cultural ahistoricism” (1977, p. 115/402) prevails in defining the kind of assimilation required in order to achieve status-recognition. The European psychoanalysts had to assimilate by gaining status-recognition for differences vis-à-vis patients (who were quick to demand such differences) according to “the reactionary principle operant in the duality of the sick and the healer” (1977, p. 115/403). In their way of adapting to American society they fall under Lacan’s criticism for forgetting history and its function in analysis. What has become of psychoanalytic theory since Freud’s death, moreover, shows what psychoanalysis is not, and in urging a return to Freud, Lacan seeks to revitalize what has continued to sustain psychoanalytic practice.

Freud’s work is a coherent effort to maintain a “primary rigour” amid different stages and changes in direction. It not only answers the questions it poses, but even goes beyond this to provide answers to present questions. The systematic study of Freud’s texts yields genuine discoveries of unused concepts, clinical details, and methodology that transform clinical practice.

II

The adversary

Lacan insists that the “meaning of a return to Freud is a return to the meaning of Freud” (1977, p. 117/405), a meaning

addressed to all of us, for Freud put the truth into question, and the truth personally concerns each of us. It should especially concern psychoanalysts since analysis rediscovers the power of truth in the analysis of symptoms and of defenses against unconscious tendencies. The peace that follows the recognition of such tendencies signals the truth. This signal is rendered questionable, however, by a theory that views the ego's defenses as unconscious and even goes so far as to identify mechanisms of defense with the dynamics of the unconscious. Haven't we gone too far "when we admit that the drive itself may be led to consciousness by the defence in order to prevent the subject from recognizing [himself in] it"? (1977, p. 118/406). Lacan's obvious concern here is to keep the field of the ego distinct from the processes of the unconscious, although he doesn't spell out the latter, referring rather to "tendency" (*tendance*) and "drive" (*pulsion*). To do justice to "these mysteries" Lacan must resort to another kind of duality, one that sustains the words of the discourse. This can only be the signifier-signified couple to be defined in Section V.

Lacan responds to critics who charge him with being an overly philosophical ideologist by stating that the criterion for truth is intrinsic to the psychoanalytic situation for "Psychoanalysis is the science of the mirages that appear within this field" (1977, p. 119/407). As a "unique" and "abject" experience, it is useful "to those who wish to be introduced to the principle of man's follies, for, by revealing itself as akin to a whole gamut of disorders, it throws light upon them" (1977, p. 119/407). For Lacan it is absurd to claim that analytic practice is strictly tied to unalterable forms discovered by chance and that analysis leads reductionistically only to ahistorical, preoedipal realities (oral and anal) that provide the illusion of truth. Analysis was situated by Freud in the oedipal framework and thus it opens onto "all the fields of creation" (i.e., the entire symbolic order). It began with a particular truth, an "unveiling" (this usually has reference to the phallus), with the result that after Freud "reality is no longer the same for us as it was before" (1977, p. 120/408). For the most part, however, truth is so easily confused with its

surrounding reality that it is in her nakedness that truth best attracts our attention (although she subsequently suffers at our hands) and it is in death that she is best preserved (a notion of death involving the ego and the analyst that will be taken up later).

III

The thing speaks of itself

Rather than identifying the criterion for truth, Lacan has truth herself promise: "I will teach you by what sign you will recognize me" (1977, p. 121/409). The discourse of error and Hegel's notion of "the cunning of reason" are suggested as approaches, but it is rather the unintended mistake, "the unsuccessful" act, the dream and the joke that are the signs of truth. For this reason, the "trade route of truth no longer passes through thought," truth is no longer a function of consciousness or the ego. Rather, the way lies through things. "[Rebus,] it is through you that I communicate," says truth, echoing Freud's work on the riddle of the dream (1977, p. 122/410). Lacan also echoes Heidegger by situating truth in being rather than in the fortress of consciousness. The things which are signs of "the truth who speaks" are linguistic signs, material taken up by language, like Cleopatra's nose in Pascal's aphorism. And if reason's cunning were somehow made consciously intelligible, truth would become deceit, for her ways pass through the dream, the mediocre, the absurd. Truth, in short, is contradictory for the logic of natural consciousness.

IV

Parade

This title invokes images of display, pageantry, and exhibition; it is the term used to refer to male courting rituals among animals. This most theatrical section begins with truth disappearing into the shadows or the underworld of death, signaling

a search for the murderer, the one hiding the truth, the speaker — the three seem to be the same. The blame falls on the ego in this “drama of knowledge,” but the scene shifts and we now see the protagonist Freud as Actaeon pursuing the goddess of truth. She offers him “the quasi-mystical limit of the most rational discourse in the world,” the limit suggesting a barrier, where “the symbol is substituted for death” (recall the link between language, limit, and death [Chapter 3, p. 94]) and the symbol operates “in order to take possession of the first swelling of life” (the moment when desire becomes part of the signifying chain) (1977, p. 124/412). In other words, the truth is that every discourse is bound by a limiting factor constituted in the way the word is “a presence made of absence” or “the murder of the thing,” originating from the first moment of separation (limit) from the mother. This is the moment of first human desire, signified by the phallus that the child desires to be for the mother but later must forgo in the oedipal resolution — the symbolic castration which is the price paid to enter the symbolic order.

All of this, Lacan assures us, is beyond the reach of Freud’s disciples, whom he tries to reorient with the words spoken by truth: “I speak” and “There is no speech that is not language.” We have mistakenly emphasized the “I” rather than the speech. Language, moreover, is an order constituted by laws, not natural expression, code, or information; in this order one properly says, following Freud, that *it speaks*, and it does so “where it is least expected, namely, where there is pain” (1977, p. 125/413). To know more, we must follow Saussure.

V

Order of the thing

In this section we approach the heart of the Lacanian re-reading of Freud. We begin with the signifier-signified distinction of Saussure. Lacan here associates the signifier with language material (phonemes) and the order of synchrony, that is, the coexisting ensemble of distinctive phonemic features, each

identified solely by its relation of difference from all the others present in the existing language structure. The network of the signified Lacan associates with “concretely pronounced discourses” (i.e., speech) and the order of diachrony, that is, the actual words sequentially chained to produce a meaningful statement. The statement’s coherence or “unity of signification” is never resolved in a “pure indication of the real” (does not get its meaning from “real” objects) but always “refers back to another signification,” i.e., the signifier refers not to a given signified but to another signifier. Ultimately we must affirm that we stand in a kind of circle of understanding in which “the signification is realized only on the basis of a grasp of things in their totality” (1977, p. 126/414). This grasp is a function of the signifier which “alone guarantees the theoretical coherence of the whole as a whole.” The signification, furthermore, cannot be reduced to the level of information, for speech implies more than what is said.

