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The inscriptive subject of psychoanalysis

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THE INSCRIPTIVE SUBJECT OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

by

KAREN EVANS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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In memory of
Gary Uram

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He realized that, though he may penetrate all the riddles of the higher and lower orders, the task of shaping the senseless and dizzying stuff of dreams is the hardest that a man can attempt - much harder than weaving a rope of sand or of coining the faceless wind.

Jorge Luis Borges
"The Circular Ruins"

As a distinct discourse, psychoanalysis shares with philosophy an interest in understanding human subjectivity. Both fields try to understand what it means to be a human subject or, more generally, what it means to be a human being. The following essay presents an investigation of the issue of subjectivity through the lens of psychoanalysis. In choosing to pursue this investigation through a study of the subject in psychoanalysis, the philosophical investigation of the subject is neither rejected nor abandoned, for, it will be shown, a psychoanalytic investigation of the subject is, precisely, a philosophical investigation.

Psychoanalysis is concerned with the human psyche. Its discourse is fully directed toward an understanding of the psychic life of the human subject. This means it cares about, and, thereby, cares for, the subject. In trying to understand and care about the subject, psychoanalysis must come to define the subject in a fundamental way. This difficult task lies at the base of the psychoanalytic project. It is this commitment

to a fundamental understanding of the human subject that makes the project of psychoanalysis philosophical.

As a kind of philosophical investigation, psychoanalysis conceives its definition of the human subject within the bounds of standard philosophical categories, namely, in terms of mental functions such as perception, thought, imagination, and in terms of intersubjective relations, in particular, ethics. However, psychoanalysis's specific terminology and conceptual architecture distinguish its discourse within the domain of philosophy.

Any philosophical investigation entertains certain presuppositions or premises through which it articulates its claims. Psychoanalysis's singularity can be attributed to the particular set of presuppositions it holds. For example, the psychoanalytic definition of the subject is articulated in terms of "the unconscious" and "consciousness" rather than in more common philosophical parlance such as "mind" and "body." An argument for the philosophical basis of "the unconscious" and other psychoanalytic terms could be elaborated, though this will not be the project undertaken here. Instead, the philosophical credibility of the psychoanalytic vocabulary will be assumed in attempting to investigate what is fundamentally at stake in the psychoanalytic definition of the subject.

Thus, in view of this purpose, the following essay claims that psychoanalysis posits a subject that is "inscriptive."

The subject is inscriptive because it is born into a context of pre-existing relations and, therefore, is inscribed or defined by this whole network of relations, and because the subject, in being inscribed, is destined to inscribe this order by perpetuating it. The source of this claim is found in certain key texts of Freud and Lacan, although it is not explicitly thematized as such by either. It is the project of this essay, then, to direct the reader through its argument for the inscriptive character of the subject, and, in doing so, to define fully the term "inscriptive," by way of a careful analysis of these texts.

The term "analysis" suggests a faithful attentiveness to the texts which, nevertheless, must bend or distort the texts in view of the myopic function of analysis. Thus, while proceeding from a faithful reading of Freud to Lacan, the essay selectively organizes, i.e., bends, the reading in the direction of its own vision. One such prominent bend is a detour through Heidegger's Being and Time. It is in the discourse that arises from the confluence of the texts of Freud, Lacan and Heidegger that the essay's own singularity is pronounced, i.e., in the notion of the inscriptive subject. Though operative from the first, the essay's "voice" is most fully "heard" near its close, after all the other "voices" have been properly blended.

The notion of the inscriptive subject finds its fullest support in Lacan's claim that language is the condition of the

unconscious; that is to say that language, as the context of human existence, effects the formation of the unconscious. Following Lacan, the inscriptive subject is determined to be a linguistic subject. This is not simply to say that the human subject has language, uses language, i.e., verbal language, but that language is so essential to what it means to be a human being that it orders the very categories of human existence, such as perception, thought and the family order, all of which are discussed here. Since language is fundamentally defined by difference and law, according to the structuralist account of language (the account that Lacan claims is well-suited to Freud's original insights), the human being is thus divided, i.e., divided by language's difference, divided by the law of language first encountered by the child as an instrument for prohibiting desire which perpetuates human desire in prohibiting it.

Although the claim for the inscriptive subject draws its strongest support from Lacan, the use of the term "inscriptive" has its source in Freud. In the well-known letter to Fliess of December 6, 1896, Freud writes of the Niederschriften, a series of "registrations" or "inscriptions"¹ of psychic material in various "systems" of the psychic apparatus. The

¹ When Freud uses the term Niederschrift, he does not make any overt connection to language. He only hints at a linguistic connection. It is Lacan, in L'Éthique de la Psychanalyse, who makes the connection to language more explicit. See Jacques Lacan, Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan: Livre VII, L'Éthique de la Psychanalyse 1959-1960 (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1986), p. 63.

notion of the Niederschriften is developed further in Chapter Seven of The Interpretation of Dreams; it informs his theory of repression and, generally, haunts the body of his work though he never makes the linguistic leap that Lacan makes. Thus, the use of the term "inscriptive" here is drawn from Freud, though he never uses the term to characterize or thematize his notion of the subject.

The term "inscriptive" has been specifically selected here to serve a double function. The subject is an "inscriptive" subject, rather than an "inscribed" or "inscribing" one. The term "inscriptive" includes both passive and active modes, both "inscribed" and "inscribing." Freud's reference to psychic inscriptions only accommodates a notion of a subject that passively receives or records inscriptions, i.e., an inscribed subject. Yet, it fails to articulate the dynamic consequences of such inscriptions. It is argued in this essay that the subject, in being inscribed, in being scored or determined by its linguistic context, is destined to inscribe or perpetuate this linguistic order. Thus, the use of the term "inscriptive" not only captures both active and passive modes, but also the metamorphic relation between them. The notion of the inscriptive subject only fully unfolds in the play on the ambiguity of the term.

Lacan is stylistically famous for this kind of verbal tightrope walking. By playing on the ambiguity of a term, Lacan is able to construct the conceptual space of a paradox.

An example, discussed in this essay, is found in his use of the term "phallus."

For Lacan, the phallus is the signifier of what the subject lacks, what belongs to yet is cut off from the subject in being a subject. The phallus is not synonymous with the penis for both male and female lack the phallus. The status of the phallus as a signifier is derived from the role played by the castration fantasy in effecting the child's accession to language. As an organ, the phallus occupies a prominent position in motivating the child's definition of sexual difference through the castration complex. Sexual difference is determined by the presence or absence of the phallus. Yet, neither child is ever actually castrated, neither child actually lacks the phallus (i.e., here, the penis or the clitoris); the child only orders its understanding of sexual difference around the fantasy of castration - of either losing or having lost the phallus. As a fantasy, castration "detaches" the phallic organ from the body by transforming it into an object of fantasy. As a fantasmatic object, as a signifier, the phallus represents that loss, represents loss in general.

