
The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious

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This text represents my contribution to a conference on “La Dialectique,” held at Royaumont from September 19 to 23, 1960. The conference was organized by the “Colloques philosophiques internationaux,” and I was invited to participate by Jean Wahl.

It is the date of this text—which predates the Bonneval Colloquium from which the text that follows stemmed [“Position of the Unconscious” follows this one in *Écrits* 1966]—that leads me to publish it, in order to give the reader an idea how far my teaching has always been ahead of what I could make more widely available.

(The graph presented here was constructed for my seminar on unconscious formations. It was worked out particularly in relation to the structure of jokes, which I took as a point of departure, before a surprised audience. That was in the first term of the seminar, which was the last term of 1957. An account of the seminar, along with the graph provided here, was published at the time in the *Bulletin de psychologie*.)

A structure is constitutive of the praxis known as psychoanalysis. This structure cannot be immaterial to an audience like the one here today, which is supposed to be philosophically sophisticated.

The thesis that being a philosopher means being interested in what everyone is interested in without knowing it has the interesting peculiarity that its relevance does not imply that it can be settled either way. For it can only be settled if everyone becomes a philosopher.

I am talking about its philosophical relevance, for that is, in the end, the schema Hegel gave us of History in *The Phenomenology of Mind*.

Summarizing it in this way has the advantage of providing us with a mediation that is convenient for situating the subject: on the basis of a relationship to knowledge.

It is also convenient for demonstrating the ambiguity of such a relationship.

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This same ambiguity is manifested by the effects of science in the contemporary universe.

The scientist himself is a subject, one who is particularly qualified in his

constitution, as is shown by the fact that science did not come into the world all by itself (its birth was not without vicissitudes, and was preceded by a number of failures—abortion or prematurity).

Now this subject who must know what he is doing, or so we presume, does not know what is already, in fact, of interest to everyone regarding the effects of science. Or so it would appear in the contemporary universe, where everyone finds himself at the same level as the scientist as far as this point of ignorance is concerned.

In and of itself, this warrants our speaking of a subject of science—a notion to which an epistemology that can be said to display more pretension than success would like to measure up.

Hence—let it be noted here—the entirely didactic reference I have made to Hegel in order to convey, for my analytic training purposes, where things stand regarding the question of the subject such as psychoanalysis properly subverts it.

What qualifies me to proceed along this path is obviously my experience of this praxis. What made me decide to do so—those who follow my work will attest to this—is a failure of theory coupled with abuses in its transmission, which, while presenting no danger to the praxis itself, result, in both cases, in a total absence of scientific status. To raise the question of the minimal conditions required for such a status was not perhaps an impertinent point of departure. It has turned out to lead a long way.

I am not referring here to anything as broad in scope as a challenging of different societies' practices—in particular, to the stockpile of conclusions I have been forced to draw in order to counter the notorious deviations in analytic praxis that claim to be genuinely psychoanalytic in England and America.

What I will specifically try to define is subversion, and I apologize to this assembly, whose qualifications I mentioned earlier, for being unable to do more in its presence than elsewhere—namely, to take this assembly as such as the pivot of my demonstration, the onus being on me to justify taking such liberties with regard to it.

795 Nevertheless, I shall take advantage of your kindness in assuming we agree that a science cannot be conditioned upon empiricism.

Secondly, we encounter what has already been constituted, with a scientific label, by the name of psychology.

Which I challenge—precisely because, as I will show, the function of the subject, as inaugurated by Freudian experience, disqualifies from the outset what, going by the name “psychology,” merely perpetuates an academic framework, no matter how one dresses up its premises.

Its criterion is the unity of the subject, which is one of the presuppositions of this sort of psychology; it should even be taken as symptomatic that this theme is ever more emphatically isolated, as if the return of a certain subject of consciousness [*connaissance*] were at stake, or as if the psychical had to obtain recognition as doubling the organism.

Here we must take as exemplary the idea in which a whole body of traditional thought comes together in accrediting a term, “state of consciousness,” that is not without basis. Whether we’re dealing with the states of enthusiasm described by Plato, the degrees of samadhi in Buddhism, or the experience (*Erlebnis*) one has under the influence of hallucinogens, it is important to know how much of this is authenticated by any theory.

Authenticated in the register of what consciousness includes by way of connaturality.

It is clear that Hegelian knowledge, in the logicizing *Aufhebung* [sublation] on which it is based, puts as little stock in these states as such as does modern science, which may recognize in them an object of experience, in the sense of an opportunity to define certain coordinates, but in no way an ascesis that could, so to speak, be “epistemogenic” or “noophoric.”

It is in this respect that reference to them is relevant to us.

For I assume you are sufficiently informed about Freudian practice to realize that such states play no part in it; but what is not fully appreciated is the fact that this supposed “depth psychology” does not dream of using these states to obtain illumination, for example, or even assign any value to them along the path it sketches out.

For that is why—though it is not stressed—Freud steers clear of hypnoid states, even when it comes to explaining the phenomena of hysteria. That is the amazing thing: Freud prefers the hysteric’s discourse to hypnoid states. What I have called “fertile moments” in my mapping of paranoiac knowledge [*connaissance*] is not a Freudian reference.

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I have some difficulty in getting across—in a circle infatuated with the most incredible illogicality—what it means to interrogate the unconscious as I do, that is, to the point at which it gives a reply that is not some sort of ravishment or takedown, but is rather a “saying why.”

If we conduct the subject anywhere, it is to a deciphering which assumes that a sort of logic is already operative in the unconscious, a logic in which, for example, an interrogative voice or even the development of an argument can be recognized.

The whole psychoanalytic tradition supports the view that the analyst’s voice can intervene only if it enters at the right place, and that if it comes too early it merely produces a closing up.

In other words, a strain of psychoanalysis that is sustained by its allegiance to Freud cannot under any circumstances pass itself off as a rite of passage to some archetypal, or in any sense ineffable, experience. The day someone who is not simply a moron obtains a hearing for a view of this kind will be the day all limits will have been abolished. We are still a long way from that.¹

Thus far we have merely broached our subject. For we must home in more precisely on what Freud himself articulates in his doctrine as constituting a “Copernican” step.

For such a step to be constituted, is it enough that a privilege should be revoked—in this case, the one that put the earth in the central place? Man’s subsequent destitution from an analogous place due to the triumph of the idea of evolution gives one the sense that such revocation implies an advantage that is confirmed by its constancy.

797 But can we be so sure this is an advantage or real progress? Does anything make it seem that the other truth, if we may so term revealed truth, has seriously suffered as a result? Don’t we realize that, by exalting the center, heliocentrism is no less of a lure than seeing the earth as the center, and that the existence of the ecliptic probably provided a more stimulating model of our relations with truth, before it lost much of its interest when it was reduced to being no more than the earth bowing assent?

In any case, it is not because of Darwin that men believe themselves to be any the less the best among the creatures, for it is precisely of this that he convinces them.

The use of Copernicus’ name as a reference has more hidden resources that touch specifically on what has already just slipped from my pen regarding our relation to the true—namely, the emergence of the ellipse as being not unworthy of the locus from which the so-called higher truths take their name. The revolution is no less important even though it concerns only “celestial revolutions.”

From that point on, to dwell on it no longer means simply revoking some idiotic notion stemming from the religious tradition, which, as can be seen well enough, is none the worse for it, but rather of tying more closely together the regime of knowledge and the regime of truth.

For if Copernicus’ work, as others have remarked before me, is not as Copernican as we think it is, it is because the doctrine of double truth continues to offer shelter to a knowledge that, up until then, it must be said, appeared to be quite content with that shelter.

So here we are at the palpable border between truth and knowledge; and

it might be said, after all, that at first sight our science certainly seems to have readopted the solution of closing the border.

Yet if the history of Science's birth is still a sufficiently burning question for us to be aware that at that border something shifted at that time, it is perhaps here that psychoanalysis distinguishes itself by representing a new seism that occurred there.

For let us reexamine from this angle the service we expect from Hegel's phenomenology: that of marking out an ideal solution—one that involves a permanent revisionism, so to speak, in which what is disturbing about truth is constantly being reabsorbed, truth being in itself but what is lacking in the realization of knowledge. The antinomy the Scholastic tradition posited as principal is here taken to be resolved by virtue of being imaginary. Truth is nothing but what knowledge can learn that it knows merely by putting its ignorance to work. This is a real crisis, in which the imaginary is eliminated in engendering a new symbolic form, to use my own categories. This dialectic is convergent and proceeds to the conjuncture defined as absolute knowledge. As it is deduced, this conjuncture can only be the conjunction of the symbolic with a real from which nothing more can be expected. What is this, if not a subject finalized in his self-identity? From which one can conclude that this subject is already perfect(ed) here and is the fundamental hypothesis of the entire process. He is named, in effect, as the substratum of this process; he is called *Selbstbewusstsein*, the being of the conscious, wholly conscious self.