These are the bases that distinguish language from mere signs (Lacan made this point in the “Discourse at Rome” [1977, p. 84/297]). These linguistic bases put the notion of dialectic in a new light. The illustration of the dialectic chosen by Lacan is Hegel’s critique of the “beautiful soul,” a particular stage in the dialectic of self-consciousness in which individual conscience (earlier called “the law of the heart”) becomes the ultimate criterion for condemning the behavior of others. This leads eventually to the condition described by Lauer (1976): “Since *doing* anything runs the risk of sullyng its purity, for the ‘beautiful soul’ *saying* the right thing becomes all important.” As moral critic, the beautiful soul “wants to impose on the man of action the obligation of justifying himself in words, with the result that everything is levelled off, and the very distinction between good and evil becomes a matter of words.” When the other admits he has done wrong, the beautiful soul “does not admit the same in regard to himself; as critic he is not subject to criticism” (pp. 226–227). In this way the self-centeredness becomes apparent so that (in Heidegger’s description of the day-to-day ontic level

of being) the glib talk of the beautiful soul partakes of the same fallenness as the disordered behavior that is criticized. Thus Lacan can speak of “the tauto-ontic of the *belle âme* as mediation, unrecognized by itself, of that disorder as primary in being” (1977, p. 126/415).

Recognition by law is the basis given by Hegel for the dignity of the “person,” and Lacan equates this with the “I” of consciousness (this equation is open to question). He can then play off Freud against Hegel in making this “I” (ego) “responsible for the manifest disorder to be found in the most enclosed field of the real being,” i.e., in the imaginary “pseudo-totality” of this organism (1977, p. 127/415). The basis of the disorder is prior to the mirror stage, in the congenital gap (*béance*) of prematurity at birth, and in the later return in discourse of imaginary (bodily) elements that appear fragmented (*morcelés*) in this gap. In other words, the defensive self-righteousness of the ego arises to cover the gap and overcome the fear of fragmentation, and this internal disorder is in turn denounced in the other, who is seen as a threat to the ego.

But this genesis is not required to demonstrate the signifying structure of the symptom, for the symptom is a signifier and can be deciphered in a sequence of signification to reveal the omnipresence of the signifying function for the human being. This function determines the meaning of exchange to the extent that society is not a collection of individuals but an “immixture of subjects” mutually transformed by the symbolic order. Such transformation places the incidence of truth as cause at the level of the subject, and thus introduces inherent heterogeneity. Lacan may be referring here to the truth-perception of one class of men in conflict with another, so central to the Marxist dialectic, whose resistance to psychoanalysis is therefore unwarranted since “its ethic is not an individualist one” (1977, p. 127/416), the American example of individualistic success notwithstanding.

Lacan now turns to his main theme: that the subject, “the legatee of recognized truth,” “the true subject of the unconscious,”

is not the ego of consciousness, “constituted in its nucleus by a series of alienating identifications” (1977, p. 128/417). He proceeds to re-read Freud’s (1933) formula “*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden*,” not as it has entered English, “Where the id was, there the ego shall be,” in the sense that the ego supplants the id. Lacan’s lucid analysis leads him to conclude that Freud’s formula signifies: “‘There where it was’ (*Là où c’était*), I would like it to be understood, ‘it is my duty that I should come to being’” (1977, p. 129/417–418). What is at stake is not a grammatical conception of how the “I” (*le je*) and the ego (*le moi*) relate, but a process somehow on the level of being, rather than ego consciousness, whereby the “I” as subject comes to being in the unconscious, comes to “emerge . . . from this very locus in so far as it is a locus of being” (1977, p. 128/417). All of this affects analytic practice, especially the handling of transference and resistance, to which Lacan now turns.

VI

Resistance to the resisters

Now that the argument has gained momentum, this title exhorts us not to be sidetracked. After the previous section’s emphasis on the centrality of language and the symbolic order, the warning is needed, for we must “remember that the first resistance with which analysis has to deal is that of the discourse itself,” insofar as “it is first a discourse of opinion” (1977, p. 130/419). In the last chapter we saw that analysis begins with the period of the “empty word” in which the discourse, Lacan now tells us, at first (*d’abord*) consists of mere opinion (ego reflection) and not truth (echoing the Platonic distinction between *doxa* [opinion] and *episteme* [knowledge]). There is danger of resistance, furthermore, because “all psychological objectification will prove to be bound up with this discourse” (1977, p. 130/148). Lacan also warned of the dangers of objectification in the previous essay when he called attention to the “third paradox of the relation of language to speech,” namely, “that of the subject who loses

his meaning in the objectifications of discourse" (1977, p. 70/281). The analysis of resistances thus leads to "a reinforcement of the objectifying position in the subject," and by maintaining "the subject in a state of observation" (the observing ego?) we enter "a circle of misunderstanding that nothing in analysis, or in criticism, will be able to break" (1977, p. 130/419).

What is even more treacherous, however, is the effect on the analyst, who cannot proceed to objectify the subject and yet speak to him as he should. In its essence, objectification falls under "a law of misunderstanding" (*méconnaissance*) which rules the subject not just as observed (the objectified) but also as observer (the objectifier). The analyst should not speak about the subject, "for he can do this himself," but about another thing (*autre chose*), "something other [*chose autre*] than that which is in question when he speaks of himself" (1977, p. 130/419). This "something other" is "the thing [*la chose*] that speaks to you," which would remain inaccessible under conditions of objectification. As a word addressed to the analyst, this "thing" is capable of evoking (*évoquer*) its own response. The analyst hears the message "under this inverted form" and by returning it gives the subject the satisfaction of having recognized its truth. This is what the analysts of the '20s stopped achieving because they were caught in the objectifying analysis of resistances, rendered unable to recognize the response evoked in them, and thus unable to hear the inverted (unconscious) form of the subject's message and return it to him. The "thing that speaks" appears, then, to be the unconscious as it moves into the analytic discourse. If truth is to be considered in terms of adequacy, it is *this* "thing" which must be its norm, "this thing that speaks to us, which speaks within us, . . . even in escaping behind the discourse that says nothing but to make us speak" (1977, p. 131/420). But how do we speak about it?

VII

Interlude

When we turn to what other psychoanalysts are concerned with, we find they speak of the ego—as a synthesis of functions,

a function of synthesis, as autonomous, as an operational notion. It is this preoccupation, obstructing the presence of the "thing," which Lacan now sets out to demolish. He begins boldly by asking if the notion of the ego in analysis differs operationally from any other thing—for instance, this desk (or reading stand [*pupitre*]) close at hand. He then undertakes "to show that the discourses concerning the ego and the desk (and that is what is at stake) coincide point by point" (1977, p. 132/421). The desk, like the ego, "is dependent on the signifier," for the word is responsible for the fact that it is not just a piece of wood. Moreover, the chain of signifiers conjoined to the desk, to which the desk refers (such as papers, wills, and other documents), are as "dignified" in their human status as the things and signifiers to which the ego devotes its interest and attention in its discourse—indeed, the ego finds itself subordinated to the desk's documents in the form of legal contracts, etc. Furthermore, to lend a human voice to the desk would enable it to speak of its individual existence and its history (easily documented) which is, like us, prey to fatality. One of us, lastly, may dream that he is this desk, which then becomes a signifier of desire in a chain of significations to which the consciousness of this desk will have given its interest—and here, Lacan says, we touch on "the preconscious of this desk" (1977, p. 133/423).