Insofar as the phallus is distinct from or other than the subject, i.e., in being what the subject does lack, it signifies the subject's division. Yet, insofar as the phallus belongs to the subject as what completes it, as what makes it whole, the phallus signifies the subject's wholeness. But were the subject to be whole, it would no longer be a subject,

for to be a subject is to be divided, i.e., to be lacking wholeness. Thus, wholeness is the lack of subjectivity. Paradoxically, then, what belongs to yet is lacking in the subject, in lacking wholeness, is the lack of subjectivity. The signification of the phallus is conveyed in the force of this paradox.

While it is not the intention of this essay to either imitate or focus on Lacan's stylistic peculiarities (nor Freud's, nor Heidegger's), the essay has found inspiration in Lacan's style in helping to articulate the paradoxical and labyrinthine structure of some of its ideas. It is in this stylistic mold, then, that the term "inscriptive" is cast.

CHAPTER 1

As subjects, our access to the world is always mediated by (perceptual) representations. If we cannot know the thing-in-itself, then what we do have immediate awareness of are the phenomenal appearances that present themselves to our mind. Even our knowledge of other human beings is mediated through images, sounds, etc. As thinking beings, our "inner" mental life is given to us by thoughts, but these thoughts themselves rest upon memories, recorded data of perceptual or instinctual events, making the synthetic capacity of thinking a mere working over of this (already) recorded material.

According to Freud in The Interpretation of Dreams, thought arises out of the desire to satisfy an unconscious wish. In the primitive stages of psychic life of the infant, an internal stimulus produced by a biological need, e.g., hunger, causes a continuous force of excitation in the psychic mechanism. The goal of the stimulus is to discharge, diminish or dispel its force, thus, reducing the pain it causes. This can only be accomplished through an "experience of satisfaction." What is essential to the experience of satisfaction is some particular perception (i.e., representation) attached to this experience which gets recorded in the unconscious. This process which is motivated by the desire for satisfaction of the need is what Freud calls the wish. When the biological need reoccurs, the perception of the experience of satisfac-

tion will be reactivated, i.e., the perception will be reproduced or re-presented in the mind. However, this reactivation of the perception is merely a hallucinatory satisfaction, and, as such, is inefficient, for the need is not actually satisfied and persists until it is satisfied (unless, of course, the hallucination regresses to the point where it overrides the instinctual impulse. However, in this case, severe damage to the psychic constitution results, such as in the case of psychosis). This satisfaction can come about only through "external" paths, i.e., through motor activity (e.g., through crying or some activity directed towards arousing the attention of the caretaker who can provide the nourishment for the helpless infant). This complicated business of rerouting the course of excitation is the domain of thought which is responsible for the inhibition of the regression of hallucination and controls motor activity. Thus, as Freud says, "Thought is after all nothing but a substitute for a hallucinatory wish . . ." ² All of our thoughts, then, are ultimately motivated by wishes and even our most highly abstract forms of reasoning are themselves given to us through and as representations. Therefore, we can see that, at least on one level, as subjects, as beings whose constitution is given through psychic processes, i.e., through thought and perception, our definition is contingent upon the mediation of

² Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, trans. by James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965), p. 606.

representations.

Yet, there appears to be a significant difference between thought processes and perception, i.e., thoughts are predominantly attached to and articulated by words whereas perceptions are given to us through (primarily visual) images. The distinction between words and images is fundamental for Freud. Not only does it characterize the difference between thought and perception, but, more importantly for Freud, it characterizes the difference between secondary and primary processes, between the preconscious-conscious system and the unconscious. The preconscious-conscious system is distinguished by the presence of word-presentations (Wortvorstellung) while thing-presentations (Sachvorstellung or Dingvorstellung) are characteristic of the unconscious. In fact, Freud's whole notion of dream interpretation and his description of certain paraphrenic disorders hinge upon this distinction. Therefore, even though our subjective definition is given to us through the mediation of (re)presentations, is it not the case that there are two separate and distinct kinds of psychic processes going on, and, that the difference between words and images, as mediators of thought and perception, is a significant difference?

On one hand, perceptual images seem to come to us directly from the experiences we are undergoing or have undergone. As Descartes would say, they come to us without our consent and we have little control over them. Images seem to bear a

direct one-to-one correspondence to the objects of which they are representations whereas words do not. Words are linguistic mediators; they are derived by convention and, generally, hold an arbitrary relation to the items they are meant to signify. The extent of our linguistic vocabulary is, therefore, dependent upon the objects and events which occupy our collective experiential vocabulary. Thus, it seems that images are more primary in terms of psychic development than words.

Similarly, in coming to us directly from our experiences, images come to us as a whole, i.e., within a context. They are composites of possibilities: they have distinguishable parts or aspects and they appear coincidentally with other distinguishable images. It requires mental work, concentration and imagination, to focus on their parts, to break them down. In this respect, we can say that they are dense or compact; they have a kind of substance. Words, on the other hand, lack this substance, this concreteness. Perhaps, this is just an obvious consequence of their conventionality, i.e., in that their specific form or figure is arbitrarily chosen, it is insignificant, secondary or insubstantial in regard to their function as conventional substitutes. Yet as substitutes, their function is to achieve a translation rather than an isomorphic mapping, emphasizing the displacement, the alterity, inherent in any re-presentation.

The abstractness of words lends to the transportation,

the migration, of (re)presentations. This can be accomplished from word to word or from image to word. Words allow us to unpack images, to translate the wealth of their possibilities, their parts or aspects, into psychic material that is more easily processed, synthesized and, ultimately, comprehensible. In his theory of dream interpretation, Freud distinguishes two levels of the dream. First, there is the manifest content of the dream (or dream-content) which is present to the dreamer as a series of images. But there is also the latent content of the dream (or dream-thoughts) which is the articulation of the meaning of the dream. The dream-thoughts try to make sense of the dream images by translating the content of the images into an ordered discourse given in words. "The dream-thoughts are immediately comprehensible, as soon as we have learnt them. The dream-content, on the other hand, is expressed as it were in a pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of the dream-thoughts."³ The "pictographic" dream-content must be translated into the dream-thoughts in order for the wish that motivates the dream and that is expressed in it to be understood. Because the dream-content is given in images, each image is dense or compact, thick with articulable possibilities which must be enumerated in order to arrive at an adequate interpretation of the dream. This process of the dream-work whereby the (unconscious) mental processes

³ *ibid.*, p. 312.

compress a range of psychic material into the terse body of the (dream) image is called condensation by Freud. "The first thing that becomes clear to anyone who compares the dream-content with the dream-thoughts is that a work of condensation on a large scale has been carried out. Dreams are brief, meagre and laconic in comparison with the range and wealth of the dream-thoughts. If a dream is written out it may perhaps fill half a page."⁴ Thus, according to Freud, (dream) images are not immediately digestible to the psychic mechanism. As pictures, they must first be translated into words so that their content can be comprehended, can be read, in mental life as thought.

Words, therefore, are a more efficient medium for conducting thought. They can set ideas in motion, for they promote the activity of psychic synthesis because they can articulate, and, thus, make use of, the complicated taxematic operations which lack correlates as images. As transporters of thought, words can also convey thought intersubjectively, i.e., they motivate and expedite communication. Though images can be helpful in advancing and communicating thought, they are more ambiguous for this purpose than words.