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Would that it were so! But the history of science itself—I mean of our science, since its inception, assuming we situate its first birth in Greek mathematics—presents itself, rather, in the form of detours that comply very little with this immanentism. And scientific theories—let us not be misled on this score by any resorption of the special theory of relativity into the general theory—do not, in any way, fit together according to the thesis/antithesis/synthesis dialectic.

Indeed, a number of creaks—confusedly given voice to by the great minds responsible for some of the cardinal changes in physics—remind us that, after all, it is elsewhere that the moment of truth must sound for this field of knowledge as for others.

Why wouldn't we think that the astonishing indulgence science is showing toward psychoanalytic hype may be due to the theoretical hope psychoanalysis offers—a hope that is not merely the result of the prevailing confusion?

I am not, of course, referring to the extraordinary lateral transference by

which psychology reimmerses its categories in psychoanalysis to reinvigorate its lowly purposes of social exploitation. For the reason already stated, I regard the fate of psychology as irremediably sealed.

799 In any case, my two-pronged reference to Hegel's absolute subject and to science's abolished subject sheds the light necessary to accurately formulate Freud's dramatism: the return of truth to the field of science at the same time as it comes to the fore in the field of its praxis—repressed, it reappears there.

Who cannot see the distance that separates the unhappiness of consciousness—which, however deeply ingrained it may be in Hegel's work, can still be said to be but the suspension of knowing—from civilization's discontents in Freud's work, even if it is only in the inspiration of a sentence which is, as it were, disavowed, that Freud marks for us what, on reading it, cannot be articulated otherwise than the skewed relation that separates the subject from sex?

There is nothing, then, in my approach to situating Freud that owes anything to the judicial astrology in which the psychologist is immersed. Nothing that proceeds on the basis of quality, much less of intensity, or of any phenomenology from which idealism may draw reassurance. In the Freudian field, the words notwithstanding, consciousness is a characteristic that is as obsolete to us in grounding the unconscious—for we cannot ground it on the negation of consciousness (that unconscious dates back to Saint Thomas Aquinas)—as affect is unsuited to play the role of the protopathic subject, since it is a function without a functionary.

Starting with Freud, the unconscious becomes a chain of signifiers that repeats and insists somewhere (on another stage or in a different scene, as he wrote), interfering in the cuts offered it by actual discourse and the cogitation it informs.

In this formulation, which is mine only in the sense that it conforms as closely to Freud's texts as to the experience they opened up, the crucial term is the signifier, revived from ancient rhetoric by modern linguistics, in a doctrine whose various stages I cannot trace here, but of which the names Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson stand for its dawn and its present-day culmination, not forgetting that the pilot science of structuralism in the West has its roots in Russia, where formalism first flourished. Geneva 1910 and Petrograd 1920 suffice to explain why Freud did not have this particular instrument at his disposal. But this historically motivated lacuna makes all the more instructive the fact that the mechanisms described by Freud as those of the primary process, by which the unconscious is gov-

erned, correspond exactly to the functions this school of linguistics believes determine the most radical axes of the effects of language, namely metaphor and metonymy—in other words, the effects of the substitution and combination of signifiers in the synchronic and diachronic dimensions, respectively, in which they appear in discourse.

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Once the structure of language is recognized in the unconscious, what sort of subject can we conceive of for it?

In a concern for method, we can try to begin here with the strictly linguistic definition of *I* as signifier, where it is nothing but the shifter* or indicative that, qua grammatical subject of the statement, designates the subject insofar as he is currently speaking.

That is to say, it designates the enunciating subject, but does not signify him. This is obvious from the fact that there may be no signifier of the enunciating subject in the statement—not to mention that there are signifiers that differ from *I*, and not only those that are inadequately called cases of the first person singular, even if we add that it can be lodged in the plural invocation or even in the Self [*Soi*] of auto-suggestion.

I believe, for example, that I have detected the enunciating subject in the French signifier *ne*, said by grammarians to be “expletive,” a term that already prefigures the incredible opinion of those among the best who regard its form as subject to sheer whimsy. Would that the weight I give it make them think twice, before it not but become obvious they have missed the point [*avant qu’il ne soit averé qu’ils n’y comprennent rien*—take out that “not but” [*ne*] and my enunciation loses its force as an attack, *I* eliding me in the impersonal. Yet I fear that in this way they could not but come to vilify me [*Mais je crains ainsi qu’ils n’en viennent à me honnir*—skip that “not but” [*n’*] and its absence, toning down my alleged fear to declare my repugnance to a timid assertion, reduces the emphasis of my enunciation by situating me in the statement.

But if I say “*tue*” (kill), because they are killing me, where am I situating myself if not in the *tu* on the basis of which I glare at them [*toise*]?

Don’t sulk—I am merely referring obliquely to what I am reluctant to cover over with the inevitable map of clinical work.

Namely, the right way to answer the question “Who is speaking?” when the subject of the unconscious is at stake. For the answer cannot come from him if he doesn’t know what he is saying, or even that he is speaking, as all of analytic experience teaches us.

Hence the place of the “inter-said” [*inter-dit*], constituted by the “intra-said” [*intra-dit*] of a between-two-subjects, is the very place at which the

801 transparency of the classical subject divides, undergoing, as it does, the effects of fading* that specify the Freudian subject due to its occultation by an ever purer signifier; may these effects lead us to the frontiers where slips of the tongue and jokes become indistinguishable in their collusion, or even where elision is so much more allusive in driving presence back to its lair, that we are astonished the hunt for Dasein hasn't made any more of it.

Lest our hunt be in vain, we analysts must bring everything back to the cut qua function in discourse, the most significant being the cut that constitutes a bar between the signifier and the signified. Here we come upon the subject who interests us since, being bound up in signification, he seems to be lodging in the preconscious. This would lead us to the paradox of conceiving that discourse in an analytic session is worthwhile only insofar as it stumbles or even interrupts itself—were not the session itself instituted as a break in a false discourse, that is, in what discourse realizes when it becomes empty as speech, when it is no more than the worn coinage Mallarmé speaks of that is passed from hand to hand “in silence.”

The cut made by the signifying chain is the only cut that verifies the structure of the subject as a discontinuity in the real. If linguistics enables us to see the signifier as the determinant of the signified, analysis reveals the truth of this relationship by making holes in meaning the determinants of its discourse.

This is the path by which an imperative can be fulfilled, the imperative Freud raised to the sublime stature of a pre-Socratic gnome in his formulation, “Wo Es war, soll Ich werden,” which I have commented upon more than once, and which I am now going to inflect differently.

I will limit myself to examining one step in its grammar: “where it was . . .” [*là où ce fut . . .*]—what does that mean? If it were but this [*ça*] that might have been (to use the aoristic form), how to come to the same place in order to make myself be there, by stating it now?

But the French translation says: “*Là où c'était . . .*” Let us take advantage of the distinct imperfect it provides. Where it was just now, where it was for a short while, between an extinction that is still glowing and an opening up that stumbles, *I* can [*peut*] come into being by disappearing from my statement [*dît*].

An enunciation that denounces itself, a statement that renounces itself, an ignorance that sweeps itself away, an opportunity that self-destructs—what remains here if not the trace of what really must be in order to fall away from being?

802 A dream related by Freud in his article, “Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning,” gives us a sentence, related to the pathos

with which the figure of a dead father returning as a ghost would be invested: "He did not know he was dead."²

I have already used this sentence to illustrate the subject's relation to the signifier—through an enunciation that makes a human being tremble due to the vacillation that comes back to him from his own statement.

If this figure of the dead father subsists only by virtue of the fact that one does not tell him the truth of which he is unaware, what then is the status of the *I* on which this subsistence depends?

He did not know . . . He was to know a bit later. Oh! may that never happen! May *I* die rather than have him know. Yes, that's how I get there, where it was (to be): who knew, thus, that *I* was dead?

Being of non-being, that is how *I* comes on the scene as a subject who is conjugated with the double aporia of a veritable subsistence that is abolished by his knowledge, and by a discourse in which it is death that sustains existence.