Before he attempts to clarify his last remark, Lacan notes the protest from the quarter of phenomenology-psychiatry: consciousness belongs not to the desk, but to ourselves; it is we who "perceive the desk and give it its meaning" (1977, p. 134/423). Whatever truth may be conceded here, consciousness cannot encompass "the high form which, however weak we may be in the universe, guarantees us an imprescriptible dignity in it" (1977, p. 134/423), i.e., conscious reflection cannot comprehend our own meaning, as Pascal saw. Reflection, in fact, does not connote interiority but mirage, rendering the desk no different from the observer when placed with one of us between two parallel mirrors. For in this position of reflection both ego and

desk are scrutinized by an other, from which they receive back endlessly their distorted images.

Having attacked the priority assumed by consciousness in perceiving meaning, Lacan now comes back to his remark about what might be called "the preconscious of this desk." His clarification consists in defining perception as unconscious and as reflecting the essence of the object perceived. It is this "essence" that appears to include, "potentially or actually," "affectations" (e.g., attributions of this desk) that are hardly separable from "the preconscious," for these attributes adjust themselves exactly to my "affectations" and come to consciousness with them. He grants that the ego, not the desk, "is the seat of perceptions but in being so it reflects the essence of the objects it perceives and not its own, in so far as consciousness is its privilege, since these perceptions are very largely unconscious" (1977, p. 134/424). He appears to be saying that affective qualities have their ontological basis in beings, not in consciousness. He then takes a swipe at the arguments of "bastard forms of phenomenology" for diverting us from the fact that the desk does not talk.

VIII

The discourse of the other

Once the symbolic order is given its due recognition, the desk begins to speak and challenges the notion that the ego treated in analysis is "better than the desk that I am" (1977, p. 135/425). For the health of the ego is conceived in a way that ultimately reduces it to conformity with the analyst's ego, whose task it is to strengthen the patient's ego by bringing it into conformity with the analyst's perception of reality. Seeing the patient's neurosis as due to "the weakness of the ego" (1977, p. 136/425), the analyst tries to talk to the patient in "his own language," even to the ludicrous point of talking "babyish" as a parent does to a child to get him to comply. The desk now claims to be the ideal patient, because less troublesome, since "it is simply a question of substituting your discourse for mine" (1977, p. 136/426).

The desk itself remains a word, not an ego, "a means that I have employed in my discourse," says Lacan. Yet if we examine its role in analysis, the ego, too, is a means comparable to the desk. The desk has the advantage of not being a means of resistance, even though it "will soon be torn to pieces" (*morceaux*) by Lacan's audience for use as a weapon (*arme*) to attack the speaker for saying these outrageous things (1977, p. 136/426). Lacan uses these same terms to describe the ego, but in reverse, for the ego is a "means of the speech addressed to you from the subject's unconscious, a weapon [*arme*] to resist its recognition, it is fragmented [*morcelé*] in that it bears speech [as articulated, discrete signifiers] and whole in that it helps in not hearing it [as an obstacle to hearing]" (1977, p. 137/426-427). We've been given signals, again, about the mirror stage, and before Lacan deals with it in the next section, he links the imaginary with the symbolic order, telling us "it is in the disintegration [*désagrégation*] of the imaginary unity constituted by the ego that the subject finds the signifying material of his symptoms" (1977, p. 137/427). The order of signification itself is subject to the ego's narcissistic use, for "it is from the sort of interest aroused in him by the ego that the significations that turn his discourse away from those symptoms proceed" (1977, p. 137/427).

IX

[The] imaginary passion

This interest of the ego is none other than the passion of self-love, known to moralists but needing psychoanalysis to relate it to one's body image. This image is represented by the other, and I become so dependent on it as a result of the "signification that interests me so much" that it "links all the objects of my desires more closely to the desire of the other than to the desire that they arouse in me" (1977, p. 137/427). In other words, I become identified with the other in image and desire. The objects of desire, in turn, become modeled on the ego, after the fashion of paranoiac knowledge discussed earlier (Chapters 1 and 2).

All of this, of course, is the result of the mirror stage, which Lacan proceeds to describe. One consequence is that the anxiety of the fragmented body experience provokes aggressivity in response to the threat posed by the image of the other. Through “an appeal to the power of the image in which the honeymoon of the mirror so delighted” (1977, p. 138/428), the anxiety is quelled, i.e., through the pseudo-unification of the ego. The model of this synthesizing function of the ego is the notary or functionary mastering reality by treating objects as functional images of himself. But it is in the captivating relation to another ego that the alienation constituting the ego decisively appears, for as the ego identifies with the other in a “dual relation of ego to ego,” there occurs a mutual distribution of master-slave roles (paralleled in each subject by the original relation of mastery of ego image to fragmented body), not unlike the complementary roles between notary and client. This results in a permanent war of *toi ou moi* involving the struggle for survival of the notary (the masterful ego) in each of the subjects.

In this framework of a two-ego analysis, the language of the ego is reduced to repetitive command, aggressive echo, or delusional flourish, hardly propitious for the analysis of defenses, despite the appearances of corroboration in the “object relation” (1977, p. 139/429). We have to do with neither a “two body psychology” nor the “two ego analysis” it shelters.

X

Analytic action

What we do in analysis is more complicated, for “we teach that there are not only two subjects present in the analytic situation, but two subjects each provided with two objects, the ego and the other (*autre*), this other being indicated by a small *o*” (1977, p. 139/429). But when a pair of subjects (*S* and *O*) meet, one of those “objects” drops out in accordance with a “relation of exclusion” between the “other” of *S* and the “other” of *O*. While this remains obscure, perhaps reflecting our inadequacy with “a

dialectical mathematics with which we must familiarize ourselves” (1977, p. 139/429), we can attempt an understanding based on the transivist identification just discussed in the preceding section, where reference was made to “the relation of exclusion that . . . structures the dual relation of ego to ego” (1977, p. 138/428). In this relation, there is an “identification precipitated from the ego to the other in the subject”—that is, in the other subject—and it would seem that it is because of this identification that the ego of one becomes “the other” of another. In other words, the ego of *S* becomes the other of *O*, while *O*’s ego becomes the “other” of *S*, leaving us with “four players,” *S* and its aspect of being “the other” for *O*, and *O* with its aspect of being “the other” for *S*.