Because of the density or composite nature of images, numerous semantic possibilities are simultaneously compressed into a single representation. This makes it difficult to discern a given order in these possibilities and ascribe a

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 312-313.

specific or singular meaning. Their linear powers of narration or direct communication seem thus limited.

An image is a particular mode of representation that attempts to faithfully mirror objects of experience. There are, however, meaningful terms or constructions that figure frequently in human discourse that lack experiential correlates, such as certain logical or hypothetical operations (e.g., "if," "whether," "either/or," etc.). Thus, images either fail to reproduce these at all or else they can do so only in a circuitous manner, suggesting the operation rather than reproducing it, contradicting their intention to faithfully mirror. Tied to experiential models, images lack a certain range of expression or, at best, provide only clumsy surrogates.

In that images mirror the objects of experience, they have a definite form or figure. This form gives the image its particularity and sets it apart from all other images, allowing us to recognize it as what it is. Yet, this particularity of form also impedes its capacity to occasion psychic synthesis. An image of a triangle, for instance, will always have a specific form whether it be isosceles, scalene or equilateral. Given in this form are the essential elements that define any triangle, i.e., its three sides, etc. Yet, what is given is also more, and less, than what is understood in using the word "triangle." More in that what is given in the image are elements that are not essential to the defini-

tion of a triangle, elements that exceed the minimum requirements necessary to simply define a triangle. And less in that it falls short of expressing the full range of representative possibilities of a triangle. The word "triangle," however, is not bound to and by this particularity of form and, thus, does not encounter these problems. Descartes noted this problematic in the Sixth Meditation, although it was not within the context of image versus word, but, rather, in a discussion of the difference between imagination and understanding. The imagination has no trouble producing representations of simple forms, such as a triangle. It has great difficulty, however, producing representations of more complex forms, such as a chiliagon, for it cannot easily distinguish and render the finer features of their figural constructions. As Descartes says, ". . . [the imagined form of a chiliagon] differs in no way from the representation I should form if I were thinking of a myriagon, or any figure with very many sides."⁵ The understanding, by contrast, can easily and equally entertain the concept of either simple or complex forms.

Words, then, are better suited than images to articulate certain kinds of ideas and, in general, seem to be a more efficient means of expressing and synthesizing thought. Thus, despite their primacy in the development of psychic life, images are limited in their power to synthesize. They are

⁵ René Descartes, Meditations on First Philosophy, trans. by John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 50.

limited by their form, by their dependent isomorphism and by the ambiguity of their coincidence. In terms of the operation of perception, it is obvious that the psychic apparatus must be activated and perform some measure of work in order to incorporate our perceptual experiences into psychical raw material. But, for the most part, perception implies a passive receptivity on the part of the mental apparatus. Images get ingested or registered in the psychic apparatus through perception, but they must be digested through other psychic means. In order to fully effect this digestion, to work over, transform and synthesize this raw material, the activity of thought must be implemented. This can be accomplished by attempting to directly organize the raw material as given, but, as argued above, this is frustrated by certain limitations and, as such, inefficient. Psychic digestion is best effected by translating images into words. The translation itself involves activity on the part of the psychic apparatus, and, once translated, the material can then be used for further synthetic possibilities.

Thus far, the discussion regarding the distinction between images and words has situated the distinction in relation to perception and thought. However, Freud's discussion of the distinction is not taken up in terms of perception and thought, but rather in regard to the differing contents of the unconscious and the preconscious-conscious systems. Here he distinguishes between thing-presentations, which are

derived from things and are primarily visual (and, thus, correspond to images as described above), and word-presentations. In his essay "The Unconscious," Freud concludes that "the conscious idea [presentation] comprises the concrete idea [the presentation of the thing] plus the verbal idea [the presentation of the word] corresponding to it, whilst the unconscious idea [presentation] is that of the thing alone."⁶ Thus, unconscious mental processes are characterized by thing-presentations (or images) alone, while conscious mental processes combine thing-presentations along with word-presentations. Conscious mental processes include the additional element of word-presentations.

This conforms with Freud's division of the dream into two parts. The manifest content of the dream is composed of images, or thing-presentations, alone, while the latent content re-presents those images by means of words. This suggests that part of the dream, the dream-content, is unconscious because it is given through thing-presentations alone, while the other part, the dream-thoughts, is conscious, including word-presentations to effect a translation of the corresponding thing-presentations. It is through the latent content, through the dream-thoughts, that the meaning of the dream can be unravelled. Only when the images of the dream

⁶ Sigmund Freud, "The Unconscious," trans. by Cecil M. Baines in General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p. 147. Standard Edition translations are added in brackets.

have been translated into words, when the unconscious presentations have been brought into the preconscious-conscious domain, can the dream interpretation begin. As Freud writes, "It is from these dream-thoughts and not from a dream's manifest content that we disentangle its meaning."⁷

Words move us closer to the meaning of the dream; they allow us to understand it. Dream images alone seem opaque to the meaning. This agrees with what has been said above, i.e., that images by themselves have a limited synthetic power while words can occasion synthesis much more efficiently. If this is the case, then is it warranted to align dreams and other unconscious processes with perception, since both are defined by images, and preconscious-conscious processes with thought, both effecting psychic synthesis through words?

Like perception, dream images also seem to be received passively in that we have little control over their particular presence when we are dreaming. However, Freud's investigations show that dreams, being a product of psychic activity, i.e., condensation, displacement, etc., are themselves determined by synthesis and are, therefore, a kind of thought. "Now dreams think essentially in images . . . But this feature of dream-life can only be fully understood if we further recognize that in dreams . . . we appear not to think but to experience; that is to say, we attach complete belief to the hallucinations. Not until we wake up does the critical

⁷ Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, p. 311.

comment arise that we have not experienced anything but have merely been thinking in a peculiar way, or in other words dreaming."⁸ Thus, dream images are capable of expressing ideas even though those ideas remain mysterious to us until we have translated their meaning into words. Therefore, it can be said that the unconscious is like perception in that its field is defined by images, but unlike perception in that it has an active or synthetic capacity. A descriptive schema of the psychic faculties that define subjectivity might be summarized as follows:

PERCEPTION (receptive)		- given by images
THOUGHT (active)	- conscious	- given by words (+ images)
THOUGHT (active)	- unconscious	- given by images

For Freud, thoughts or ideas can be either conscious or, as in the case of dreams, unconscious. "It can be shown that all that we can ever get rid of are purposive ideas that are known to us; as soon as we have done this, unknown - or, as we inaccurately say, 'unconscious' - purposive ideas take charge and thereafter determine the course of the involuntary ideas. No influence that we can bring to bear upon our mental processes can ever enable us to think without purposive ideas; nor am I aware of any states of psychical confusion which can

⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 82-83.

do so."⁹ Throughout his texts, he frequently refers to unconscious "ideas" or "thoughts." For many, the possibility of unconscious ideas or thoughts runs contrary to intuition, for the very notion of an idea seems to involve consciousness. Ideas are just those mental contents of which we are consciously aware. But, for Freud, consciousness and thought are not identical. ". . . we see the process of a thing becoming conscious as a specific psychical act, distinct from and independent of the process of the formation of a presentation or idea; and we regard consciousness as a sense organ which perceives data that arise elsewhere."¹⁰ Consciousness, then, is a "sense organ" for Freud and, as such, is like perception in ". . . being susceptible to excitation by qualities but incapable of retaining traces of alterations - that is to say, as having no memory."¹¹ But before exploring these enigmatic remarks, it might be more pertinent to the current discussion to understand exactly what Freud means by the word "idea."