Will we weigh this being against the being Hegel as subject forged—Hegel being the subject who, regarding history, adopts the discourse of absolute knowledge? We recall that Hegel admitted to having experienced the temptation of madness. Isn't our path the one that overcomes that, by going right to the truth of the vanity of this discourse?

I will not expound my doctrine on madness here. For I have included this eschatological excursion only to designate the gap that separates the two relations—Freudian and Hegelian—between the subject and knowledge.

And to show that there is no surer root of these relations than the different ways in which the dialectic of desire is distinguished in them.

For in Hegel's work it is desire (*Begierde*) that is given responsibility for the minimal link the subject must retain to Antiquity's knowledge [*connaissance*] if truth is to be immanent in the realization of knowledge. The "cunning of reason" means that, from the outset and right to the end, the subject knows what he wants.

It is here that Freud reopens the junction between truth and knowledge to the mobility out of which revolutions arise.

In this respect: that desire becomes bound up at that junction with the Other's desire, but that the desire to know lies in this loop.

Freud's biologism has nothing to do with the preachy abjection that wafts up to us from psychoanalytic headquarters.

And you had to be made to experience the death instinct, which is held in such abomination there, to get on the true wavelength of Freud's biology. For to evade the death instinct in his doctrine is not to know his doctrine at all.

On the basis of the approach I have prepared for you, you should recognize in the metaphor of the return to the inanimate—which Freud ascribes to every living body—the margin beyond life that language assures the human being of due to the fact that he speaks, and which is precisely the margin where this being places in signifying position, not only those parts of his body that lend themselves to this because they are exchangeable, but the body itself. Thus it becomes apparent that the object's relation to the body can in no way be defined as based on a partial identification that would have to be totalized there, since, on the contrary, this object is the prototype of the body's signifierness as the human being's ante.

Here I will take up the challenge made to me when people translate as “instinct” what Freud calls *Trieb*—which “drive” would seem to translate quite well into English, but which is avoided in the *Standard Edition*. In French, my last resort would be *dérive* [drift], if I were unable to give the bastardized term *pulsion* [drive or urge] its point of impact.

And so I insist on promoting the idea that, whether grounded or not in biological observation, instinct—among the modes of knowledge [*connaissance*] required by nature of living beings so that they satisfy its needs—is defined as a kind of [experiential] knowledge [*connaissance*] we admire because it cannot become [articulated] knowledge [*un savoir*]. But in Freud's work something quite different is at stake, which is a *savoir* certainly, but one that doesn't involve the slightest *connaissance*, in that it is inscribed in a discourse of which the subject—who, like the messenger-slave of Antiquity, carries under his hair the codicil that condemns him to death—knows neither the meaning nor the text, nor in what language [*langue*] it is written, nor even that it was tattooed on his shaven scalp while he was sleeping.

This apologue barely exaggerates just how little the unconscious has to do with physiology.

This can be gauged by crosschecking the contribution made by psychoanalysis to physiology since its inception: its contribution has been nil, even as far as the sexual organs are concerned. No amount of fabulation will prevail against this balance sheet.

804 For, of course, psychoanalysis concerns the reality [*réel*] of the body and of its imaginary mental schema. But to recognize their import in the perspective authorized by “development,” we must first realize that the more or less fragmented integrations that seem to account for the order of development, function first and foremost like elements of a heraldry, a heraldry of the body. This is confirmed by the use that is made of them in reading children's drawings.

This is the crux—to which I shall return later—of the paradoxical privilege the phallus continues to have in the unconscious dialectic, the theory of the part-object not sufficing to explain it.

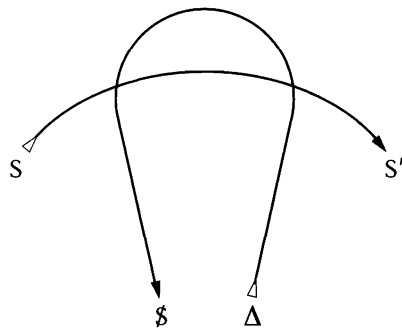
Need I now say—if one understands the kind of support I have sought in Hegel’s work by which to criticize a degradation of psychoanalysis that is so inept that it has no other claim to fame than that of being contemporary—that it is inadmissible that I should be accused of having been lured by a purely dialectical exhaustion of being, and that I can but hold a particular philosopher³ responsible for authorizing this misunderstanding?

For far from giving myself over to some logicizing reduction where desire is at stake, I detect in desire’s irreducibility to demand the very mainspring of what also prevents it from being reduced to need. To put it elliptically: it is precisely because desire is articulated that it is not articulable—by which I mean in the discourse that suits it, an ethical, not a psychological discourse.

I must now lay out for you in much greater detail the topology that I have developed in my teaching over the past few years, that is, introduce a certain graph, which, I should indicate, also serves purposes other than the one I have in mind here, having been constructed and perfected quite explicitly in order to map out on its different levels the most broadly practical structure of the data of analytic experience. It will serve here to show where desire is situated in relation to a subject defined on the basis of his articulation by the signifier.

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GRAPH 1



This is what might be called its elementary cell (see Graph 1). In it is articulated what I have called the “button tie” [*point de capiton*], by which the signifier stops the otherwise indefinite sliding of signification. The signifying chain is assumed to be borne by the vector $\overline{S.S'}$. Without even going into the

subtleties of the negatively oriented direction in which its double intersection with the vector $\overrightarrow{\Delta \cdot \mathfrak{S}}$ occurs—only in this latter vector does one see the fish it hooks, a fish less suitable for representing what it withdraws from our grasp in its vigorous swimming than the intention that tries to drown it in the flood-tide of pre-text, namely, the reality that is imagined in the ethological schema of the return of need.

The diachronic function of this button tie can be found in a sentence, insofar as a sentence closes its signification only with its last term, each term being anticipated in the construction constituted by the other terms and, inversely, sealing their meaning by its retroactive effect.

But the synchronic structure is more hidden, and it is this structure that brings us to the beginning. It is metaphor insofar as the first attribution is constituted in it—the attribution that promulgates “the dog goes meow, the cat goes woof-woof,” by which, in one fell swoop, the child, by disconnecting the thing from its cry, raises the sign to the function of the signifier and reality to the sophistics of signification, and in his contempt for verisimilitude, makes necessary the verification of multiple objectifications of the same thing.

806 Does this possibility require the topology of a four-corners game? This sort of question seems innocent enough, but it may give us some trouble if the subsequent construction must depend on it.

I will spare you the stages by revealing directly the function of the two points of intersection in this elementary graph [see Graph 2]. The first, labeled A, is the locus of the treasure trove of signifiers, which does not mean of the code, for the one-to-one correspondence between a sign and a thing is not preserved here, the signifier being constituted on the basis of a synchronic and countable collection in which none of the elements is sustained except through its opposition to each of the others. The second, labeled $s(A)$, is what may be called the punctuation, in which signification ends as a finished product.

Let us observe the dissymmetry between the one, which is a locus (a place, rather than a space), and the other, which is a moment (a scansion, rather than a duration).

Both are related to the offer to the signifier that is constituted by the hole in the real, the one as a hollow for concealment, the other as drilling toward a way out.

The subject's submission to the signifier, which occurs in the circuit that goes from $s(A)$ to A and back from A to $s(A)$, is truly a circle, inasmuch as the assertion that is established in it—being unable to close on anything but its own scansion, in other words, failing an act in which it would find its cer-

tainty—refers back only to its own anticipation in the composition of the signifier, which is in itself meaningless [*insignifiante*].

To be possible, the squaring of this circle only requires the completeness of the signifying battery installed in A, henceforth symbolizing the Other's locus. This allows us to see that this Other is but the pure subject of modern game strategy, and is as such perfectly accessible to the calculation of conjecture—in the sense that the real subject, in making his own calculations, need not take into account any so-called subjective (in the usual, that is, psychological, sense of the term) aberration, but only the inscription of a combinatory whose combinations may be exhaustively enumerated.

This squaring of the circle is nevertheless impossible, but solely because the subject constitutes himself only by subtracting himself from it and by decompleting it essentially, such that he must, at one and the same time, count himself here and function only as a lack here.

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The Other, as preliminary site of the pure subject of the signifier, occupies the key [*maitresse*] position here, even before coming into existence here as absolute Master—to use Hegel's term with and against him. For what is omitted in the platitude of modern information theory is the fact that one cannot even speak of a code without it already being the Other's code; something quite different is at stake in the message, since the subject constitutes himself on the basis of the message, such that he receives from the Other even the message he himself sends. Thus the notations A and $s(A)$ are justified.