Lacan’s language supports this interpretation as he vigorously argues for a radical distinction between the level of the “Other,” with a capital *O*, and the level of the “other” with a small *o*, where we see “the respective effects of the symbolic and the imaginary” (1977, p. 140/430). The analyst must “be thoroughly imbued with the radical difference between the Other [*l’Autre*] to which his speech must be addressed, and that second other [*autre*] who is the individual that he sees before him” (1977, p. 140/430). In practice, this means that he conducts analysis “by pretending he is dead . . . either by his silence when he is the Other with a capital *O* [*l’Autre avec un grand A*], or by annulling his own resistance when he is the other with a small ‘*o*’ [*l’autre avec un petit a*]” (1977, p. 140/430), that is, when he functions from the place of the ego, the source of his resistance as analyst. He does this in order to be “the good listener” and thereby facilitate “the acceptance of a word,” a word “which constitutes a pact, whether admitted or not, between the two subjects, a pact that is situated in each case beyond the reasons of the argument” (1977, p. 140/430), that is, situated beyond conscious discourse in the Other. The rational logic of conscious discourse “is never more than a body of rules that were laboriously drawn up,” and this leads Lacan to say what we’ve experienced all along: “I shall expect nothing . . . of those rules except the good faith of the

Other, and, as a last resort, will make use of them if I think fit or if I am forced to, only to amuse bad faith" (1977, p. 140/431). What, then, is the Other?

XI

The locus of speech

Lacan begins by describing the Other as "the locus in which is constituted the I who speaks [with] him who hears," a locus that "extends as far into the subject as the laws of speech, that is to say, well beyond the discourse that takes its orders from the ego." Lacan tell us that we've known about this other level of linguistic operations "ever since Freud discovered its unconscious field and the laws that structure it" (1977, p. 141/431). The remainder of this section contrasts the field of the unconscious with the "concrete field of individual preservation" (1977, p. 142/432), i.e., the field of the ego.

These unconscious linguistic processes account for the fact that certain symptoms are analyzable. This is because they structure the symptoms, not because the symptoms contain an "indestructible" infantile desire or because desires are fixated or regressed in relation to an object. On the contrary, as Freud described in a letter to Fliess (see note 201*b*), the repression inherent to a symptom has to do with a signifier that has been repressed and that can subsequently be recollected and recognized. These "laws of recollection and symbolic recognition" are different from "the laws of imaginary reminiscence," which have to do with "the echo of feeling or instinctual imprint," although the latter can provide material for the signifying structures of the former (as, for example, images which operate as signifiers in the dream-rebus). Lacan adds a critical note to the process of repression, transference, and symptom formation when he stresses that in these processes what dominates "the desire to be recognized" is "the desire of recognition" so that the signifier of the desire is preserved "as such until it is recognized" (1977, p. 141/431).

In the Freudian unconscious only a signifier can be repressed, for the unconscious is determined by "the symbolic law," i.e., the laws of language. That is why when Freud established "the Oedipus Complex as the central motivation of the unconscious, he recognized this unconscious as the agency of the laws on which marriage alliance and kinship are based" (1977, p. 142/432)—and, according to Lévi-Strauss, these laws are essentially linguistic in nature. The centrality of the Oedipus complex, moreover, determines why "the motives of the unconscious are limited . . . to sexual desire," and why "the other great generic desire, that of hunger, is not represented, as Freud always maintained, in what the unconscious preserves in order to gain recognition for it" (1977, p. 142/432–433).

The "concrete field of individual preservation," on the other hand, is "structured in this dialectic of master and slave, in which we can recognize the symbolic emergence of the imaginary struggle to the death in which we earlier defined the essential structure of the ego" (1977, p. 142/432). This field is linked not to the division of labor (thus discounting a simple Marxist view of alienation), but to the division of desire and labor. The point seems to be that "from the first transformation introducing into food its human signification to the most developed forms of the production of consumer goods" (1977, p. 142/432), the satisfaction of needs has been caught up in the desire and the struggle for recognition in an ego-to-ego relationship of domination and servitude. Thus hunger, an aspect of the ego field rather than the unconscious, is not represented "in what the unconscious preserves in order to gain recognition for it." Freud, moreover, intended a rigorous separation, "even in their unconscious interference, between the field of the ego and that of the unconscious." We have lost this sense of rigor and our focus has shifted from the significations of guilt in the subject's action to his "affective frustration, instinctual deprivation, and imaginary dependence"—i.e., a shift from the symbolic to the imaginary order. This shift in psychoanalysis, according to Lacan, has fostered a "general infantilization" and "social mystification" characteristic of our age (1977, p. 142/433).

XII

Symbolic debt

This section stresses the debt we owe to language, whose truth analytic practice is in danger of repressing. We are forgetful of the truth that Freud showed us with the Rat Man, namely, that "it is out of the forfeits and vain oaths, lapses in speech and unconsidered words . . . that is moulded the stone guest who comes, in symptoms, to disturb the banquet of one's desires" (1977, p. 143/433). The speech of parents, betraying nothingness and despair, can affect children more than deprivation. It is from the gaps of the symbolic order itself that arises the "ferocious figure" of the superego, for two reasons: (1) the child's grasp of the law, prior to speech, is a misapprehension; (2) the law's presentation by the parental figure is often hypocritical. This leads to "the broken link of the symbolic chain" that opens up the field of the imaginary (1977, p. 143/434).

Analytic practice that is based on the imaginary field of "dual complicity" can have value only if it reduces the resistance of the ego to "the speech that is avowed at that moment of the analysis that is the analytic moment." It is in "the avowal of this speech" that "the analysis must rediscover its centre and its gravity" (1977, p. 143/434). If we take seriously "the symbolic debt for which the subject as subject of speech is responsible" (1977, p. 144/434), then the traditional definition of truth, "*Adaequatio rei et intellectus*," turns out to have an additional meaning, hinging on the word *reus*, with a metaphorical meaning of "he who is in debt for something." Truth then becomes the correspondence between the intellect and the subject's status as one in debt to the symbolic order.