According to Freud, unconscious ideas are presented in images (or thing-presentations) alone, while conscious ideas combine images and words (or word-presentations). Freud uses the terms Dingvorstellung (or Sachvorstellung) and Wortvorstellung respectively and proposes the terminology in order to establish a clear distinction between these processes of

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 567.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 178.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 654.

mental life. However, both word-presentations and thing-presentations are kinds of Vorstellungen; both are kinds of presentations. The word Vorstellung translates from the German as "presentation," "idea," or "representation." If both conscious and unconscious processes function by means of presentations, Vorstellungen, if both require presentational content, then it is easy to see how, for Freud, ideas, as presentations, can be either conscious or unconscious. An idea must have some presentation, some thematic definition or representational form or force, in order for it to be distinguished from other ideas, in order for it to be (anything) at all.

Freud, always the dualist, originally proposed this terminology in order to clarify the distinction between unconscious and conscious processes. For him, the difference between thing-presentations and word-presentations was a significant one. Granted his distinction, for, at least, intuitively, there does seem to be some difference between them, it still holds that both thing-presentations and word-presentations are but two kinds of the same stuff, and that conscious and unconscious mental life are equally representational. If the psychic faculties that define subjectivity all involve (the mediation of) representations, either those given in perception from the world or those given in thought, conscious or unconscious, then the subject is inscribed, i.e., marked or constituted by representations.

But before going further, there is one more important area of psychoanalytic interest that needs to be explored in relation to the issue of subjectivity, and which, thus far, has been neglected in the discussion, namely, instincts and/or drives. According to Freud, instincts and drives, along with early childhood experiences, belong to the contents of the unconscious. If, as argued in the previous paragraph, the contents of the unconscious are representational, then it can simply be concluded that instincts and drives, being contents of the unconscious, are representational. And this would be true, of course. Nevertheless, because of their fundamental status in relation to the formation of the (Freudian) subject, an understanding of the representational nature of instincts and drives will clarify and underline the notion of the inscribed subject.

Though "instincts" and "drives" both refer to the primal impulses or forces that cross the threshold between the purely somatic and the purely psychic, they are not synonymous. In Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, Jean Laplanche asserts that a close reading of the Freudian metapsychology, particularly Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality and "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," reveals a clear distinction between instincts and drives. The Standard Edition obscures and overlooks this distinction by translating both by the word "instinct." Freud uses the term Instinkt only to refer to the purely biological or vital instinct while reserving Trieb to

refer to the drive which is properly sexual. According to Laplanche, drive and instinct are analagous structurally and functionally in their aim toward satisfaction. However, the drive parasitically develops out of the instinct as the infant's vital need of nourishment is simultaneously accompanied by oral sensations of sucking. Attached to these sensations, the drive separates off from the instinct as the pleasure felt through them becomes an independent goal from the need of nourishment of the original vital function. This relation of the drive to the instinct is termed "propping" or "anaclisis."

Subsequent satisfaction of the drive will be modelled on this original scene. However, unlike the instinct, the drive requires no specific or invariable object for its satisfaction. The original object of the instinct is the (mother's) milk and any subsequent satisfaction of the instinct will require the presence of this same nourishing object. But with the drive, it is the pleasure derived from the sensations that is principal and not the object per se. Some object is necessary in order to achieve satisfaction (i.e., the structure of the original scene must be maintained), but any object will do as long as satisfaction results. This is because of the deviation that occurs in the anaclitic formation of the drive. Just as the drive develops as a deviation from the instinct, the object of the drive is likewise a deviation of the object of the instinct, and, thus, is not a real object at

all. Unlike the instinct, the first object of the drive is not the milk, but the object that signifies the milk, that is associated with and closest to the milk, namely, the breast. "Thus the sexual object is not identical to the object of the function, but is displaced in relation to it; they are in a relation of essential contiguity which leads us to slide almost indifferently from one to the other, from the milk to the breast as its symbol."¹²

Thus, the relation of the drive to the instinct discloses the deviation of sexuality from the biological. The object of the drive is, from the first, always a displaced object. Sexual satisfaction, then, is always amiss in relation to its object. The return to the object in sexuality is a return to the site of displacement, to the site of loss. What is lost in sexuality is the object. Therefore, the object returned to is not the real, originary object, but a substitute, something that takes the place of the object, that represents it. In deviating from the vital function, the drive metaphorizes the aim of the instinct and displaces its object metonymically. The first object of the drive is already a substitute for the object of the instinct. Subsequent sexual satisfaction will be derived through other substitutes, e.g., the thumb. The drive can only be expressed through these substitutes, these representatives. It is because of its representational status

¹² Jean Laplanche, Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, trans. by Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 20.

that the object of sexual satisfaction can be variable.

Thus, representation is elemental to the formation of the drive and the structure of sexuality itself. But, representation does not just figure in the formation of the drive; it is a fundamental feature of the drive itself. This is evident in Freud's description of the drive given, most notably, in the essays "Repression" and "The Unconscious." The drive is a borderland element between the somatic and the psychic, i.e., it is an impulse originating from a somatic source conveyed through the psyche because of its aim (of satisfaction) and the objects to which it is attached, ". . . being both the mental representative of the stimuli emanating from within the organism and penetrating to the mind, and at the same time a measure of the demand made upon the energy of the latter in consequence of its connection with the body."¹³ Because of this transformation from soma to psyche, the somatic aspect can only be expressed psychically through a representative or delegate. The drive, as a psychic representative of organic forces, has two components: an ideational representative and an affect.

An instinct can never be an object of consciousness - only the idea that represents the instinct. Even in the unconscious, moreover, it can only be represented by the idea. If the instinct did not attach itself to an idea or manifest itself as an affect-

¹³ Sigmund Freud, "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," trans. by Cecil M. Baines in General Psychological Theory, p. 87.

tive state, we could know nothing about it.¹⁴

The representational character of ideas (Vorstellungen) has been outlined above and, thus, it is easy enough to see how the ideational component of the drive is representational. But for Freud, affect (or discharge) is also representational because it is a means through which the drive manifests itself, i.e., through which the drive is expressed. Independent of this expression, "we could know nothing about it."

But even on the level of the biological, that is to say, on the level of the instinct, there is deviation or representation. As mentioned earlier, an internal stimulus produced by a vital need seeks satisfaction through discharge. The "experience of satisfaction" is always attached to some perception associated with the experience such that a reoccurrence of the vital need will resummon the associated perception. Like the drive, the instinct can never be known except through its expression, its representation, either as an idea, i.e., as the perception associated with the experience of satisfaction, or as affect, i.e., as the motor activity produced to indicate the need to the caretaker who can help satisfy the need.