Code messages and message codes separate out into pure forms in the psychotic subject, the subject who makes do with this preliminary Other alone.

Observe, as an aside, that this Other, distinguished as the locus of Speech, nevertheless emerges as Truth's witness. Without the dimension it constitutes, the deceptiveness of Speech would be indistinguishable from the feint, which, in fighting or sexual display, is nevertheless quite different. Deployed in imaginary capture, the feint is integrated into the play of approach and retreat that constituted the first dance, in which these two vital situations find their scansion, and the partners who fall into step with it find what I will dare to write as their "dancity." Moreover, animals show that they are capable of such behavior when they are being hunted down; they manage to throw their pursuers off the scent by briefly going in one direction as a lure and then changing direction. This can go so far as to suggest on the part of game animals the nobility of honoring the parrying found in the hunt. But an animal does not feign feigning. It does not make tracks whose deceptiveness lies in getting them to be taken as false, when in fact they are true—that is, tracks that indicate the right trail. No more than it effaces its tracks, which would already be tantamount to making itself the subject of the signifier.

All this has been articulated only in a confused way by philosophers who are nevertheless professional. But it is clear that Speech begins only with the passage from the feint to the order of the signifier, and that the signifier requires another locus—the locus of the Other, the Other as witness, the witness who is Other than any of the partners—for the Speech borne by the signifier to be able to lie, that is, to posit itself as Truth.

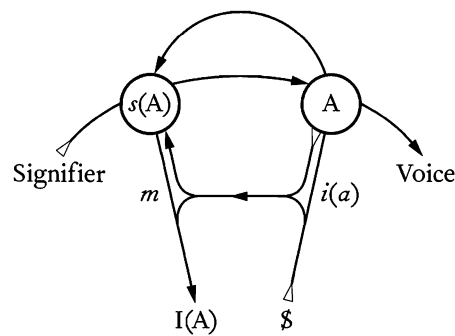
808 Thus Truth draws its guarantee from somewhere other than the Reality it concerns: it draws it from Speech. Just as it is from Speech that Truth receives the mark that instates it in a fictional structure.

The first words spoken decree, legislate, aphorize, and are an oracle; they give the real other its obscure authority.

Take just one signifier as an insignia of this omnipotence, that is, of this wholly potential power, of this birth of possibility, and you have the unary trait which—filling in the invisible mark the subject receives from the signifier—alienates this subject in the first identification that forms the ego-ideal.

This is inscribed by the notation $I(A)$, which I must substitute, at this stage, for $\$$, the barred S of the negatively oriented vector, moving $\$$ from the vector's endpoint to its starting point (see Graph 2).

GRAPH 2



This is a retroversion effect by which the subject, at each stage, becomes what he was (to be) [*était*] before that, and “he will have been” is only announced in the future perfect tense.

Here arises the ambiguity of a misrecognizing that is essential to knowing myself [*un méconnaître essentiel au me connaître*]. For, in this “rear view,” all the subject can be sure of is the anticipated image—which he had caught of himself in his mirror—coming to meet him. I won’t go back over the function of my “mirror stage” here, the first strategic point I developed as an objection to the supposedly “autonomous ego” in favor in psychoanalytic

theory, whose academic restoration justified the mistaken proposal to strengthen the ego in a type of treatment diverted thereafter toward successful adaptation—a phenomenon of mental abdication tied to the aging of the psychoanalytic group in the Diaspora owing to the war, and the reduction of an eminent practice to a *Good Housekeeping* seal of approval attesting to its suitability to the “American way of life.”*⁴

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Be that as it may, what the subject finds in this altered image of his body is the paradigm of all the forms of resemblance that will cast a shade of hostility onto the world of objects, by projecting onto them the avatar of his narcissistic image, which, from the jubilation derived from encountering it in the mirror, becomes—in confronting his semblables—the outlet for his most intimate aggressiveness.

It is this image that becomes fixed—this is the ideal ego—from the point at which the subject fixates as ego-ideal. The ego is thus a function of mastery, a game of bearing, and constituted rivalry. In the capture it undergoes due to its imaginary nature, the ego masks its duplicity; that is, consciousness, in which the ego assures itself an indisputable existence (a naïveté that is displayed in Fénelon’s work), is in no way immanent in the ego, but rather transcendent, since consciousness is based on the ego-ideal as unary trait (the Cartesian cogito does not fail to recognize this).⁵ As a result, the transcendental ego itself is relativized, implicated as it is in the misrecognition in which the ego’s identifications originate.

This imaginary process, which goes from the specular image to the constitution of the ego along the path of subjectification by the signifier, is signified in my graph by the $\vec{i(a).m}$ vector, which is one-way but doubly articulated, first as a short circuit of the $\vec{\mathcal{S}.I(A)}$ vector, and second as a return route of the $\vec{A.s(A)}$ vector. This shows that the ego is only completed by being articulated not as the *I* of discourse, but as a metonymy of its signification (what Damourette and Pichon take as the “filled out” person, as opposed to the “ethereal” person, the latter being no other than the function *I* designated earlier as that of the shifter*).

The promotion of consciousness as essential to the subject in the historical aftermath of the Cartesian cogito is indicative, to my mind, of a misleading emphasis on the transparency of the *I* in action at the expense of the opacity of the signifier that determines it; and the slippage by which *Bewusstsein* serves to cover over the confusion of the *Selbst* actually reveals, in *The Phenomenology of Mind*, that the reason for Hegel’s error lies in his rigor.

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The very movement that shifts the axis of the phenomenon of mind toward the imaginary relation to the other (that is, to the semblable connoted by a lowercase *a*), brings its effect to light: namely, the aggressiveness that

becomes the balance arm of the scales around which the equilibrium of semblable to semblable decomposes in the relationship between Master and Slave, a relationship that is replete with all the cunning tricks by which reason advances its impersonal reign.

Regarding this slavery that inaugurates the roads to freedom—a myth rather than an actual genesis, no doubt—I can point here to what it hides precisely because I have revealed what it hides as no one had before.

The struggle that gives rise to this slavery is rightly called a struggle of pure prestige, and what is at stake—life itself—is well suited to echo the danger of the generic prematurity of birth, which Hegel was unaware of, and which I have situated as the dynamic mainspring of specular capture.

But death—precisely because it is dragged into the stakes (making this a more honest wager than Pascal's, though Hegel's too is a poker game, since limits are placed on how high the bid can be raised)—simultaneously shows what is elided by a preliminary rule as well as by the final settlement. For, in the final analysis, the loser must not perish if he is to become a slave. In other words, a pact always precedes violence before perpetuating it, and what I call the symbolic dominates the imaginary, allowing us to wonder whether or not murder really is the absolute Master.

For it is not enough to decide the question on the basis of its effect: Death. We need to know which death,⁶ the one that life brings or the one that brings life.

Without criticizing the Hegelian dialectic for what it leaves out—the lack of a bond that would keep the society of masters together was pointed out long ago—I simply wish to stress what, on the basis of my own experience, strikes me as blatantly symptomatic in it, that is, as indicative of repression. This is clearly the theme of the cunning of reason, whose seductiveness is in no wise lessened by the error I pointed out above. The work, Hegel tells us, to which the slave submits in giving up *jouissance* out of fear of death, is precisely the path by which he achieves freedom. There can be no more obvious lure than this, politically or psychologically. *Jouissance* comes easily to the slave, and it leaves work in serfdom.

The cunning of reason is a seductive notion because it echoes a well-known individual myth characteristic of obsessives, obsessive structure being known to be common among the intelligentsia. But even if someone in this category avoids the professor's bad faith, he cannot easily deceive himself that his work will grant him access to *jouissance*. Paying truly unconscious homage to the story as written by Hegel, he often finds his alibi in the death of the Master. But what of this death? He quite simply waits for it.

In fact, it is from the Other's locus where he situates himself that he fol-

lows the game, thus eliminating all risk to himself—especially the risk of a joust—in a “self-consciousness” for which death is but a joke.

I say this so that philosophers will not believe they can minimize the importance of the irruption constituted by what Freud said about desire.

And this on the pretext that demand, along with the effects of frustration, has buried everything that trickles down to them from a practice which has degenerated into an educative banality that is no longer even redeemed by its laziness.

Yes, the enigmatic traumas of the Freudian discovery are now considered to be merely suppressed cravings. Psychoanalysis is nourished by the observation of children and by the childishness of the observations. Let us skip the reports thus generated, edifying as they all are.