XIII

The training of the analysts of the future

By returning to "the structures of language so manifestly recognizable in the earliest discovered mechanisms of the un-

conscious," we will find "the modes in which speech is able to recover the debt that it engenders" (1977, p. 144/435). We recall that these mechanisms are parapraxes, jokes, dreams, and symptoms, in which we recognize the structures of metaphor and metonymy. The modes of debt recovery include the study of languages and institutions, the resonances of literature, and the significations of art, all "necessary to an understanding of the text of our experience." Freud's own example shows that "he derived his inspiration, his ways of thinking and his technical weapons from just such a study" (1977, p. 144/435), and he regarded it as a necessary condition for the teaching of psychoanalysis. Its neglect is linked to the present state of analysis, and if a new generation is to recover the meaning of the Freudian experience and preserve themselves from psychosociological objectification, they must be initiated into the methods of linguistics, history, mathematics, and other "sciences of intersubjectivity" (1977, p. 145/435). This will require innovative teaching, for "the pact instituting the analytic experience must take account of the fact that this experience establishes the very effects that capture it in order to separate it from the subject" (1977, p. 145/435-436), i.e., we must make intelligible how analysis generates a dialectic of signification that develops a life of its own beyond both parties and accounts for the power of words to alter symptoms. We are uneasy about this power, denounce magical thinking in others, and make excuses for the fact that our practice is sustained by language and its link with truth. Because truth, however, like the subject, holds a place on the margin, Freud tells us that "it is impossible to keep to three undertakings: to educate, to govern, and to psychoanalyse" (1977, p. 145/436). Presumably a similar dialectic of speech develops in each of these endeavors, revealing that truth is complex, humble, alien, "stubborn to the choice of sex [because of its link to the signifier of the phallus?], akin to death, and, all in all, rather inhuman," much like Diana (1977, p. 145/436).

MAP OF THE TEXT

- I. *Situation in time and place of this exercise*
 - A. Vienna is the place of Freud's Copernican revolution.
 - 1. But this place has been neglected by psychoanalysis,
 - a. so that a return to Freud is seen as a reversal.
 - B. Post-war emigrés spread psychoanalysis to the United States,
 - 1. where ahistoricism defines assimilation,
 - a. to which the emigrants responded by seeking recognition for what differentiated them as healers and wise men from their patients as sick and ignorant,
 - 2. effacing Europe along with their bad memories.
 - C. Our return to Freud shows how psychoanalysis has been distorted since his death.
 - 1. Studying Freud's texts yields genuine discoveries,
 - a. with obvious transformative effects on practice.
- II. *The adversary*
 - A. "The meaning of a return to Freud is a return to the meaning of Freud."
 - 1. Such a return is a challenge to everyone insofar as it puts truth into question.
 - a. Truth is at the heart of analytic practice,
 - i. through which we constantly rediscover the power of the truth in our flesh,
 - ii. and in which we recognize the unconscious in the subject's defenses against it.
 - iii. The peace following such recognition comes from the truth,
 - iv. but we have distorted Freud in identifying unconscious and defense.
 - B. The adversary accuses us of bringing in Plato and Hegel.
 - 1. But Freud's method introduces us to the principle of human folly,
 - a. and is not absurdly reductionistic or due to chance.

- b. But it began with a particular truth,
 - c. which has become confused with surrounding reality,
 - d. and must again be surprised in its nakedness.
- III. *The thing speaks of itself*
 - A. Truth vanishes as soon as she appears
 - 1. to men who are phantoms.
 - 2. The discourse of error bears witness to her,
 - 3. as well as Hegel's cunning of reason.
 - 4. Truth wanders about in parapraxes, dreams, jokes.
 - 5. The road of truth no longer goes through thought, but through things as the signs of her speech.
- IV. *Parade*
 - A. "Who is speaking?"
 - 1. Libido, ego, or "the golem of narcissism"?
 - a. In the moment of truth the phallus enters.
 - 2. Truth says "I speak," and "There is no other speech but language."
 - a. Objections come from the nonverbal sphere.
 - B. It speaks, Freud discovered,
 - 1. where there is pain,
 - 2. in an order of language constituted by laws
 - a. differing from natural expression and not a code,
 - b. as Ferdinand de Saussure indicated.
- V. *Order of the thing*
 - A. Saussure distinguished signifier and signified.
 - 1. The network of the signifier is the ensemble of phonemes in a language.
 - 2. The network of the signified is the diachronic set of the spoken discourses,
 - a. whose signification always refers to other signifiers, not to specific things, and
 - b. whose signification is realized only on the basis of a grasp of things in their totality.
 - 3. Thus language is distinguished from the sign,
 - a. for it is only through signifiers that we can comprehend the whole.

- B. Hegel's "beautiful soul" falls prey to the dialectic of language,
 1. in which the I is defined as a legal being,
 2. whom Freud made responsible for internal disorder.
 3. This disorder is made possible by a congenital gap and fragmentation.
- C. For the human being, the symbolic function is omnipresent:
 1. in the signifying structures of symptoms imprinted on the flesh;
 2. in the exchange of gifts;
 3. in the commingling of subjects constituting society,
 4. where the incidence of truth as cause requires a revision of causality to include subjectivity,
 5. so that even Marxism must give up resistance to Freud.
 - a. For the psychoanalytic ethic is not individualistic,
 - i. despite the misunderstanding of it in America.
 6. Analytic experience is rooted in the general structure of semantics.
- D. The subject is not the ego.
 1. At the level of the unconscious the true subject is bequeathed recognized truth.
 2. The nucleus of the ego is made up of an alienating sequence of identifications,
 3. thus necessitating a re-reading of "*Wo Es war, soll Ich werden,*"
 - a. in which Freud discovered subjectivity in its radical ex-centricity.
- E. Linguistics teaches us to view the symptom as a signifier,
 1. appearing in a context of significations in the analytic dialogue,
 2. thus dissipating many ambiguities in the concepts of transference and resistance.

VI. *Resistance to the resisters*

- A. The first resistance with which analysis must deal is the discourse itself,
 1. as opinion and objectification.
- B. But analysis of resistance reinforces the subject's objectifications,
 1. and misunderstanding increases with emphasis on the observing state.
 2. The analyst cannot proceed to objectify the subject and still speak to him as he should,
 - a. for it is not about him that the analyst must speak to him;
 - b. rather, the analyst must respond by recognizing the other "thing" in what he says.
 - c. Since the thing speaks to us even in escaping behind the discourse,
 - d. the traditional definition of truth has a literal sense, i.e., correspondence (*adaequatio*) between intellect and thing.

VII. *Interlude*

- A. But what about the ego?
 1. As a function, as synthesis, as autonomous, as part of general psychology?
 2. As an operational notion?
- B. The ego is no different from this desk operationally (i.e., in discourse).
 1. The desk, as much as the ego, depends on the signifier.
 2. The significations of the desk are no less dignified than the ego's.
 3. If I lent my voice to the desk, it could speak of its existence and history as evidenced in documents.
 4. The desk can be a signifier in dreams, revealing a preconscious.
 5. But phenomenologists protest that the preconscious and consciousness belong to ourselves, not the desk.

- a. It is we who perceive the desk and bestow its meaning,
 - i. but we do not give ourselves meaning.
 - b. The desk and the observer are no different (with regard to consciousness) when they are placed between mirrors,
 - i. since the image of each is other for the observer.
 - c. In the same way the mirage of consciousness consists of an endless series of false reflections.
 - d. "Preconscious" cannot be separated from the desk's affective qualities which enter consciousness in adjusting to my affections.
 - e. The ego's perceptions of objects are largely unconscious and reflect their essence, not its own.
6. But we avoid discussing the fact that the desk does not speak.

