

*Of Structure
as an Inmixing
of an Otherness
Prerequisite to
Any Subject
Whatever¹*

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Somebody spent some time this afternoon trying to convince me that it would surely not be a pleasure for an English-speaking audience to listen to my bad accent and that for me to speak in English would constitute a risk for what one might call the transmission of my message. Truly, for me it is a great case of conscience, because to do otherwise would be absolutely contrary to my own conception of the message: of the message as I will explain it to you, of the linguistic message. Many people talk nowadays about messages everywhere, inside the organism a hormone is a message, a beam of light to obtain teleguidance to a plane or from a satellite is a message, and so on; but the message in language is absolutely different. The message, our message, in all cases comes from the Other by which I understand "from the place of the Other." It certainly is not the common other, the other with a lower-case *o*, and this is why I have given a capital *O* as the initial letter to the Other of whom I am now speaking. Since in this case, here in Baltimore, it would seem that the Other is naturally English-speaking, it would really be doing myself violence to speak French. But the question that this person raised, that it would perhaps be difficult and even a little ridiculous for me to speak English, is an important argument and I also know that there are many French-speaking people present who do not understand English at all; for these my choice

¹Since Dr. Lacan, as he remarks in his introduction, chose to deliver his communication alternately in English and French (and at points in a composite of the two languages), this text represents an edited transcription and paraphrase of his address.

of English would be a security, but perhaps I would not wish them to be so secure and in this case I shall speak a little French as well.

First, let me put forth some advice about structure, which is the subject matter of our meeting. It may happen that there will be mistakes, confusion, more and more approximative uses of this notion, and I think that soon there will be some sort of fad about this word. For me it is different because I have used this term for a very long time—since the beginning of my teaching. The reason why something about my position is not better known is that I addressed myself only to a very special audience, namely one of psychoanalysts. Here there are some very peculiar difficulties, because psychoanalysts really know something of what I was talking to them about and that this thing is a particularly difficult thing to cope with for anybody who practises psychoanalysis. The subject is not a simple thing for the psychoanalysts who have something to do with the subject proper. In this case I wish to avoid misunderstandings, *méconnaissances*, of my position. *Méconnaissance* is a French word which I am obliged to use because there is no equivalent in English. *Méconnaissance* precisely implies the subject in its meaning—and I was also advised that it is not so easy to talk about the “subject” before an English-speaking audience. *Méconnaissance* is not to *méconnaître* my subjectivity. What exactly is in question is the status of the problem of the structure.

When I began to teach something about psychoanalysis I lost some of my audience, because I had perceived long before then the simple fact that if you open a book of Freud, and particularly those books which are properly about the unconscious, you can be absolutely sure—it is not a probability but a certitude—to fall on a page where it is not only a question of words—naturally in a book there are always words, many printed words—but words which are the object through which one seeks for a way to handle the unconscious. Not even the meaning of the words, but words in their flesh, in their material aspect. A great part of the speculations of Freud is about punning in a dream, or *lapsus*, or what in French we call *calembour*, *homonymie*, or still the division of a word into many parts with each part taking on a new meaning after it is broken down. It is curious to note, even if in this case it is not absolutely proven, that words are the only material of the unconscious. It is not proven but it is probable (and in any case I have never said that the unconscious was an assemblage of words, but that the unconscious is precisely structured). I don't think there is such an English word but it is necessary to have this

term, as we are talking about structure and the unconscious is structured as a language. What does that mean?

Properly speaking this is a redundancy because “structured” and “as a language” for me mean exactly the same thing. Structured means my speech, my lexicon, etc., which is exactly the same as a language. And that is not all. Which language? Rather than myself it was my pupils that took a great deal of trouble to give that question a different meaning, and to search for the formula of a reduced language. What are the minimum conditions, they ask themselves, necessary to constitute a language? Perhaps only four *signantes*, four signifying elements are enough. It is a curious exercise which is based on a complete error, as I hope to show you on the board in a moment. There were also some philosophers, not many really but some, of those present at my seminar in Paris who have found since then that it was not a question of an “under” language or of “another” language, not myth for instance or phonemes, but language. It is extraordinary the pains that all took to change the place of the question. Myths, for instance, do not take place in our consideration precisely because they are also structured as a language, and when I say “as a language” it is not as some special sort of language, for example, mathematical language, semiotical language, or cinematographical language. Language is language and there is only one sort of language: concrete language—English or French for instance—that people talk. The first thing to state in this context is that there is no meta-language. For it is necessary that all so called meta-languages be presented to you with language. You cannot teach a course in mathematics using only letters on the board. It is always necessary to speak an ordinary language that is understood.