And devoid, as they all are now, of the slightest hint of humor.

Their authors are now far too concerned with obtaining a respectable position to leave any room for the irremediable ludicrousness the unconscious owes to its roots in language.

Yet it is impossible, for those who claim that discordance is introduced into the needs assumed to exist at the subject’s origins by the way demand is received, to neglect the fact that there is no demand that does not in some respect pass through the defiles of the signifier.

And while the somatic *ananke* of man’s inability to move, much less be self-sufficient, for some time after birth provides grounds for a psychology of dependence, how can that psychology elide the fact that this dependence is maintained by a universe of language? Indeed, needs have been diversified and geared down by and through language to such an extent that their import appears to be of a quite different order, whether we are dealing with the subject or politics. In other words, to such an extent that these needs have passed over into the register of desire, with everything it forces us to face in this new experience of ours: the age-old paradoxes desire has created for moralists and the mark of the infinite that theologians find in it, not to mention the precariousness of its status, as expressed in its most recent form by Sartre—desire, a useless passion.

What psychoanalysis shows us about desire in what might be called its most natural function, since the survival of the species depends on it, is not only that it is subjected, in its agency, its appropriation, and even its very normality, to the accidents of the subject’s history (the notion of trauma as contingency), but also that all this requires the assistance of structural elements—which, in order to intervene, can do very well without these accidents. The inharmonious, unexpected, and recalcitrant impact of these elements certainly seems to leave to the experience [of desire in its most natural func-

tion] a residue that drove Freud to admit that sexuality had to bear the mark of some hardly natural flaw.

We would be mistaken if we thought that the Freudian Oedipus myth puts an end to theology on the matter. For the myth does not confine itself to working the puppet of sexual rivalry. It would be better to read in it what Freud requires us to contemplate using his coordinates; for they boil down to the question with which he himself began: What is a Father?

"It is the dead Father," Freud replies, but no one hears him; and it is regrettable that, due to the mere fact that Lacan takes it up again under the heading of the "Name-of-the-Father," a situation that is hardly scientific should still deprive him of his normal audience.⁷

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Yet analytic reflection has vaguely revolved around the problematic misrecognition of the function of the sire among certain primitive peoples, and psychoanalysts—rallying round the contraband flag of "culturalism"—have even argued about the forms of an authority about which it cannot even be said that any branch of anthropology has provided a definition of any importance.

Will we wait until we are confronted with a practice, which may in the course of time become standard practice, of artificially inseminating women who are at odds with phallicism with the sperm of some great man, before we deign to pronounce a verdict on the paternal function?

Yet the Oedipal show cannot run indefinitely in forms of society that are losing the sense of tragedy to an ever greater extent.

Let us begin with the conception of the Other as the locus of the signifier. No authoritative statement has any other guarantee here than its very enunciation, since it would be pointless for the statement to seek it in another signifier, which could in no way appear outside that locus. I formulate this by saying that there is no metalanguage that can be spoken, or, more aphoristically, that there is no Other of the Other. And when the Legislator (he who claims to lay down the Law) comes forward to make up for this, he does so as an impostor.

But the Law itself is not an impostor, nor is he who authorizes his actions on its basis.

The fact that the Father may be regarded as the original representative of the Law's authority requires us to specify by what privileged mode of presence he sustains himself beyond the subject who is led to really occupy the place of the Other, namely, the Mother. The question is thus pushed back a step.

It will seem strange that—in opening up here the incommensurate space

all demand implies, since it is a request for love—I didn't allow for more "making" and debating on this point.

And that instead I focused it on what closes shy of it, due to the same effect of demand, to truly create the place of desire.

Indeed, it is quite simply, and I am going to say in what sense, as the Other's desire that man's desire takes shape, though at first only retaining a subjective opacity in order to represent need in it.

I will now explain in what way this opacity in some sense constitutes the substance of desire.

Desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand rips away from need, this margin being the one that demand—whose appeal can be unconditional only with respect to the Other—opens up in the guise of the possible gap need may give rise to here, because it has no universal satisfaction (this is called "anxiety"). A margin which, as linear as it may be, allows its vertiginous character to appear, provided it is not trampled by the elephantine feet of the Other's whimsy. Nevertheless, it is this whimsy that introduces the phantom of Omnipotence—not of the subject, but of the Other in which the subject's demand is instated (it's about time this idiotic cliché was, once and for all, and for all parties, put in its place)—and with this phantom, the necessity that the Other be bridled by the Law.

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But I will stop here again in order to return to the status of desire, which presents itself as independent of the Law's mediation, because Law originates in desire—owing to the fact that, by an odd symmetry, desire reverses the unconditionality of the demand for love, in which the subject remains subjected to the Other, in order to raise it to the power of an absolute condition (in which "absolute" also implies "detachment").

Given the advantage won over the anxiety related to need, this detachment is successful right from its humblest mode—that in which it was glimpsed by a certain psychoanalyst in his work with children, which he called the "transitional object," in other words, the shred of blanket or beloved shard the child's lips or hands never stop touching.

This is, frankly, no more than an emblem; representation's representative in the absolute condition is in its proper place in the unconscious, where it causes desire in accordance with the structure of fantasy I will extract from it.

For it is clear here that man's continued nescience of his desire is not so much nescience of what he demands, which may after all be isolated, as nescience of whence he desires.

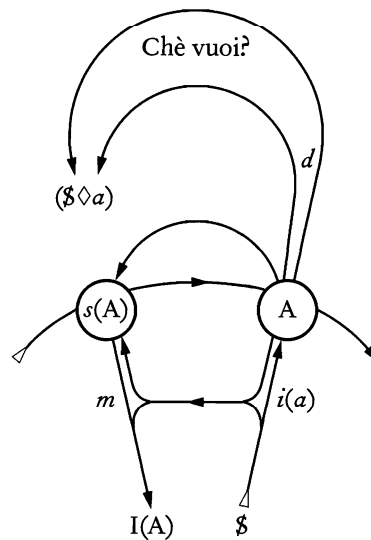
This is where my formulation that the unconscious is (the) discourse about the Other [*discours de l'Autre*] fits in, in which the *de* should be under-

stood in the sense of the Latin *de* (objective determination): *de Alio in oratione* (you complete it: *tua res agitur*).

But we must also add that man's desire is the Other's desire [*le désir de l'homme est le désir de l'Autre*] in which the *de* provides what grammarians call a "subjective determination"—namely, that it is qua Other that man desires (this is what provides the true scope of human passion).

815 This is why the Other's question [*la question de l'Autre*]*—*that comes back to the subject from the place from which he expects an oracular reply*—*which takes some such form as "*Chè vuoi?*" "What do you want?" is the question that best leads the subject to the path of his own desire, assuming that, thanks to the know-how of a partner known as a psychoanalyst, he takes up that question, even without knowing it, in the following form: "What does he want from me?"

GRAPH 3



It is this superimposed level of structure that will nudge my graph (see Graph 3) toward its completed form, inserting itself there first like the outline of a question mark planted in the circle of the capital A, for Other, symbolizing the question it signifies with a disconcerting collineation.

Of what bottle is this the opener? Of what answer is it the signifier, the master key?

It should be noted that a clue may be found in the clear alienation that leaves it up to the subject to butt up against the question of his essence, in that he may

not misrecognize that what he desires presents itself to him as what he does not want—a form assumed by negation in which misrecognition is inserted in a very odd way, the misrecognition, of which he himself is unaware, by which he transfers the permanence of his desire to an ego that is nevertheless obviously intermittent, and, inversely, protects himself from his desire by attributing to it these very intermittences.

Of course, one may be surprised by the extent of what is accessible to self-consciousness, on the condition that one has learnt it through another channel. Which is certainly the case here.

For if we are to rediscover the pertinence of all this, a sufficiently sophisticated study, that can only be situated in the context of analytic experience, must enable us to complete the structure of fantasy by essentially linking here, regardless of its occasional elisions, the moment of a fading* or eclipse of the subject—which is closely tied to the *Spaltung* or splitting he undergoes due to his subordination to the signifier—to the condition of an object (whose privilege I have done no more than touch on above in reference to diachrony).

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This is what is symbolized by the abbreviation ($\mathcal{S}\langle a \rangle$), which I have introduced as an algorithm; and it is no accident that it breaks the phonemic element constituted by the signifying unit right down to its literal atom. For it is designed to allow for a hundred and one different readings, a multiplicity that is acceptable as long as what is said about it remains grounded in its algebra.