VIII. *The discourse of the other*

- A. "How is the ego better than I am?" asks the desk.
 - 1. The ego's health is defined by its adaptation to reality, but in fact is distinguished by identification with the analyst's ego.
 - 2. We infantilize the subject's speech as we equate neurosis with ego weakness.
 - 3. The desk is an ideal patient since the analyst can simply substitute his own discourse and ego.
- B. In truth, the desk is "I" as grammatical subject, not an ego.
 - 1. However, as means in the discourse, the desk can be compared to the ego as means in analysis;
 - a. but the desk shows less resistance than the ego.
 - b. The ego is a defensive weapon used to resist recognition of the unconscious.
 - c. The ego is an imaginary unity,
 - i. in whose disintegration the subject discovers the signifying material of his symptoms,

- ii. from which his discourse is turned away by the ego.

IX. *Imaginary passion*

- A. The interest of the ego is the passion of self-love.
 - 1. Psychoanalysis has analyzed its relation to one's own body image,
 - a. which is represented by one's fellow-man.
 - 2. This passion makes me so dependent on this image that all the objects of desire are linked to the desire of the other.
 - a. These objects appear in a space structured by vision and the mirror experience.
- B. The mirror stage is a consequence of man's prematurity at birth,
 - 1. in which the infant jubilantly identifies with the total human form,
 - 2. whose unity is threatened by the image of another.
 - 3. According to the paranoiac principle of human knowledge, objects are an imaginary reduplication of the ego.
 - 4. The alienation that constitutes the ego in identification with the other leads to the transitive quarrel.
 - 5. The language of the ego is reduced to reactive aggressivity,
 - a. in which we locate the analysis of defense,
 - b. and whose outcome is judged to be a function of the object relation so that a "two body psychology" shelters a "two ego analysis."

X. *Analytic action*

- A. In the analytic situation there are not two but four players.
 - 1. Each subject has two objects, ego and other.
 - a. But these are merged in the Subject-Other relationship.
 - 2. The analyst's silence makes death present.
 - a. He must distinguish the symbolic register of the

Other from the imaginary register of the other.

- i. This is based on the radical difference between the Other to whom his speech is addressed and the second other whom he sees.

B. Every discourse is addressed to the good listener for the acceptance of a word which constitutes a pact situated beyond reasons.

1. And we expect nothing from rules of logic except the good faith of the Other,
 - a. so that we make use of them only to beguile bad faith.

XI. *The locus of speech*

A. The Other is the foundation of all dialogue.

1. This realm reaches into the subject as far as the laws of speech do,
 - a. beyond the ego's discourse.
 - b. Freud discovered it as the field of the unconscious, together with the laws structuring it.

B. These unconscious laws determine the analyzable symptoms,

1. not because infantile desires are indestructible,
2. but because they are permanently recollected in a repressed signifier that seeks to be recognized.
 - a. The laws of such recollection and symbolic recognition are different from the laws of feeling or instinct.

3. This unconscious is the agency of laws governing marriage, kinship, and exchange.

- a. It is in this sense that the motives of the unconscious are expressed in terms of sexual desire.

C. The field of the ego's survival is structured in the dialectic of master and slave,

1. where we find Hegel's "struggle to the death" which defines the essential structure of the ego.
 - a. Freud intended a rigorous separation between the ego's field and that of the unconscious,

- i. whose recognition the ego resists by its own significations in speech.

(a) As a result, we are now led away from dealing with the significations of guilt to encouraging infantilization and ideology.

XII. *Symbolic debt*

A. Analytic practice risks repressing the very truth it bears in its exercise,

1. which haunts us in the lapses of our discourse.
2. Parental speech has more effect on the child than deprivation.
 - a. The misunderstood law gives rise to the ferocious superego.

B. Analysis which is reduced to a mobilization of defenses is to be criticized,

1. because it is disordered in practice as well as principle,
2. while its striving for success has value only in reducing the resistance of the ego to the word.
3. Analysis must rediscover its center in the acknowledgment of this word actualized in the transference,
 - a. so that the intellect can be adequate to the symbolic debt for which the subject is responsible as subject of the word.

XIII. *The training of the analysts of the future*

A. We return to the language structures recognizable in unconscious mechanisms.

1. Freud believed the history of language and literature was necessary for understanding the text of our experience and for teaching psychoanalysis,
 - a. but this insight has been ignored.
2. Training a new generation of analysts will require initiation into the methods of the linguist, the historian, and the mathematician,

- a. thereby warding off the psychosociological objectification in which uncertain analysts have looked for substance.
- b. This reform requires communicating with disciplines defined as sciences of intersubjectivity, or “conjectural sciences,”
 - i. turning about what is implied by “human sciences,”
- c. and it requires innovative teaching.
 - i. For truth is complex, humble, marginal, akin to death, and rather inhuman.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

- 115a/402 A misprint in the English text reads “have not reached” instead of “have now reached.”
- 116f/404 The French text ends this paragraph with *questions de l'actuel*, more sharply translated as “questions of the present” than “questions of the real.” To allow a text bound up in tradition to speak to us (who are also bound up in tradition) is precisely the task of hermeneutics, “that discipline of commentary.”
- 118c/406 Since the French text reads “pour éviter que le sujet s’y reconaisse,” we translate: “in order to prevent the subject from recognizing himself in it,” rather than “. . . from recognizing it.”
- 118d/406 The image of the bandit shape lurking behind every tree suggests a familiar diatribe against symbol-hunting, the reification of the signified in a fixed (analogic) relation to the signifier (see, e.g., 1977, p. 160/510). It is not clear what is “this little, then, which can become everything on occasion,” unless it refers back to the little it takes to believe that one is in the forest of Bondy, where truth consists of fixed one-to-one relationships between the signifier and the signified.