It is not only because the material of the unconscious is a linguistic material, or as we say in French *langagier*, that the unconscious is structured as a language. The question that the unconscious raises for you is a problem that touches the most sensitive point of the nature of language, that is the question of the subject. The subject cannot simply be identified with the speaker or the personal pronoun in a sentence. In French the *ennoncé* is exactly the sentence, but there are many *ennoncés* where there is no index of him who utters the *ennoncé*. When I say “it rains,” the subject of the enunciation is not part of the sentence. In any case here there is some sort of difficulty. The subject cannot always be identified with what the linguists call “the shifter.”

The question that the nature of the unconscious puts before us is,

in a few words, that something always *thinks*. Freud told us that the unconscious is above all thoughts, and that which thinks is barred from consciousness. This bar has many applications, many possibilities with regard to meaning. The main one is that it is really a barrier, a barrier which it is necessary to jump over or to pass through. This is important because if I don't emphasize this barrier all is well for you. As we say in French, *ça vous arrange*, because if something thinks in the floor below or underground things are simple; thought is always there and all one needs is a little consciousness on the thought that the living being is naturally thinking and all is well. If such were the case, thought would be prepared by life, naturally, such as instinct for instance. If thought is a natural process, then the unconscious is without difficulty. But the unconscious has nothing to do with instinct or primitive knowledge or preparation of thought in some underground. It is a thinking with words, with thoughts that escape your vigilance, your state of watchfulness. The question of vigilance is important. It is as if a demon plays a game with your watchfulness. The question is to find a precise status for this other subject which is exactly the sort of subject that we can determine taking our point of departure in language.

When I prepared this little talk for you, it was early in the morning. I could see Baltimore through the window and it was a very interesting moment because it was not quite daylight and a neon sign indicated to me every minute the change of time, and naturally there was heavy traffic, and I remarked to myself that exactly all that I could see, except for some trees in the distance, was the result of thoughts, actively thinking thoughts, where the function played by the subjects was not completely obvious. In any case the so-called *Dasein*, as a definition of the subject, was there in this rather intermittent or fading spectator. The best image to sum up the unconscious is Baltimore in the early morning.

Where is the subject? It is necessary to find the subject as a lost object. More precisely this lost object is the support of the subject and in many cases is a more abject thing than you may care to consider—in some cases it is something done, as all psychoanalysts and many people who have been psychoanalyzed know perfectly well. That is why many psychoanalysts prefer to return to a general psychology, as the President of the New York Psychoanalytical Society tells us we ought to do. But I cannot change things, I am a psychoanalyst and if someone prefers to address himself to a professor of psychology that is his affair. The question of the structure, since we

are talking of psychology, is not a term that only I use. For a long time thinkers, searchers, and even inventors who were concerned with the question of the mind, have over the years put forward the idea of unity as the most important and characteristic trait of structure. Conceived as something which is already in the reality of the organism it is obvious. The organism when it is mature is a unit and functions as a unit. The question becomes more difficult when this idea of unity is applied to the function of the mind, because the mind is not a totality in itself, but these ideas in the form of the intentional unity were the basis, as you know, of all of the so-called phenomenological movement.

The same was also true in physics and psychology with the so-called Gestalt school and the notion of *bonne forme* whose function was to join, for instance, a drop of water and more complicated ideas, and great psychologists, and even the psychoanalysts, are full of the idea of "total personality." At any rate, it is always the unifying unity which is in the foreground. I have never understood this, for if I am a psychoanalyst I am also a man, and as a man my experience has shown me that the principal characteristic of my own human life and, I am sure, that of the people who are here—and if anybody is not of this opinion I hope that he will raise his hand—is that life is something which goes, as we say in French, *à la dérive*. Life goes down the river, from time to time touching a bank, staying for a while here and there, without understanding anything—and it is the principle of analysis that nobody understands anything of what happens. The idea of the unifying unity of the human condition has always had on me the effect of a scandalous lie.