This algorithm and the analogs of it used in the graph in no way contradict what I said earlier about the impossibility of a metalanguage. They are not transcendent signifiers; they are indices of an absolute signification, a notion which will, I hope, seem appropriate to the condition of fantasy without further commentary.

The graph shows that desire adjusts to fantasy as posited in this way—like the ego does in relation to the body image—but the graph also shows the inversion of the misrecognitions on which the one and the other are based, respectively. Thus closes the imaginary path, by which I must come into being in analysis, where the unconscious was (to be) *itself*.

Let us say—borrowing the metaphor used by Damourette and Pichon about the grammatical ego and applying it to a subject to which it is better suited—that fantasy is really the “stuff” of the *I* that is primally repressed, because it can be indicated only in the fading* of enunciation.

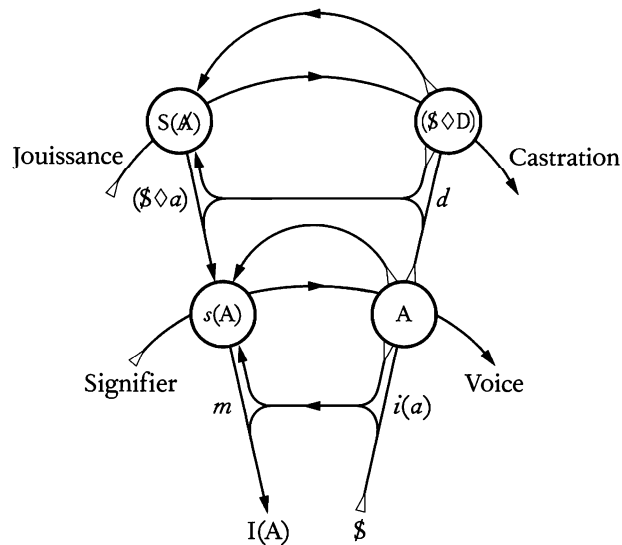
Indeed, our attention is now drawn to the subjective status of the signifying chain in the unconscious or, better, in primal repression (*Urverdrängung*).

In my deduction, it is easier to understand why it was necessary to investigate the function on which the subject of the unconscious is based, because we realize that it is difficult to designate that subject anywhere as subject of a

statement—and therefore as articulating it—when he does not even know he is speaking. Hence the concept of the drive, in which the subject is designated on the basis of a pinpointing that is organic, oral, anal, and so on, which satisfies the requirement that the more he speaks, the further he is from speaking.

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COMPLETE GRAPH



But while my complete graph allows us to situate the drive as the treasure trove of signifiers, its notation, $(S \diamond D)$, maintains its structure by linking it to diachrony. The drive is what becomes of demand when the subject vanishes from it. It goes without saying that demand also disappears, except that the cut remains, for the latter remains present in what distinguishes the drive from the organic function it inhabits: namely, its grammatical artifice, so manifest in the reversals of its articulation with respect to both source and object. (Freud is a veritable wellspring on this point.)

The very delimitation of the “erogenous zone” that the drive isolates from the function’s metabolism (the act of devouring involves organs other than the mouth—just ask Pavlov’s dog) is the result of a cut that takes advantage of the anatomical characteristic of a margin or border: the lips, “the enclosure of the teeth,” the rim of the anus, the penile groove, the vagina, and the slit formed by the eyelids, not to mention the hollow of the ear (I am avoiding going into embryological detail here). Respiratory erogeneity has been little studied, but it is obviously through spasms that it comes into play.

Let us note that this characteristic of the cut is no less obviously prevalent

in the object described by analytic theory: the mamilla, the feces, the phallus (as an imaginary object), and the urinary flow. (An unthinkable list, unless we add, as I do, the phoneme, the gaze, the voice . . . and the nothing.) For isn't it plain to see that the characteristic of being partial, rightly emphasized in objects, is applicable not because these objects are part of a total object, which the body is assumed to be, but because they only partially represent the function that produces them?

A common characteristic of these objects as I formulate them is that they have no specular image, in other words, no alterity.⁸ This is what allows them to be the "stuff" or, better put, the lining—without, nevertheless, being the flip side—of the very subject people take to be the subject of consciousness. For this subject, who thinks he can accede to himself by designating himself in the statement, is nothing but such an object. Ask someone with writer's block about the anxiety he experiences and he will tell you who the turd *is* in his fantasy. 818

It is to this object that cannot be grasped in the mirror that the specular image lends its clothes. A substance caught in the net of shadow, and which, robbed of its shadow-swelling volume, holds out once again the tired lure of the shadow as if it were substance.

What the graph now offers us is situated at the point at which every signifying chain takes pride in closing its signification. If we are to expect such an effect from unconscious enunciation, it is here in $S(\mathcal{A})$ and read as: signifier of a lack in the Other, a lack inherent in the Other's very function as the treasure trove of signifiers. And this is so insofar as the Other is called upon (*chè vuoi*) to answer for the value of this treasure, that is, to answer for its place in the lower chain certainly, but with the signifiers constitutive of the upper chain—in other words, in terms of the drive.

The lack at stake is one I have already formulated: that there is no Other of the Other. But is this characteristic of truth's Faithlessness really the last word worth giving in answer to the question, "What does the Other want from me?" when we analysts are its mouthpiece? Surely not, and precisely because there is nothing doctrinal about our role. We need not answer for any ultimate truth, and certainly not for or against any particular religion.

It is already significant that I had to situate here [in $S(\mathcal{A})$] the dead Father in the Freudian myth. But a myth is nothing if it props up no rites, and psychoanalysis is not the Oedipal rite—a point to be expanded on later.

No doubt a corpse is a signifier, but Moses' tomb is as empty for Freud as Christ's was for Hegel. Abraham revealed his mystery to neither of them.

For my part, I will begin with what the abbreviation $S(\mathcal{A})$ articulates, being first of all a signifier. My definition of the signifier (there is no other) 819

is as follows: a signifier is what represents the subject to another signifier. This latter signifier is therefore the signifier to which all the other signifiers represent the subject—which means that if this signifier is missing, all the other signifiers represent nothing. For something is only represented to.

Now insofar as the battery of signifiers is, it is complete, and this signifier can only be a line that is drawn from its circle without being able to be counted in it. This can be symbolized by the inherence of a (-1) in the set of signifiers.

It is, as such, unpronounceable, but its operation is not, for the latter is what occurs whenever a proper name is pronounced. Its statement is equal to its signification.

Hence, by calculating this signification according to the algebra I use, namely:

$$\frac{S \text{ (signifier)}}{s \text{ (signified)}} = s \text{ (the statement),}$$

$$\text{with } S = (-1), \text{ we find: } s = \sqrt{-1}$$

This is what the subject is missing in thinking he is exhaustively accounted for by his cogito—he is missing what is unthinkable about him. But where does this being, who appears in some way missing from the sea of proper names, come from?

We cannot ask this question of the subject qua *I*. He is missing everything he needs in order to know the answer, since if this subject, *I*, was dead [*moi J'étais mort*], he would not know it, as I said earlier. Thus he does not know I'm alive. How, therefore, will *I* prove it to myself?

For *I* can, at most, prove to the Other that he exists, not, of course, with the proofs of the existence of God with which the centuries have killed him, but by loving him, a solution introduced by the Christian kerygma.

It is, in any case, too precarious a solution for us to even think of using it to circumvent our problem, namely: What am *I*?

I am in the place from which “the universe is a flaw in the purity of Non-Being” is vociferated.

And not without reason for, by protecting itself, this place makes Being itself languish. This place is called Jouissance, and it is Jouissance whose absence would render the universe vain.

Am I responsible for it, then? Yes, of course. Is this Jouissance, the lack of which makes the Other inconsistent, mine, then? Experience proves that it is usually forbidden me, not only, as certain fools would have it, due to bad

societal arrangements, but, I would say, because the Other is to blame—if he was to exist [*existait*], that is. But since he doesn't exist, all that's left for me is to place the blame on *I*, that is, to believe in what experience leads us all to, Freud at the head of the list: original sin. For even if we did not have Freud's express and sorrowful avowal, the fact remains that the myth we owe to him—the most recent in history—is of no more use than the myth of the forbidden fruit, except for the fact (and this is not one of its assets as a myth) that, being more succinct, it is considerably less stultifying.

But what is not a myth, although Freud formulated it just as early on as he formulated the Oedipus myth, is the castration complex.