Both drive and instinct involve representation. Granting this, it might be argued that the difference between the two, which is grounded in the parasitic relation of the drive to the instinct, guarantees that deviation only truly occurs on

¹⁴ Freud, "The Unconscious," p. 126.

the level of the drive. The instinct fixes on a particular perception associated with satisfaction and evidences itself in regular forms of motor activity, such as crying. Its object is invariable, i.e., (in the case of hunger) milk or nourishment. But the drive's object is variable; it is chosen as a substitute to fill in the gap left by the dubious status of the "original" object. The object of the drive is misplaced in the displacement of the formation of the drive and can only be replaced by various substitutes in the manifestations of the drive.

But though deviation explicitly characterizes the drive, it is not lacking altogether in the instinct. In fact, it might be possible to view the structure of the instinct as a prototype for the deviation found in the drive. Deviation is necessary to instinct and drive alike because both involve a transit from somatic to psychic. In the drive and in the instinct, psychical impulses arise from somatic sources. In both, the somatic must be incorporated into the psychic and this can only be done through representatives or delegates. The somatic is, by nature, what is different and alien to the psychic. The movement from somatic to psychic, then, can only be a translation. The original somatic "stuff" will always be lost, in a sense, will always be displaced, because of the translation into psychic "stuff."

Of course, it could be argued that there really is no difference between the somatic and the psychic, or that the

difference is, at least, problematic, and that the situation outlined above is just that evidence that warrants questioning the difference. Though this is a claim that will be entertained by this paper, contra Freud, this is not an argument against dualism in general, nor an argument against Freud's insistence on the necessity of dualism for conflict. Without engaging in a metaphysical debate, what will be argued is that Freud's dualism is at best in his opposition of Eros and Thanatos, and that the problematic outlined above, though it questions and rejects one kind of dualism, i.e., a metaphysical one, illuminates and underscores another. What the discussion points to is the deviation implicit in life itself, that is to say, not only is sexuality, in general, a perversion of the vital register, but life, or the animate state, is a perversion of the inanimate. The evidence of this deviation is the pervasion of representation for the existence of the subject.

Thus far, representation has been shown to be essential for the definition of subjectivity and it has been claimed that this pervasion of representation designates the subject as inscriptive. But subjectivity is more than just a passive reception and accumulation of representations; it is also defined by the activity that works on these representations. This activity, as discussed above, is thinking. Therefore, there must be a stronger sense in which the subject can be said to be inscriptive, i.e., thinking, too, must be explained

inscriptively.

According to Freud, it is not possible to think without purposive ideas. Purposive ideas have the power to set off the activity of thought and direct its course. But it is important to keep in mind that purposive ideas need not be "known" or conscious. If "known" purposive ideas are not operative, then "unknown" ones are. Unknown purposive ideas are usually sourced in wishes from which they draw their strength. From the earliest moments of infantile mental life, purposive ideas in the form of wishes (i.e., memories of satisfaction) function to determine the course of thought and (motor) activity. In a sense, then, we are always thinking because purposive ideas are always operative in mental life. Even our most random and unintentional thoughts are motivated, according to Freud, by purposive ideas.

How, then, do purposive ideas effect thought? The psychic apparatus registers stimuli coming from two directions: from the world through perception and from interior organic sources in the form of instincts and drives. These stimuli are "registered," i.e., recorded, in the memory where they are stored. As ideas, these registrations are the raw material of thought. They are not, however, arbitrarily deposited, but are linked together in accord with various criteria. Of these, Freud notes simultaneity in time to be primary. Certain ideas, particularly perceptions, are linked together simply because of their coincidence of occurrence.

Ideas can also be linked together through relations of similarity such as sameness of shape, sound, intensity, etc. Because of the various associative possibilities, ideas are not just isolated, static entities, but are bound together in a complex network which gives them a mobility and fluidity. Thinking, then, flows along the paths that link one idea to a chain of associated ideas. As such, thinking is an activity that encounters a series of connected ideas in its movement, and is given this facility of movement because of these connections.

Again, it is important to remember that, according to Freud, thinking is never random, but is always motivated by purposive ideas. Purposive ideas compel thinking along certain specific paths rather than others. But not all paths are equally open to the course of thought. While some paths are freely accessible, others are blocked by a censorship mechanism. If a particular path chosen by a purposive idea is blocked, then an alternate path will be pursued. Of course, the alternate chosen must be one connected to the original path by some associative link. This connection allows the detour to take place effectively, i.e., the original goal or destination is reached though its course has been redirected. In other words, the content of the motivating purposive idea is preserved, but in a substitute form. If the alternate chosen is also blocked, due to the transparency of its connectedness with the original, then another substitute must

be found that is linked to the first alternate and less obviously connected to the original path. This process can continue until the association between the original path and the actual path pursued seems very remote. However, the connection is sustained despite the circuitousness of its trail. In fact, Freud claims that superficial connections between ideas only indicate that the deep connections between them have been hidden or obscured by censorship. "The real reason for the prevalence of superficial associations is not the abandonment of purposive ideas but the pressure of the censorship. Superficial associations replace deep ones if the censorship makes the normal connecting paths impassable."¹⁵ It is this process of rerouting the course of thought through substitutes that is operative in the work of condensation and displacement. Displacement can be seen to describe this process in general whereby associative substitutes are selected as a means of escaping censorship. Condensation, more specifically, reroutes the intensity of several trains of thought into one nodal idea. More will be said of the economics of these two principles later.

But, before going further, perhaps it might be best to take up the investigation from another perspective. In the above discussion, the description of the inscriptive subject has been articulated primarily in terms of "ideas" or "representations," i.e., in terms of psychic content, with some

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 569.

reference to the Freudian theory of dynamics or energics underlying and motivating this content. It might be valuable at this point to take a closer look at the model on which Freud conceived the dynamics of this content, for implicit in this model is another and, perhaps, more fundamental way in which the subject is inscriptive.

CHAPTER 2

Freud's fullest elaboration of his model of psychic dynamics can be found in the "Project for a Scientific Psychology" written in 1895, and somewhat revised and summarized later in Chapter Seven of The Interpretation of Dreams. It is important to bear in mind that this is only a model of the energetics of the psychical apparatus designed for a specific purpose, i.e., for the purpose of grounding our understanding of certain psychical processes in biological principles, thereby, attempting to explain psychic forces in terms of organic ones. It might be argued that Freud's model is simply out of date, that it fails to accord with current scientific knowledge of the brain and that, because of this, it is of no value in trying to understand human subjectivity. Freud recognized the failure of his model to accurately match up with the scientific findings even of his own time. It was because of this that he eventually abandoned the "Project," never intending to publish it, and the hope of correlating his psychoanalytic discoveries with the advancements made in neurophysiology. Nevertheless, he never totally gave up many of the ideas proposed in the "Project," but reworked and synthesized them in later texts. Some of his insights do accord with modern scientific data while others are debatable, and still others seem to be more philosophically inspired than scientifically determined. All of this said, Freud's dubita-

ble neurophysiology does not discredit his model, for it provides a working schematic of the psychic economy which has scientific as well as philosophical relevance.