We may try to introduce another principle to understand these things. If we rarely try to understand things from the point of view of the unconscious, it is because the unconscious tells us something articulated in words and perhaps we could try to search for their principle.

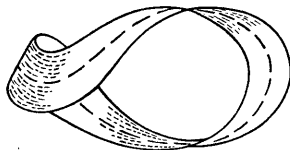
I suggest you consider the unity in another light. Not a unifying unity but the countable unity one, two, three. After fifteen years I have taught my pupils to count at most up to five which is difficult (four is easier) and they have understood that much. But for tonight permit me to stay at two. Of course, what we are dealing with here is the question of the integer, and the question of integers is not a simple one as I think many people here know. To count, of course, is not difficult. It is only necessary to have, for instance, a certain number of sets and a one-to-one correspondence. It is true for example

that there are exactly as many people sitting in this room as there are seats. But it is necessary to have a collection composed of integers to constitute an integer, or what is called a natural number. It is, of course, in part natural but only in the sense that we do not understand why it exists. Counting is not an empirical fact and it is impossible to deduce the act of counting from empirical data alone. Hume tried but Frege demonstrated perfectly the ineptitude of the attempt. The real difficulty lies in the fact that every integer is in itself a unit. If I take two as a unit, things are very enjoyable, men and women for instance—love plus unity! But after a while it is finished, after these two there is nobody, perhaps a child, but that is another level and to generate three is another affair. When you try to read the theories of mathematicians regarding numbers you find the formula “ n plus 1” ($n + 1$) as the basis of all the theories. It is this question of the “one more” that is the key to the genesis of numbers and instead of this unifying unity that constitutes two in the first case I propose that you consider the real numerical genesis of two.

It is necessary that this two constitute the first integer which is not yet born as a number before the two appears. You have made this possible because the *two* is here to grant existence to the first *one*: put *two* in the place of *one* and consequently in the place of the *two* you see *three* appear. What we have here is something which I can call the *mark*. You already have something which is marked or something which is not marked. It is with the first mark that we have the status of the thing. It is exactly in this fashion that Frege explains the genesis of the number; the class which is characterized by no elements is the first class; you have one at the place of zero and afterward it is easy to understand how the place of one becomes the second place which makes place for two, three, and so on. The question of the two is for us the question of the subject, and here we reach a fact of psychoanalytical experience in as much as the two does not complete the one to make two, but must repeat the one to permit the one to exist. This first repetition is the only one necessary to explain the genesis of the number, and only one repetition is necessary to constitute the status of the subject. The unconscious subject is something that tends to repeat itself, but only one such repetition is necessary to constitute it. However, let us look more precisely at what is necessary for the second to repeat the first in order that we may have a repetition. This question cannot be answered too quickly. If you answer too quickly, you will answer that it is necessary that they are the same. In this case the principle of the two would be that of twins—and why not triplets

or quintuplets? In my day we used to teach children that they must not add, for instance, microphones with dictionaries; but this is absolutely absurd, because we would not have addition if we were not able to add microphones with dictionaries or as Lewis Carroll says, cabbages with kings. The sameness is not in *things* but in the *mark* which makes it possible to add things with no consideration as to their differences. The mark has the effect of rubbing out the difference, and this is the key to what happens to the subject, the unconscious subject in the repetition; because you know that this subject repeats something peculiarly significant, the subject is here, for instance, in this obscure thing that we call in some cases trauma, or exquisite pleasure. What happens? If the “thing” exists in this symbolic structure, if this unitary trait is decisive, the trait of the sameness is here. In order that the “thing” which is sought be here in you, it is necessary that the first trait be rubbed out because the trait itself is a modification. It is the taking away of all difference, and in this case, without the trait, the first “thing” is simply lost. The key to this insistence in repetition is that in its essence repetition as repetition of the symbolical sameness is impossible. In any case, the subject is the effect of this repetition in as much as it necessitates the “fading,” the obliteration, of the first foundation of the subject, which is why the subject, by status, is always presented as a divided essence. The trait, I insist, is identical, but it assures the difference only of identity—not by effect of sameness or difference but by the difference of identity. This is easy to understand: as we say in French, *je vous numérote*, I give you each a number; and this assures the fact that you are numerically different but nothing more than that.