In the castration complex we find the mainspring of the very subversion I am trying to articulate here by means of its dialectic. For this complex, which was unknown as such until Freud introduced it into the formation of desire, can no longer be ignored in any reflection on the subject.

In psychoanalysis it seems that, rather than attempting to carry its articulation further, people have deliberately avoided providing any explanation of it. Which is why this great Samson-like body has been reduced to providing grist for the mill of the Philistines of general psychology.

Certainly there is a bone(r) [*os*] here. Since it is precisely what I am claiming—namely, what structures the subject—it essentially constitutes in the subject the gap that all thought has avoided, skipped over, circumvented, or stopped up whenever thought apparently succeeds in sustaining itself circularly, whether the thought be dialectical or mathematical.

This is why I am given to guiding my students to the places where logic is disconcerted by the disjunction that breaks through from the imaginary to the symbolic, not in order to indulge in the paradoxes that are thus generated, or in some supposed crisis in thought, but, on the contrary, to redirect their fake shine to the gap they designate—which I always find quite simply edifying—and above all to try to create a method from a sort of calculus whose very inappropriateness would flush out the secret.

Such is the phantom known as the cause, which I have pursued in the purest symbolization of the imaginary through the alternation from the similar to the dissimilar.⁹

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Let us observe carefully, therefore, what it is that objects to conferring on my signifier $S(\text{A})$ the meaning of *mana* or of any such term. It is the fact that we cannot be satisfied to explain it on the basis of the poverty of the social fact, even if the latter were traced back to some supposedly total fact.

Claude Lévi-Strauss, commenting on Mauss' work, no doubt wished to see in *mana* the effect of a zero symbol. But it seems that what we are dealing with in our case is rather the signifier of the lack of this zero symbol. This is

why, at the risk of incurring a certain amount of opprobrium, I have indicated how far I have gone in distorting mathematical algorithms in my own use of them: for example, my use of the symbol, $\sqrt{-1}$, also written i in the theory of complex numbers, can obviously be justified only if I give up any claim to its being able to be used automatically in subsequent operations.

We must keep in mind that *jouissance* is prohibited [*interdite*] to whoever speaks, as such—or, put differently, it can only be said [*dite*] between the lines by whoever is a subject of the Law, since the Law is founded on that very prohibition.

Indeed, were the Law to give the order, “*Jouis!*” [“Enjoy!” or “Come!”], the subject could only reply “*J’ouis*” [“I hear”], in which the *jouissance* would no longer be anything but understood [*sous-entendue*].

But it is not the Law itself that bars the subject’s access to *jouissance*—it simply makes a barred subject out of an almost natural barrier. For it is pleasure that sets limits to *jouissance*, pleasure as what binds incoherent life together, until another prohibition—this one being unchallengeable—arises from the regulation that Freud discovered as the primary process and relevant law of pleasure.

It has been said that in this discovery Freud merely followed the course already being pursued by the science of his time—nay, a long-standing tradition. To appreciate the true audacity of his step, we have only to consider his reward, which was not long in coming: the stalemate regarding the heteroclite nature of the castration complex.

822 The latter is the sole indication of this *jouissance* in its infinitude, which brings with it the mark of its prohibition, and which requires a sacrifice in order to constitute this mark: the sacrifice implied in the same act as that of choosing its symbol, the phallus.

This choice is allowed because the phallus—that is, the image of the penis—is negativized where it is situated in the specular image. That is what predestines the phallus to give body to *jouissance* in the dialectic of desire.

We must distinguish, therefore, between the principle of sacrifice, which is symbolic, and the imaginary function which is devoted to it, but which veils the principle at the same time that it gives it its instrument.

The imaginary function is the one Freud formulated as governing object cathexis as narcissistic. I came back to this myself when I showed that the specular image is the channel taken by the transfusion of the body’s libido toward the object. But insofar as a part remains preserved from this immersion, concentrating in itself the most intimate aspect of autoeroticism, its position as a “pointy extremity” in the form predisposes it to the fantasy of it

falling off—in which its exclusion from the specular image is completed as is the prototype it constitutes for the world of objects.

It is thus that the erectile organ—not as itself, or even as an image, but as a part that is missing in the desired image—comes to symbolize the place of jouissance; this is why the erectile organ can be equated with the $\sqrt{-1}$, the symbol of the signification produced above, of the jouissance it restores—by the coefficient of its statement—to the function of a missing signifier: (-1) .

If it serves to tie together in this way the prohibition of jouissance, it is nevertheless not for reasons of form, but because the supersession of these reasons signifies what reduces all coveted jouissance to the brevity of auto-eroticism. The pathways that are altogether traced out by the anatomical conformation of speaking beings—namely, the further perfected hand of the monkey—have not, in effect, been disdained in a certain philosophical asceticism as pathways of a wisdom that has incorrectly been termed cynical. Certain individuals¹⁰ in our times, obsessed no doubt by this memory, have suggested to me that Freud himself belongs to the tradition of “bodily techniques,” as Mauss calls it. The fact remains that analytic experience demonstrates the original character of the guilt generated by such practices.

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Guilt that is related to the reminder of the jouissance that is not found in the service rendered to the real organ, and consecration of the signifier’s imaginary function of prohibiting objects.

Indeed, this is the radical function for which a wilder analytic era found more accidental causes (due to education), just as it reinterpreted the other forms—in which it took an interest, to its credit—of sanctification of the organ (circumcision) as traumas.

The shift of $(-\varphi)$ (lowercase phi) as phallic image from one side to the other of the equation between the imaginary and the symbolic renders it positive in any case, even if it fills a lack. Although it props up (-1) , it becomes Φ (capital phi) there, the symbolic phallus that cannot be negativized, the signifier of jouissance. And it is this characteristic of Φ that explains both the particularities of women’s approach to sexuality, and what makes the male sex the weaker sex with regard to perversion.

I will not take up perversion here, inasmuch as it barely accentuates the function of desire in man, insofar as desire institutes the dominance—in the privileged place of jouissance—of object a in fantasy, which desire substitutes for \mathcal{A} . Perversion adds to that a recuperation of φ that would scarcely seem original if it did not concern the Other as such in a very particular way. Only my formula for fantasy allows us to bring out the fact that the subject here makes himself the instrument of the Other’s jouissance.

It is of more concern to philosophers to grasp the relevance of this formula in the case of the neurotic, precisely because the neurotic skews it.

Indeed, the neurotic, whether hysteric, obsessive, or, more radically, phobic, is the one who identifies the Other's lack with the Other's demand, Φ with D.

Consequently, the Other's demand takes on the function of the object in the neurotic's fantasy—that is, his fantasy (my formulas make it possible to realize this immediately) is reduced to the drive: $(S \diamond D)$. This is why it was possible to catalog all the neurotic's drives.

824 But the prevalence given by the neurotic to demand—which, in an analytic movement opting for facility, shifted the whole treatment toward the handling of frustration—hides the anxiety induced in him by the Other's desire, anxiety that cannot be misrecognized when it is covered over by the phobic object alone, but which is more difficult to understand in the case of the other two neuroses when one is not in possession of the thread that makes it possible to posit fantasy as the Other's desire. Once we posit this, we find fantasy's two terms split apart, as it were: the first, in the case of the obsessive, inasmuch as he negates the Other's desire, forming his fantasy in such a way as to accentuate the impossibility of the subject vanishing, the second, in the case of the hysteric, inasmuch as desire is sustained in fantasy only by the lack of satisfaction the hysteric brings desire by slipping away as its object.

These features are confirmed by the obsessive's fundamental need to be the Other's guarantor, and by the Faithlessness of hysterical intrigue.

In fact, the image of the ideal Father is a neurotic's fantasy. Beyond the Mother—demand's real Other, whose desire (that is, her desire) we wish she would tone down—stands out the image of a father who would turn a blind eye to desires. This marks—more than it reveals—the true function of the Father, which is fundamentally to unite (and not to oppose) a desire to the Law.

The Father the neurotic wishes for is clearly the dead Father—that is plain to see. But he is also a Father who would be the perfect master of his desire—which would be just as good, as far as the subject is concerned.

This is one of the stumbling blocks the analyst must avoid, and the crux of the interminable aspect of transference.