The elemental terms of Freud's "Project" are "neurone" and "quantity" which roughly correspond to "idea" and "affect" in the previous discussion.¹⁶ Neurones are the basic material units of the psychic apparatus; quantity is the measure of energy that passes through them. Each neurone is a discrete unit and identical in construction with all the other neurones. The neurone can be conceptualized as a Y-shaped entity having one entrance and (at least) two exits¹⁷,

¹⁶ In Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, Laplanche asserts that ". . . these two clinical notions correspond exactly, point, by point . . ." I, however, am hesitant to claim the exactness of the terminological isomorphism. If, as Freud claims in "The Unconscious," only ideas are cathexes, or investments of energy, and affects are forms of discharge, then, technically, neurone corresponds to idea and quantity corresponds to quota of affect. Ideas, as cathexes, are quantitative while affect is qualitative. Though, ultimately, the qualitative factor of affect is reducible to the quantitative, there is an important categorical distinction that is being conveyed through Freud's terminology that escapes Laplanche's sensitive reading. See Laplanche, Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, p. 56.

¹⁷ Laplanche proposes the schematization of the neurone as a Y-shaped unit, where "each neurone corresponds to a bifurcation, with an entry path and two exit paths, . . ." Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, p. 55. In the "Project," however, Freud does not specify the number of exit paths, claiming only that each neurone must "be presumed to have several paths of connection with other neurones . . ." Sigmund Freud, "Project for a Scientific Psychology" in The Origins of Psychoanalysis, trans. by Eric Mosbacher and James Strachey (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1954), p. 362. Later in the text, Freud attempts to graphically render a neuron configuration showing some neurones with two exit paths and others with three. "Project for a Scientific Psychology," p. 376. Though Laplanche's schematization

and attached to another neurone at each of its termini such that, together, they form a neuronic system. The flow of quantity is motivated down through the neurone by a kind of natural gravitational pull rather than impelled by any independent force. This natural inclination of the neurone^o gives rise to the primary operative principle of the whole of the neuronic system, namely, the principle of neuronic inertia. This fundamental principle states that neurones tend to divest themselves of all quantity, to discharge all excitation that has entered, and, thereby, return to the original state of non-disturbance. However, this goal is not always fulfilled.

At each of the connecting points between neurones is a contact barrier set up to offer resistance to the passage of quantity. These contact barriers, however, vary in their degree of resistance. Some offer no resistance at all and allow quantity to pass through the neurones freely, as if there were no contact barriers at all. Freud calls these the "permeable" neurones. They are considered to be well facilitated in relation to one another because they allow quantity to pass freely and completely, because they "facilitate" discharge. However, because of this, they can retain no trace of quantity, i.e., they can neither hold quantity nor be affected by it. Since the contact barriers of the permeable

deviates slightly from Freud's, Laplanche still captures the essential construction of the neurone.

neurones offer no resistance to the passage of quantity, the neurones have no way of stopping the flow and damming up quantity within them, nor can the contact barriers ever be permanently altered by the quantity. The contact barriers simply let quantity pass, then return to their original state. Thus, Freud asserts that quantity can only be retained in "impermeable" neurones with contact barriers that do offer resistance. In this case, discharge is not easily facilitated and quantity is dammed up in the neurones until it can force its way through by permanently altering the contact barriers.

The division of neurones into permeable and impermeable underlies the difference between perception and consciousness, on one side, and memory, on the other. According to Freud's model, perception is, in itself, instantaneous and non-retentive, i.e., perception occurs only when the sense organ is in direct contact with the perceived object and lasts only as long as the immediate contact is sustained. Thus, the neurones of perception are permeable. They can never be altered by incoming stimuli because they must always be ready and in place to receive fresh stimuli. Therefore, their contact barriers offer no resistance to stimuli; they allow quantity to pass freely, then resume their original state.

Likewise, consciousness is transitory and non-retentive. Content is sustained in consciousness only as long as conscious attention is immediately focused on it, i.e., quantity passes through the neurones of consciousness freely. Thus,

like perception, the neurones of consciousness are permeable. As Freud repeatedly writes, consciousness is not the great, independent center of the psychic apparatus, but only a part of it, serving a limited function as a "sense organ which perceives data that arise elsewhere."¹⁸ In regarding consciousness as a sense organ, Freud emphasizes the close relation of perception and consciousness. In fact, Freud calls the system of neurones that comprise consciousness the "perceptual neurones." The neurones of consciousness are responsible for imparting differences of sensory quality to our perceptual experiences, translating the quanta of energy passing through the permeable neurones of perception into qualities of sensation. In addition to these, consciousness is also responsible for the qualities of pleasure and unpleasure (pain). Consciousness translates a discharge of quantity into pleasure and an increase of quantity into unpleasure, making the principle of neuronics inertia equivalent to the pleasure principle. Quality adds an extra dimension to perception, allowing us to feel our experiences, and, thereby, distinguish and sort their content more fully. In lending quality to perception, consciousness, then, also functions to signal the reality of the stimulus entering the psychic apparatus. Yet,

¹⁸ Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, p. 178. This description of consciousness as a sense organ of perceptual data which retains nothing can also be found on pages 578, 613 and 654 of the same text and pages 371 and 372 of the "Project," as well as in Letter 52 written to Wilhelm Fliess on December 6, 1896.

it is important to keep in mind that "this transmission of quality is not durable; it leaves no traces behind it and cannot be reproduced."¹⁹

Thus, neither the neurones of perception nor those of consciousness are capable of retaining quantity. Yet, some record of perceptual excitation is retained in the psychic apparatus. This retention, then, must occur in some other neuronic system of the psychic apparatus composed of impermeable neurones. The contact barriers of these impermeable neurones resist the flow of quantity and are altered as a consequence. This alteration is "felt" as a mark or trace of the passage of quantity, accounting for the recording of memory. Since memory only resides in impermeable neurones, and since the neurones of consciousness are permeable, then memory is not part of consciousness, but is unconscious. As Freud writes, ". . . our memories - not excepting those which are most deeply stamped on our minds - are in themselves unconscious. . . . memory and the quality that characterizes consciousness are mutually exclusive."²⁰

Freud calls the impermeable neurones of memory the Psi-system of neurones, the permeable neurones of perception the Phi-system and those of consciousness the Omega-system. According to Freud's schema, the Psi-system is situated at the center of the psychic apparatus as the primary processing

¹⁹ Freud, "Project for a Scientific Psychology," p. 372.