What can we propose to intuition in order to show that the trait be found in something which is at the same time one or two? Consider the following diagram which I call an inverted eight, after a well-known figure:



You can see that the line in this instance may be considered either as one or as two lines. This diagram can be considered the basis of a sort of essential inscription at the origin, in the knot which constitutes the subject. This goes much further than you may think at first, be-

cause you can search for the sort of surface able to receive such inscriptions. You can perhaps see that the sphere, that old symbol for totality, is unsuitable. A torus, a Klein bottle, a cross-cut surface, are able to receive such a cut. And this diversity is very important as it explains many things about the structure of mental disease. If one can symbolize the subject by this fundamental cut, in the same way one can show that a cut on a torus corresponds to the neurotic subject, and on a cross-cut surface to another sort of mental disease. I will not explain this to you tonight, but to end this difficult talk I must make the following precision.

I have only considered the beginning of the series of the integers, because it is an intermediary point between language and reality. Language is constituted by the same sort of unitary traits that I have used to explain the one and the one more. But this trait in language is not identical with the unitary trait, since in language we have a collection of differential traits. In other words, we can say that language is constituted by a set of signifiers—for example, *ba*, *ta*, *pa*, etc., etc.—a set which is finite. Each signifier is able to support the same process with regard to the subject, and it is very probable that the process of the integers is only a special case of this relation between signifiers. The definition of this collection of signifiers is that they constitute what I call the Other. The difference afforded by the existence of language is that each signifier (contrary to the unitary trait of the integer number) is, in most cases, not identical with itself—precisely because we have a collection of signifiers, and in this collection one signifier may or may not designate itself. This is well known and is the principle of Russell's paradox. If you take the set of all elements which are not members of themselves,

$$x \notin x$$

the set that you constitute with such elements leads you to a paradox which, as you know, leads to a contradiction. In simple terms, this only means that in a universe of discourse nothing contains everything, and here you find again the gap that constitutes the subject. The subject is the introduction of a loss in reality, yet nothing can introduce that, since by status reality is as full as possible. The notion of a loss is the effect afforded by the instance of the trait which is what, with the intervention of the letter you determine, places—say $a_1 a_2 a_3$ —and the places are spaces, for a lack. When the subject takes the place of the lack, a loss is introduced in the word, and this is the definition of the subject. But to inscribe it, it is necessary to define it in a circle.

what I call the otherness, of the sphere of language. All that is language is lent from this otherness and this is why the subject is always a fading thing that runs under the chain of signifiers. For the definition of a signifier is that it represents a subject not for another subject but for another signifier. This is the only definition possible of the signifier as different from the sign. The sign is something that represents something for somebody, but the signifier is something that represents a subject for another signifier. The consequence is that the subject disappears exactly as in the case of the two unitary traits, while under the second signifier appears what is called meaning or signification; and then in sequence the other signifiers appear and other significations.

The question of desire is that the fading subject yearns to find itself again by means of some sort of encounter with this miraculous thing defined by the phantasm. In its endeavor it is sustained by that which I call the lost object that I evoked in the beginning—which is such a terrible thing for the imagination. That which is produced and maintained here, and which in my vocabulary I call the object, lower-case, *a*, is well known by all psychoanalysts as all psychoanalysis is founded on the existence of this peculiar object. But the relation between this barred subject with this object (*a*) is the structure which is always found in the phantasm which supports desire, in as much as desire is only that which I have called the metonymy of all signification.