- 119d/407 Balthazar Gracian (1601–1658) was a Spanish Jesuit philosopher, novelist, and epigrammatist. La Rochefoucauld (1613–1680) is best known for his moral maxims and polished epigrams (Lacan quoted him earlier [1977, p. 54d/264]). Madeleine de Scudéry (1607–1701) was a novelist who had one of the chief literary salons of Paris. Freud joined this circle apparently by setting the tradition of moral casuistry onto the terrain of sexuality, whose literary map, when properly oriented, still serves as guide for the psychoanalyst in his office.
- 119e–
120a/407 The translation is in question here. In the zealot’s opinion, regarding the forms governing psychoanalytic practice, “elles détiennent l’accès à une réalité transcendante aux aspects de l’histoire,” i.e., “they confine access to a reality transcending aspects of history,” and therefore the taste for order and love of beauty have their permanent (and ahistorical) foundation in toileting. Lacan has already told us (1977, p. 53/262) “the anal stage is no less purely historical when it is actually experienced than when it is reconstituted in thought.”
- 120b/407 The French is a bit stronger in stating that regarding the analytic relation Freud was only satisfied with having situated it in the position of the Oedipus complex.
- The preoedipal (object relations) theorists narrow the analytic relation as much as the experimental psychologists restrict the scope of discovery by their methodology.
- 120d/408 Diogenes, the Greek Cynic philosopher, went about in daylight with a lantern, “looking for an honest man.” The light held aloft in the proverbial symbol of the search for truth also appears to have broad general reference. The mention of the well may be related to the French phrase “la vérité est au fond du

puits" ("truth lies at the bottom of a well"). The casket (perhaps another reference) suggests a later theme, namely, truth's relationship to death (see 1977, p. 124c/412, Diana and "the smooth surface of death," and p. 145e/436, where truth is "akin to death").

121c/409 In Hegel, reason's cunning operates by means of contradiction, impasse, deceptive appearance, and frustration in order to forward the dialectic to its grand conclusion: self-consciousness aware of itself as absolute spirit.

122b/410 The sentence "All the same. . ." (*Quand même*) begins better with "Even though," thus subordinating this clause to "you will not get off so lightly." The next sentence might read ". . . to see me escape (by situating me not in you yourselves but in being itself) first from the dungeon of the fortress in which you are so sure you have me secured." The "most far-fetched conceit" translates *la pointe la plus gongorique*.

Luis de Gongora y Argote (1561-1627) has been called Spain's greatest poet. His style yields the term "Gongorism" and is characterized by innovative use of metaphor, classical and mythological allusion, and latinization of vocabulary. Lacan has referred to himself as the Gongora of psychoanalysis (1966, p. 467). Who would dispute the point?

122c/410 Fichte (1762-1814) spearheaded post-Kantian German idealism with his notion of the absolute Ego.

The choice of "riddle" in English loses the force of *rébus* in French, referring to Freud's (1900a) illustration that the dream is like a rebus, a picture-puzzle linguistically structured. The Latin dative and ablative plural form for "things" is *rebus*.

123a/411 Pascal (1670) wrote: "Cleopatra's nose, had it been shorter, the whole face of the world would have been changed" (#162).

123c/411 "*Parade*": in "The Agency of the Letter in the Uncon-

scious" Lacan writes of "the fascinating display of mating. . . ritual" (1977, p. 172/525); the French is even more explicit: *l'érection fascinante de la parade*.

124a/412 Schreber fell victim to the divine rays which spoke, i.e., to the signifier (see 1977, p. 185a/538).

124c/412 In classical myth Actaeon, the hunter, came upon Diana, the virgin huntress (Artemis to the Greeks), bathing in a stream. Because he saw her naked she turned him into a stag, whereupon his own dogs, no longer recognizing him, tore him to pieces. Freud, unlike Actaeon and unlike the analyst who becomes "the prey of the dogs of his thoughts" (1977, p. 124d/412), has given the slip to the dogs who from the beginning have been thrown off their scent (not "tracked down" as in the English). Freud tries to draw them back into pursuit (these thinkers who pursue the truth), but he cannot slow down his own pace.

124d/412 Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) stressed the relativity of perception in the dialectical pursuit of truth. He had a major influence on Spinoza and Leibniz.

125d/413 Rather than turn to the ego, we should turn to the ridges (better than "angle of intersection" for *arêtes*) of speech, i.e., to the slopes of the sliding of the signified under the signifier, namely, metaphor and metonymy (see 1977, pp. 154-160/503-511).

Stalin's bull is explained by Lacan's note in "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious":

We may recall that the discussion of the need for a new language in communist society did in fact take place, and Stalin, much to the relief of those who adhered to his philosophy, put an end to it with the following formulation: language is not a superstructure [1977, p. 176/496].

126a/414 The use of "non-overlapping networks" to translate

- qui ne se recouvrent pas* is misleading; the networks do not cover one another, but they may overlap.
- 126b-c/414 The next chapter presents Saussure's ideas in more detail. For the moment it should be said that Lacan is embellishing Saussure's elementary relationship of signifier as sound-image to signified as concept.
- 126d/414 The antecedents of "it" (signification? redundancy?) are also ambiguous in the French. The point seems to be that we cannot base the meaning of a sentence solely on the information contained in the sentence (for there is no one-to-one connection between words and things, and speech always says more than it says). Redundancy (in Lacan's view of information theory) is "precisely that which does duty as resonance in speech" (1977, p. 86c/299).
- 126h/415 Rather than "which he erects," we translate "which it erects," referring to the infatuated "I."
- 127d/415 The text should read: "Deciphered, it [the symptom] is self-evident and shows, imprinted on the flesh, the omnipresence for the human being of the symbolic function" ("Déchiffrée, elle est patente et montre imprimée sur la chair, l'omniprésence pour l'être humain de la fonction symbolique").
- 127f/415-416 The French text speaks of "the incidence of truth" (*l'incidence de la vérité*) and "the heterogeneity of this incidence," not "effects" as in the English.
- 128c/416 The alpha-omega distinction is at first confusing. The sense seems to be that the distinction between subject and ego emerges in the early Freud (point alpha) as the distinction between unconscious and preconscious, but in the later Freud (point omega) as the distinction between *Es* and *Ich* in the famous formula. We prefer to translate: "separated by an abyss from (*des*) preconscious functions" rather than "of." Lacan writes in "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious": "a large number of psychical effects that are quite legitimately designated as unconscious, in the sense of excluding the characteristic of consciousness, are nonetheless without any relation whatever to the unconscious in the Freudian sense" (1977, p. 163/514).
- 128e/417 The narcissistic shift from "this am I" to "it is me" was noted earlier in the "Discourse at Rome" when Lacan pointed out that "the '*ce-suis-je*' of the time of Villon has become reversed in the '*c'est moi*' of modern man" (1977, p. 70/281).
- 129a/417 The theme of radical ex-centricity (not "eccentricity") as noted earlier will be developed in "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious" (1977, p. 165e/517; 171g/524). The English text omits Lacan's development of the neologism *s'être*: "There where it was (*Là où c'était*), one can say '*là où s'était*'. . ."
- 130a/419 The French text has "recognize the truth" (*la vérité*), not "recognize the fact" as in the English.
- 131a/420 See the earlier discussion (p. 83) of the sender receiving his message back from the receiver in an inverted form.
- 131b/420 Lacan may be utilizing an ambiguity in the French verb for "knowing": "Cette vérité que nous connaissons ainsi ne pouvons-nous donc la connaître?" ("This truth that we know in this way, can we therefore know it?"). The first knowing consists of a response evoked by the "other thing," a hearing of the message "in this inverted form" and returning it to the sender. Not the result of perception-consciousness as much as a mutual coming-to-presence through a kind of birth, this form of knowing suggests Claudel and his formula, "Toute naissance est une connaissance" ("Every birth is a co-birth, a knowing"). Lacan refers to Claudel at the end of the *Selection* (1977, p. 324/827).
- Adaequatio rei et intellectus* is the classic definition of truth seen as a conformity of the intellect with what is.
- 131d/420 *Chosisme* is one of the terms used to characterize the

French anti-novel, typified in the work of Robbe-Grillet and Sarraute. It also refers to a philosophical stance loosely called "concretism."