²⁰ Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, p. 578.

plant. It receives excitation from external sources mediately through Phi and indications of reality from Omega. All excitation received by Phi and Omega must ultimately be communicated to Psi. Thus, at the core of the human psychic apparatus lies the unconscious as the storehouse of memory. All of our experiences are recorded and kept there as specific marks, permanent alterations of the contact barriers of impermeable neurones, left by quantity passing through them on the way toward discharge following the principle of neuronic inertia. Memory, as such, is the set of inscriptions, i.e., recorded marks, defining the totality of experiences of each individual psyche, and the psychic apparatus is, at base, an inscribing machine.

Thus, the subject's inscriptive constitution is grounded in the predisposition of the psychic apparatus as an inscribing instrument. But, it must not be forgotten that these mnemonic marks or configurations also correspond to specific contents, i.e., to representations. The mnemonic scribbles are both tied to this content, as the vehicle through which the content is conveyed and motivated by the same operative principles, and independent of it as a psychic phenomena. The mnemonic systems describe the mechanics of the energetic economy underlying the psychic content while representations describe the means through which experiences are psychically had, expressed or undergone. Yet, it has been shown that both phenomena confirm the inscriptive foundation of the subject.

But, again, there is one area of psychic life which, thus far, has been excluded from the discussion of psychic energics and must be included if the claim of this paper is to be fully justified. In order to get a complete picture of the energics of the psychic apparatus, drives and instincts must also be elaborated quantitatively. This, as will be shown, both complicates the thesis of the inscriptive subject as well as confirms it.

In addition to receiving excitation from Phi and Omega, Psi also receives (and records) stimuli from endogenous sources, i.e., internal somatic operations of the organism (drives and instincts). But the organism cannot easily alleviate the constant pressure of internal stimuli as it can with external stimuli. Discharge of external stimuli is effected through motor activity. For example, it is easy enough to close one's eyes when light strikes them. When light strikes the eyes, the stimulus passes through the Phi-neurones to the facilitated paths of the Psi-neurones of memory that have recorded the experience. The facilitations of the memory-trace will move the stimulus along the most familiar route of Psi-neurones that will ultimately end in and produce the motor activity that will discharge the stimulus, e.g., closing one's eyes.

But to discharge an internal stimulus, e.g., hunger, a much more complicated set of conditions must be met, complications that involve the compliance of the external world. And

until they are met, the constant force of the stimulus is felt. In order to diminish this tension and effect discharge, the organism cannot simply transform the excitation coming from the source into the energy required for the appropriate motor activity. Instead, it must call upon a reserve of energy independent of that coming from the immediate stimulus to perform certain actions (in this case, actions designed to procure nourishment), which Freud calls "specific" actions. Thus, the organism must assume a measure of quantity that it utilizes to produce these specific actions that result in the desired satisfaction.

However, at this point, the primary goal of the principle of neuronic inertia, i.e., complete discharge, is undermined. Quantity is not completely evacuated, but, says Freud, diminished and maintained at the lowest possible level to sustain life. Within the operation of the psychic apparatus, therefore, the principle of neuronic inertia is divided into a primary and secondary function. The primary and secondary functions of tension reduction will later be rearticulated in Beyond the Pleasure Principle as the two sides of the pleasure principle, namely, the zero principle and constancy.

The complications surrounding the satisfaction of internal impulses involve, in part, the organism's inability to escape the pressure, i.e., the pain, of the stimulus, and, in part, the organism's dependency on external factors, including other beings, to produce the satisfaction. Now, to

reformulate more technically what has been stated earlier, the experience of satisfaction of an internal impulse is attached to a perception, for example, the mother's breast, in the case of hunger, which is registered as a memory-trace in the Psi-system. When the impulse arises again, the memory-trace of that perception will be reactivated, i.e., the excitation coming from the impulse will pass through the facilitated path of neurones comprising the memory of the perception of satisfaction. However, actual discharge is only possible when the appropriate external conditions are fulfilled, i.e., in this case, when actual nourishment is available and near. Failing these conditions, the excitation persists until some specific action performed by the organism procures satisfaction.

But there is one major difficulty here. Despite the disparity between the hallucinatory status of the memory of the perception attached to the experience of satisfaction and the actuality of the required conditions for satisfaction, the inchoate psychic apparatus has no means of discerning the ontological difference between them. That is to say that the inchoate psychic apparatus has no way of distinguishing the difference between the hallucination of nourishment and actual nourishment. Discharge may be effected by either, and, thus, hallucinatory satisfaction and actual satisfaction are equally real for it. This, of course, can have disastrous results. If the psychic apparatus continues to fail to discriminate

between them, then each time the impulse of hunger arises, it will be "satisfied" only through hallucination. The infant will cease taking in actual nourishment and die. Therefore, some means of discrimination must develop.

But it is not consciousness that remedies this situation. Though consciousness is responsible for lending its indication of reality to stimuli impinging upon the psychic apparatus, it does so indiscriminately. That is to say that consciousness lends its signal of reality to any impulse, exogenous or endogenous. Perceptual and fantasmatic scenes are equally brought into consciousness and lived as real. The psychic remnants of the hallucinatory satisfaction of wishes are still evidenced in the form of dreams. Thus, the problem is not that the psychic apparatus lacks a means of distinguishing reality from what is not reality, but that, as Laplanche says, it suffers from an overabundance of reality.²¹ There must be some mechanism that develops in the psychic apparatus that allows external reality to be privileged such that it alone functions as reality. This can only be accomplished by inhibiting fantasmatic reality, i.e., by preventing hallucination from being lived as real. According to Freud, the inhibitory agency of the psychic apparatus is the ego.

But if the ego must be developed as a psychic agency, then it neither exists from the outset nor is it absolutely necessary for the functioning of the psychic apparatus. How,

²¹ Laplanche, Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, pp. 61-62.

then, is it formed? The ego's formation begins in Psi, i.e., it is composed of the impermeable neurones of memory. Something happens in Psi that causes a group of neurones to become so organized that they facilitate quantity in relation to one another, and thus, form a kind of unity or whole. This is the origin of the ego as a distinct agency within Psi. Because the neurones are well facilitated in relation to one another, evacuated quantity is reinvested into the circuit of quantity that courses through the ego. Thus, the primary function of the principle of neuronic inertia is perverted such that the orientation of the ego aims at retaining quantity rather than completely evacuating it.

Once formed, the ego is able to inhibit hallucinatory satisfaction, allowing external reality to function exclusively as reality. The ego accomplishes this task by serving as what Freud calls a "lateral cathexis." That associations between ideas can be established simply because of their concurrence in time has been mentioned earlier in the discussion. To translate this into energetic terms, a facilitating path is formed between two neurones when they are cathected simultaneously. While most facilitations are sequentially determined, this lateral cathexis has the power to influence the course of energy "from the side." Thus, a recathexis of a sequential facilitation can be diverted or even prevented from following its usual, sequential route of facilitation if a lateral cathexis has been formed with another neurone

anywhere along that path. The ego, as the sum of all lateral cathexes, is like a swirling vortex of energy that acts magnetically to attract quantity to it and restrict its usual, i.e., most facilitated, course. Once an excitation is reduced in strength or completely diverted from its course, consciousness cannot be summoned to lend its indication of reality, and thus, the excitation is not lived as real.