It is why a calculated vacillation of the analyst's "neutrality" may be more valuable to a hysteric than any number of interpretations—provided, of course, that the fright this risks bringing about in the patient does not lead to a breaking off of the analysis, and that the analysand is convinced by what follows that the analyst's desire was in no way involved in the matter. This, of course, is not a recommendation regarding technique, but a perspective on

the question of the analyst's desire for those who could not otherwise have any notion of it: how the analyst must safeguard the imaginary dimension of his nonmastery and necessary imperfection for the other, is as important a matter to deal with as the deliberate reinforcement in the analyst of his nescience regarding each subject who comes to him for analysis, of an ever renewed ignorance so that no one is considered a typical case.

To return to fantasy, let us say that the pervert imagines he is the Other in order to ensure his own *jouissance*, and that this is what the neurotic reveals when he imagines he is a pervert—in his case, to ensure control over the Other.

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This explains the supposed perversion at the crux of neurosis. Perversion is in the neurotic's unconscious in the guise of the Other's fantasy. But this does not mean that the pervert's unconscious is right out in the open. He, too, defends himself in his desire in his own way. For desire is a defense, a defense against going beyond a limit in *jouissance*.

In its structure as I have defined it, fantasy contains ($-\phi$), the imaginary function of castration, in a hidden form that can switch from one of its terms to the other. That is to say, like a complex number, it alternatively imaginarizes (if you will allow me this term) one of these terms in relation to the other.

Included in object *a* is *agalma*, the inestimable treasure that Alcibiades declares is contained in the rustic box the figure of Socrates is to him. But let us note that a minus sign ($-$) is attributed to it. It is because Alcibiades has not seen Socrates' prick—permit me to follow Plato here, who does not spare us the details—that Alcibiades the seducer exalts in Socrates the *agalma*, the marvel that he would have liked Socrates to cede to him by avowing his desire. Alcibiades' subjective division, which he carries within him, shines through quite clearly on this occasion.

Such is woman concealed behind her veil: it is the absence of the penis that makes her the phallus, the object of desire. Evoke this absence in a more precise way by having her wear a cute fake one under a fancy dress, and you, or rather she, will have plenty to tell us about: the effect is 100 percent guaranteed, for men who don't beat around the bush, that is.

Thus by exhibiting his own object as castrated, Alcibiades flaunts the fact that he is imbued with desire—a fact that does not escape Socrates' attention—for someone else who is present, Agathon. Socrates, as the precursor of psychoanalysis, and confident of his position at this fashionable gathering, does not hesitate to name Agathon as the transference object, bringing to light through an interpretation a fact that many analysts are still unaware of: that the love-hate effect in the psychoanalytic situation is found outside of it.

But Alcibiades is by no means a neurotic. In fact, it is because he is the

826 epitome of desirousness, and a man who pursues *jouissance* as far as possible, that he can thus (though with the help of an instrumental drunkenness) produce before everyone's eyes the central articulation of the transference, when in the presence of the object adorned with its sparkle.

The fact remains that he projected onto Socrates the ideal of the perfect Master—that he completely imaginized Socrates through the action of $(-\varphi)$.

In the case of the neurotic, $(-\varphi)$ slips under the $\$$ in fantasy, favoring the imagination that is characteristic of him, that of the ego. For the neurotic underwent imaginary castration at the outset; it sustains the strong ego that is his, so strong, one might say, that his proper name bothers him, so strong that deep down the neurotic is Nameless.

Yes, it is behind this ego, which certain analysts choose to strengthen still more, that the neurotic hides the castration he denies.

But, contrary to appearances, he cleaves to this castration.

What the neurotic does not want, and what he strenuously refuses to do until the end of his analysis, is to sacrifice his castration to the Other's *jouissance*, by allowing it to serve the Other.

And, of course, he is not wrong, for—although, deep down, he feels he is the most vain thing in existence, a *Want-To-Be* or a *One-Too-Many*—why would he sacrifice his difference (anything but that) to the *jouissance* of an Other, which, let us not forget, does not exist. Yes, but if by chance it was to exist [*existait*], it would enjoy it [*il en jouirait*]. And that is what the neurotic does not want. For he figures that the Other demands his castration.

What analytic experience attests to is that castration is what regulates desire, in both normal and abnormal cases.

Providing it oscillates by alternating between $\$$ and *a* in fantasy, castration makes of fantasy a chain that is both supple and inextensible by which the fixation of object cathexis, which can hardly go beyond certain natural limits, takes on the transcendental function of ensuring the *jouissance* of the Other that passes this chain on to me in the Law.

827 Anyone who really wants to come to terms with this Other has open to him the path of experiencing not the Other's demand, but its will. And then: to either realize himself as an object, turning himself into the mummy of some Buddhist initiation, or satisfy the will to castrate inscribed in the Other, which leads to the supreme narcissism of the Lost Cause (the latter being the path of Greek tragedy, which Claudel rediscovers in a Christianity of despair).

Castration means that *jouissance* has to be refused in order to be attained on the inverse scale of the Law of desire.

I won't go any further here.

[Endnote]

This article is coming out here for the first time: an unexpected shortage of the funds that are usually provided in ample quantity to publish the complete proceedings of such colloquia having left it in abeyance, along with all the fine things that adorned it.

I should mention, for the record, that the “Copernican” discussion was added later, and that the end of the article on castration was not delivered at the colloquium due to lack of time, and was in fact replaced by a few words on the machine, in the modern sense of the word, by which the subject’s relation to the signifier can be materialized.

From the fellow feeling natural in any discussion, let us not exclude the fellow feeling aroused in me by a particular disagreement. The term “a-human,” which someone wanted to attribute to what I had said, did not bother me in the least; I was flattered, rather, as I had helped occasion the birth of the new element it brings to the category. I noted with no less interest the sizzling, that followed soon afterward, of the word “hell,” since the voice that pronounced it gave it a certain distinctive piquancy owing to the speaker’s declared allegiance to Marxism. I must admit that I appreciate humanism when it comes from a camp where, although employed with no less cunning than elsewhere, it at least has a certain candor about it: “When the miner comes home, his wife rubs him down . . .” That leaves me defenseless.

In a private conversation, someone close to me asked me (this was the form his question took) whether talking to a brick wall implied faith in an eternal scribe. Such faith is not necessary, was the reply, to whoever knows that every discourse derives its effects from the unconscious.

Notes

1. (Added in 1966:) Even in attempting to interest people in telepathy, under the heading of psychological phenomena—or in the whole Gothic psychology that can be resuscitated on the basis of Myers’ work—the crudest adventurer will be unable to break out of the field in which Freud has already confined him, by presenting what he accepts of these phenomena as requiring translation, in the strict sense of the term, in the corroborative effects of contemporary discourses.

Even when prostituted, psychoanalytic theory remains sanctimonious (a well-known characteristic of the brothel). As we say since

Sartre, she’s a respectable girl: she won’t walk the street on just any side.

2. *GW* VIII, 237–38.

3. I am referring here to the friend who invited me to this conference, after having, some months before, revealed in print his reservations—based on his personal ontology—about “psychoanalysts” who were too “Hegelian” for his liking, as if anyone in this group but me could even be associated with Hegel.

This in the hodgepodge text of pages from his diary cast to the four winds (of chance, no doubt), from which a journal (*La Nouvelle*

Revue française) had nevertheless benefited.

Regarding which I pointed out to him that in the, even entertaining, terms in which he dressed up this ontology of his in his informal notes, I found its “certainly not, but perhaps” procedure designed to mislead.

4. I have left this paragraph in the text only as a monument to an outdated battle (added in 1962: What was I thinking? {1966. 1957. 1968 . . . ha, ha!}).

5. (Added in 1962:) The words in parentheses here have been added with a view to pinpointing later developments regarding identification.

6. This, too, is a reference to what I professed in my seminar, *L'Éthique de la psychanalyse* (1959–1960, forthcoming), on the second death. I agree with Dylan Thomas that there aren't two. But is the absolute Master, then, the only one that remains?

7. [Added in 1966:] The very fact that I said this at the time at this point in my paper, even if I didn't put it more forcefully, suggests an appointment with fate since, three years later, it was precisely regarding the theme of the Name-of-the-Father that I adopted the sanction of laying to rest the theses I had promised in my seminar, due to the permanence of this situation.

8. (Added in 1962:) I have since justified this by means of a topological model borrowed from surface theory in an *analysis situs*.

9. (Added in 1962:) More recently, in the opposite direction, in the attempt to correlate topologically defined surfaces with the terms I employ here in the subjective articulation. Not to mention in the simple refutation of the supposed paradox, “I am lying.”

10. (Added in 1971:) This plural covers an eminent contemporary philosopher.