- 131e/420 The French text begins "What other thing are you going to look for" ("Qu'allez-vous chercher autre chose"), so that *chose* is repeated anew and appears to be the "pirouette" in the preceding line. The irony of the analyst willing to objectify the ego but eschewing its being taken as a thing is expressed in the "delicate shoes" replacing the "big clogs" which hide the truth (1977, p. 119a/406).
- 131f/420 The "thirty-five years" refers to "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" (Freud, 1920), in which the distinction between ego instincts and sexual instincts was changed from qualitative to topographical.
- 132a/421 That the inventor of the autonomous ego (probably a reference to Heinz Hartmann) should receive praise for bringing psychoanalysis into general psychology appears to be as ironical as if the wealthy Aga Khan, noted for his interest in horse breeding and racing, were to be praised for teaching his followers how to bet on his horses.
- 132c/421 Instead of the simple misprint, the English text should read *chosisme*.
- 132d/421 Rather than "Of so little use" for *en si peu de chose*, we translate "In so little a way (is it distinguished) . . ."
- 132f/422 The English omits a word Lacan will repeat, namely, that the ego *intéresse*, "gives its interest to," significations. Later (1977, p. 133c/423) the consciousness of the desk inspires the dreamer's interest in significations. We would also translate: "it is from the sort of interest which the ego arouses in the subject that come the significations which divert his discourse" (1977, p. 137b/427); "This interest of the ego is a passion" whose nature was glimpsed by the moralists (1977, p. 137c/427); and this passion brings to every relation with the body image "a signification that in-

terests me" (1977, p. 137c/427). Lastly, evidence for Lacan's deliberate usage comes from his ironic satisfaction that his audience will find what he says "interesting" and from his wondering whether what he says happens to "interest" them (1977, p. 136e-f/426); he even seizes the moment to make the point that what is "interesting" euphemistically designates what is of only moderate interest (as befits the ego?), while "speculations of universal interest are called 'disinterested'" (1977, p. 136e/426). The point of all this is to suggest that there is a narcissistic relation between the ego and certain significations, i.e., the ego can cluster speech (significations) to serve defensively its own imaginary ends. For an "interesting" analogy in Heidegger, see his *What Is Called Thinking* (1952, p. 5).

- 133b/422 The desk as "intersign" of fatalities suggests its mediating role for the documentation of wills, death records, etc.
- 133c/422 Again, the English has "riddle" for *rébus* in the French.
- 134a/423 The reference is to man as "a thinking reed" in Pascal's *Pensées* (1670, #347-348).
- 134d/424 The dispositions of pure exteriority, immoderately spread by man, which condition ego consciousness, may be statues, monuments, photographs, automobiles, and other narcissistic artifacts.
- 135a/424 Karl Jaspers is a handy target for Lacan both as philosopher and psychopathologist.
- 135d/425 This paragraph begins with the imputation of a *petitio principii*, a mode of attack used elsewhere by Lacan (see, e.g., 1977, p. 120b/407).
- 136a/425 The sense seems to be that the patient, presumed to have a weak ego, is treated in a condescending manner by the analyst just as even well-informed parents resort to baby-talk to seduce infants into conforming to their intentions. The irony is that "talking in his own language" becomes condescending whereas it

- should serve as the guiding principle promoting resonance with the word.
- 136f/426 The pleonasm is in the “look and see” while the antonomasia appears to be in the substitution of the desk for his person, about to be attacked by the audience.
- 137a/427 The French for “bears speech” is *porte la parole*, suggesting *porte-parole* (“mouthpiece” or “spokesman”), a role that splits the ego from the subject’s unconscious. The ego is also fragmented insofar as speech must be articulated, but is whole insofar as it blocks or stands in the way of hearing what is said.
- 137c/427 As indicated above, *Cet intérêt du moi* is better translated as “This interest of the ego” rather than “in the ego.” This section draws heavily on themes discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. In the French “my fellow-man” is *mon semblable*, also translated as “my counterpart,” referring to the other as experienced in the confused identification of ego and other in transitivity. The role of the other in determining the objects of desire is described by Kojève (1939):
- Desire directed toward a natural object is human only to the extent that it is “mediated” by the Desire of another directed toward the same object: it is human to desire what others desire, because they desire it. Thus, an object perfectly useless from the biological point of view (such as a medal, or the enemy’s flag) can be desired because it is the object of other desires [p. 6].
- 137e/427 The English would be more readable with commas: “from which results, at the time indicated, the jubilant identification. . . .”
- 138a/428 Again, the English can be rendered more readable: “an operation which, . . . [and] being of much the same kind as the ‘aha!’ . . . , does not fail to bring. . . .”
- 138b/428 The notary or solicitor (*notaire*) executes deeds, handles real estate transactions, successions, marriage

contracts, etc.

- 138d/428 The English text has “coadaptation” for “coaptation,” a stronger word, for “coaptation” means a fitting together and making fast, indicative of a captivating identification with the other. Some discussion of “transitivity” appeared earlier (Chapter 1).
- 139a/429 This paragraph may be read as describing the discouraging environment of the young child whose speech consists of the Aha! experience of Köhler’s chimps, the repetition of parental commands upon playthings and to oneself, and aggressive mimicry, while parental speech consists of rote descriptions of objects and frenzied *ritornello* (a short, recurrent instrumental passage in a vocal composition)—this forms the reductive basis of the ego’s language.
- 140e/430 Rather than “to whom it brings its salvation,” the English becomes more comprehensible in using another meaning of *salut*: “to whom it brings its greeting.”
- 141a/431 The I speaks *with (avec)* “him who hears,” not *to* him.
- 142a/432 We recall Lacan’s discussion of the law of exchange in the “Discourse at Rome” (1977, pp. 65–66/276–277).
- 143c/434 The second sentence reads: “Will we divert our study of what will come *from* the law [*de ce qu’il advient de la loi*] . . . and *from* the imperative [*et de l’impératif*] . . . : that is to say, *from* the springs [*c’est-à-dire des ressorts*] . . .” The law’s content is misunderstood before it is known, its compelling quality is challenged before it is discerned: these are the springs from which arises, out of such gaps in the symbolic order, the imaginary figure of the superego, reimposing what was misunderstood or challenged in the course of development.