In this brief presentation I have tried to show you what the question of the structure is inside the psychoanalytical reality. I have not, however, said anything about such dimensions as the imaginary and the symbolical. It is, of course, absolutely essential to understand how the symbolic order can enter inside the *vécu*, lived experienced, of mental life, but I cannot tonight put forth such an explanation. Consider, however, that which is at the same time the least known and the most certain fact about this mythical subject which is the sensible phase of the living being: this fathomless thing capable of experiencing something between birth and death, capable of covering the whole spectrum of pain and pleasure in a word, what in French we call the *sujet de la jouissance*. When I came here this evening I saw on the little neon sign the motto "Enjoy Coca-Cola." It reminded me that in English, I think, there is no term to designate precisely this enormous weight of meaning which is in the French word *jouissance*—or in the Latin *fruor*. In the dictionary I looked up *jouir* and found "to possess, to use," but it is not that at all. If the living being is something at all thinkable, it will be above all as subject of the *jouissance*; but this psychological law that we call the pleasure principle (and

which is only the principle of displeasure) is very soon to create a barrier to all *jouissance*. If I am enjoying myself a little too much, I begin to feel pain and I moderate my pleasures. The organism seems made to avoid too much *jouissance*. Probably we would all be as quiet as oysters if it were not for this curious organization which forces us to disrupt the barrier of pleasure or perhaps only makes us dream of forcing and disrupting this barrier. All that is elaborated by the subjective construction on the scale of the signifier in its relation to the Other and which has its root in language is only there to permit the full spectrum of desire to allow us to approach, to test, this sort of forbidden *jouissance* which is the only valuable meaning that is offered to our life.

Discussion

ANGUS FLETCHER: Freud was really a very simple man. But he found very diverse solutions to human problems. He sometimes used myths to explain human difficulties and problems; for example, the myth of Narcissus: he saw that there are men who look in the mirror and love themselves. It was as simple as that. He didn't try to float on the surface of words. What you're doing is like a spider: you're making a very delicate web without any human reality in it. For example, you were speaking of joy [*joie, jouissance*]. In French one of the meanings of *jouir* is the orgasm—I think that is most important here—why not say so? All the talk I have heard here has been so abstract! . . . It's not a question of psychoanalysis. The value of psychoanalysis is that it is a theory of psychological dynamism. The most important is what has come after Freud, with Wilhelm Reich especially. All this metaphysics is not necessary. The diagram was very interesting, but it doesn't seem to have any connection with the reality of our actions, with eating, sexual intercourse, and so on.

HARRY WOOLF: May I ask if this fundamental arithmetic and this topology are not in themselves a myth or merely at best an analogy for an explanation of the life of the mind?

JACQUES LACAN: Analogy to what? "S" designates something which can be written exactly as this S. And I have said that the "S" which designates the subject is instrument, matter, to symbolize a loss. A loss that you experience as a subject (and myself also). In other words, this gap between one thing which has marked meanings and this other thing which is my actual discourse that I try to put in the place where

you are, you as not another subject but as people that are able to understand me. Where is the analogon? Either this loss exists or it doesn't exist. If it exists it is only possible to designate the loss by a system of symbols. In any case, the loss does not exist before this symbolization indicates its place. It is not an analogy. It is really in some part of the realities, this sort of torus. This torus really exists and it is exactly the structure of the neurotic. It is not an analogon; it is not even an abstraction, because an abstraction is some sort of diminution of reality, and I think it is reality itself.

NORMAN HOLLAND: I would like to come to Mr. Lacan's defense; it seems to me that he is doing something very interesting. Reading his paper before the colloquium was the first time I had encountered his work and it seems to me that he has returned to the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, which was the earliest of Freud's psychological writings. It was very abstract and very like what you have written here, although you are doing it with algebra and he is doing it with neurons. The influence of this document is all through *The Interpretation of Dreams*, his letters to Fliess, and all the early writings, although often merely implicit.

ANTHONY WILDEN: If I may add something, you spoke at the beginning of your talk of repudiation or nonrecognition [*méconnaissance*], and we have begun with such an extreme case of this that I don't know how we're going to work our way out of it. But you have started at the top (at the most difficult point of your work), and it is very difficult for us to recognize the beginnings of this thought, which is very rich and very deep. In my opinion, as your unhappy translator, you are absolutely faithful to Freud and it is absolutely necessary for us to read your works before talking a lot of nonsense—which we may very well do here tonight. And after they have read your work, I would urge these gentlemen to *read Freud*.

RICHARD SCHECHNER: What is the relationship between your thoughts about nothingness and the work that Husserl and Sartre have done?

LACAN: "Nothingness," the word that you have used, I think that I can say almost nothing about it, nor about Husserl, nor about Sartre. Really, I don't believe that I have talked about nothingness. The sliding and the difficulty of seizing, the never-here (it is here when I search there; it is there when I am here) is not nothing. This year I shall announce, as a program of my seminar, this thing that I have entitled *La Logique du phantasme*. Most of my effort, I believe, will be to define the different sorts of lack, of loss, of void which are of abso-

lutely different natures. An absence, for instance. The absence of the queen, it is necessary to make an addition with this sort of element, but to find the absence of the queen. . . . I think that the vagueness of the mere term *nothing* is not manageable in this context. I am late in everything I must develop, before I myself disappear. But it is also difficult enough to make the thing practicable to advance. It is necessary to proceed stage by stage. Now I will try this different sort of lack.

[M. Kott and Dr. Lacan discuss the properties of Möbius strips at the blackboard.]

JAN KOTT: There is a curious thing which is probably accidental. We find all these motifs in Surrealist painting. Is there any relationship here?

LACAN: At least I feel a great personal connection with Surrealist painting.

POULET: This loss of object which introduces the subject, would you say that it has any connection with the void [*le néant*] in Sartre's thinking? Would there be an analogy with the situation of the sleeper awakened that we find at the beginning of Proust's work? You remember, the dreamer awakens and discovers a feeling of loss, of an absence, which is moreover, an absence of himself. Is there any analogy?

LACAN: I think that Proust many times approached certain experiences of the unconscious. One often finds such a passage of a page or so in Proust which one can *découper* very clearly. I think you are right; Proust pushes it very close, but instead of developing theories he always comes back to his business, which is literature. To take the example of Mlle. Vinteuil, as seen by the narrator with her friend and her father's picture, I don't think that any other literary artist has ever brought out a thing like this. It may be because of the very project of his work, this fabulous enterprise of "time recovered"—this is what guided him, even beyond the limits of what is accessible to consciousness.

SIGMUND KOCH: I find a pattern constantly eluding me in your presentation, which I can only attribute to the fact that you spoke in English. You placed a great deal of emphasis on the integer 2 and on the generation of the integer 2. Your analysis is, as I recall, that if one starts with a unitary mark, then there is the universe of the nonmarked, which brings you, presumably, to the integer 2. What is the analogical correspondence between the marked and the unmarked? Is the marked the system of consciousness and the nonmarked the unconscious sys-

tem? Is the marked the conscious subject and the nonmarked the unconscious subject?

LACAN: From Frege I only recalled that it is the class with characteristic numbers o , which is the foundation of the 1 . If I have chosen 2 for psychoanalytical reference, it is because the 2 is an important scheme of the Eros in Freud. The Eros is that power which in life is unifying, and it is the basis on which too many psychoanalysts found the conception of the genital maturity as a possibility of the so-called perfect marriage, for instance, which is a sort of mystical ideal end, which is promoted so imprudently. This 2 that I have chosen is only for an audience which is, at first, not initiated to this question of Frege. The 1 in relation with the 2 can, in this first approach, play the same role as the o in relation to the 1 .

For your second question, naturally, I was obliged to omit many technical things known by those who possess Freud perfectly. In the question of repression it is absolutely necessary to know that Freud put as the foundation of the possibility of repression something that in German is called the *Urverdrängung*. Naturally, I could not afford here the whole set of my formalization, but it is essential to know that a formalism of the metaphor is primary for me, to make understood what is, in Freudian terms, *condensation*. [Dr. Lacan concluded his comment with a reprise of "L'Instance de la lettre" at the blackboard.]

GOLDMANN: Working in my method on literature and culture, what strikes me is that in dealing with important, historical, collective phenomena and with important works, I never need the *unconscious* for my analysis. I do need the *nonconscious*; I made the distinction yesterday. Of course there are unconscious elements; of course I can't understand the means by which the individual is explaining himself—and that, I have said, is the domain of psychoanalysis, in which I don't want to mix. But there are two kinds of phenomena which, according to all the evidence, seem to be social and in which I must intervene with the nonconscious, but not the unconscious. I think you said that the unconscious is the ordinary language, English, French, that we all speak.

LACAN: I said *like* language, French or English, etc.

GOLDMANN: But it's independent from this language? Then I'll stop. I no longer have a question. It's linked to the language that one speaks in conscious life?

LACAN: Yes.

GOLDMANN: All right. The second thing that struck me, if I understood you. There were a certain number of analogies with processes that I find in consciousness, on the level where I get along without the unconscious. There is something that since Pascal, Hegel, Marx, and Sartre we know without recourse to the unconscious: man is defined by linking these invariants to difference. One doesn't act immediately *dépasse l'homme*" Pascal said. History and dynamism, even without reference to the unconscious, cannot be defined except by this lack. The second phenomenon I find on the level of consciousness: it seems obvious that consciousness, inasmuch as it is linked to action, cannot be formulated except by constituting invariants, that is objects, and by linking these invariants to difference. One doesn't act immediately on a multiplicity of givens. Action is closely linked to the constitution of invariants, which permit a certain order to be established in the difference. Language exists before this particular man exists—is this language (French, English, etc.) linked simply to the problem of the phantasm? There is no subject without symbol, language, and an object. My question is this: Is the formation of this symbolism and its modifications linked solely to the domain of the phantasm, the unconscious, and desire, or is it also linked to something called work, the transformation of the outside world, and social life? And if you admit that it is linked to these also the problem comes up: Where is the logic, where is the comprehensibility? I don't think that man is simply aspiration to totality. We are still facing a mixture, as I said the other day, but it is very important to separate the mixture in order to understand it.

LACAN: And do you think that work is one of the "mooring-points" that we can fasten to in this drift?

GOLDMANN: I think that, after all, mankind has done some very positive things.

LACAN: I don't have the impression that a history book is a very structured thing. This famous history, in which one sees things so well when they are past, doesn't seem to be a muse in which I can put all my trust. There was a time when Clio was very important—when Bossuet was writing. Perhaps again with Marx. But what I always expect from history is *surprises*, and surprises which I still haven't succeeded in explaining, although I have made great efforts to understand. I explain myself by different co-ordinates from yours. In particular, I wouldn't put the question of work in the front rank here.

CHARLES MORAZÉ: I am happy to see in this discussion the use of the genesis of numbers. To reply to Mr. Goldmann, when I study history, I depend on this same genesis of numbers as the most solid reality. Apropos of this, I would like to ask this question to see if our postulates are really the same or different. It seems to me that you said at the beginning of your talk that for you the structure of consciousness is language, and then at the end you said the unconscious is structured like language. If your second formulation is the correct one, that is also mine.

LACAN: It is the unconscious that is structured like language—I never varied from that.

RICHARD MACKSEY: We have perhaps exhausted our quota of *méconnaissances* for this session, but I'm still a bit confused about the consequences which your invocation of Frege and Russell imply for your ontology (or at least your ontics). Thus, I'm concerned about the extreme realist position which your mathematical example would seem to imply. I'm not troubled by the argument that the incompleteness theorem undermines realism, since Gödel himself has maintained his realist position, simply seeing the theorem as a basic limitation on the expressive power of symbolism. Rather, I think that the logistic thesis itself has been subjected to serious criticism. If the authors of the *Principia* attempt to define the natural numbers as certain particular sets of sets, apart from other metalinguistic difficulties in the theory of types one could counter that their derivation is arbitrary, since in a set theory, not based on a theory of types, "one" could be defined as, say, the set whose sole number is the empty set, and so on, so that the natural numbers could retain their conventional properties. Ergo, one might ask *which* set is the number one? A few months ago Paul Benacerraf carried this line of argument further, asserting that the irreducible characteristic of the natural numbers is simply that they form a recursive progression. Thus, any system that forms such a progression will do as well as the next; it's not the mark which particular numbers possess, but the interrelated, abstract *structure* (rather than the constituent objects) which gives the properties of the system. This attacks any realist position that equates numbers with entities or objects (and proposes a kind of conceptualist or nominalist structuralism).

LACAN: Without enlarging on this comment, I should say that concepts and even sets are not objects. I have never denied the structural aspect of the number system.