The ego functions primarily to inhibit or deflect those paths proceeding toward hallucination or the release of unpleasure. Here, it must be assumed that the ego (or some other agency of psychic organization which directs the ego) is capable of discerning the direction of the path toward hallucination or unpleasure through comparison to the mnemonic records of previous experiences and rushing in like some superhero to save the psychic apparatus from destruction. However, at least in the case of hallucination, this is clearly problematic. It has already been stated that the inchoate (pre-ego) psychic apparatus has no means of discriminating between hallucination and reality. Hallucinatory satisfaction and actual satisfaction are equally real for it. Satisfaction, it would seem, directly follows from the reactivation of the memory of the perception associated with the experience of satisfaction. In fact, Freud writes, ". . . the shortest path to the fulfilment of the wish is a path leading direct from the excitation produced by the need to a complete cathexis of the perception. Nothing prevents us from

assuming that there was a primitive state of the psychical apparatus in which this path was actually traversed, that is, in which wishing ended in hallucinating."²² The ego, according to Freud's schema, is developed as an agency for the express purpose of disqualifying hallucinatory satisfaction. But how can it recognize hallucination if hallucination has not been distinguished as such before? How can the ego know which path to inhibit? What prevents hallucination from satisfying the infant's needs when the ego is not yet operative? What inhibits hallucinatory regression at this stage of psychic development? These are questions which remain problematic.

But what happens in Psi that causes certain neurones to group together to initiate this circulating investment or cathexis of the ego? In the "Project," Freud claims that the facilitations of the cathexis are established from the reception of certain constantly repeated internal quantities, i.e., drive excitations. Later, in The Ego and the Id, he asserts that it is the constant recurrence of perceptual, i.e., external, stimuli that organizes the ego as an agency within the psychic apparatus. "It is easy to see that the ego is that part of the id which has been modified by the direct influence of the external world through the medium of the

²² Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, p. 605.

Pcpt.-Cs. . . . "23 The twenty-eight years that separate these two texts occasion considerable revision and development in Freud's thought. In The Ego and the Id, the neurophysiological vocabulary of the "Project" is abandoned and the earlier topographic model of the psychic apparatus is replaced with the structural model. Nevertheless, the basic outline of psychic organization remains the same in both. In particular, the ego is conceived as a formation that arises out of the unconscious (which is the foundation of the psychic apparatus), i.e., from Psi in the "Project" and from the id in The Ego and the Id, and serves an inhibitory function. And although The Ego and the Id and the "Project" differ significantly in regard to the source of the stimuli that prompts the formation of the ego, both accounts attribute its development to stimuli that are constantly repeated.

Thus, it seems that the ego, whatever the source of its originating stimuli, is formed out of the most frequently traversed (or cathected) memories such that they bind together as a unit to circulate and retain their reserve of quantity rather than eliminate it, and therefore, insure a constant cathexis. Although the ego comes out of the impermeable neurones of memory which are in service to the pleasure principle to completely evacuate energy, as a fully developed agency, it seems to contradict this description. The ego's

²³ Sigmund Freud, The Ego and the Id, trans. by Joan Riviere and James Strachey (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1960), p. 15.

neurones seem to be anything but connected to memory, impermeable or guided by the pleasure principle. First, it seems curious to conceive of the ego as a collection of memories if a memory is construed to be a neuronic record of events or stimuli experienced in the past which must be recathected in order to be made attentively present. Instead, as a constant cathexis of quantity, the ego is an agent of present attention. It always seems to be "on" or attuned to the present. Secondly, the frequency of recurrence of an excitation causes the contact barriers of impermeable neurones to offer less and less resistance and become more permeable. Because the passage of quantity through the impermeable neurones of the ego is so frequent, the contact barriers would be permanently altered to such a degree as to seem permeable. Likewise, the ego's close affiliation with consciousness and perception would seem to imply a permeable neuronic constitution. And last, as has been stated, Psi's service to the primary function of the pleasure principle to completely evacuate energy has been subverted in the ego. Instead, the ego functions to retain energy. Thus, although the ego develops out of the unconscious and a part of it remains unconscious²⁴, its constant investment with energy takes it out of

²⁴ According to both the "Project" and The Ego and the Id. The status of the ego in relation to the unconscious is part of the reason Freud replaced the first topography with the second. In his early work, the ego as an agency is generally articulated in terms of its conscious function. However, Freud admits later that there are ego functions (in particular, certain defense mechanisms) which were unconscious.

the domain of the unconscious and aligns its influence as an agency with perception and consciousness.

The introduction of the ego clearly divides the organization of psychic operations in two directions. The first of these orientations has been present from the start in the principle of neuronic inertia. The fundamental tendency of the psychic apparatus is toward the evacuation of quantity, toward unbinding energy and allowing its free flow. This is the primary function attributed to the pleasure principle, i.e., to completely reduce tension. Psychological processes oriented toward this purpose are considered primary processes, being the original and fundamental design of the psychic apparatus. For the most part, the primary processes correspond to the operations of the unconscious.

But this tendency is challenged early on in the development of the psychic apparatus in relation to the satisfaction of internal needs which requires a store of energy in order to perform necessary specific actions. With the rise of the ego as a distinct agency within Psi, the tendency of the pleasure principle is completely subverted such that a second principle of psychological organization is asserted. This tendency is oriented toward binding energy, toward retaining rather than evacuating it. Processes that function toward this end are collectively called the secondary processes. Of these processes, the ego functions figure dominantly and the pleasure principle is superseded by the reality principle.

Thus, it is the binding power of the ego that allows the psychic apparatus to "discriminate," i.e., conceive a difference, between a perception, as a stimulus coming from external reality, and a memory, as a fantasmatic fulfillment of a wish. Consequently, it can be said that the ego introduces the psychic apparatus to difference and splits the subject in two. The development of the ego as a psychic agency only furthers the thesis of the inscriptive subject in that the ego explicitly functions to discriminate, to mark off and make a difference. In dividing, the ego inscribes. Yet, as has been pointed out, how the ego is able to discriminate is problematic, for the ego must have a model upon which to base its power to divide and discriminate. There must be some prior moment of psychic division. The issue of division holds a clue to how the ego is able to recognize (the) difference (between a memory and a perception) and restrict the regressive path toward hallucinatory satisfaction. The ego's power to divide finds its precedent in the records of (its) memory, in the impermeable neurones of which it is composed. This record of memory is itself a mark, an alteration or violation, a division of the virgin material of the psychic apparatus. The inscription of memory, the sign of the movement of quantity, proves to be the first marked moment of difference. However, unlike memory which is guided by the principle of neuronic inertia, the ego diverts the primary course of psychic functioning toward its end in complete discharge via halluci-

natory satisfaction, and, instead, serves the psychic apparatus in maintaining itself and in perpetuating the organism in general. Thus, the basic difference that the ego exposes is that between life and death psychically manifested in the difference between perceiving and thinking.

But, perhaps this latter pairing is not altogether isomorphic, for it has been claimed previously that psychoanalysis recognizes two kinds of thinking, unconscious and conscious. In terms more appropriate to the "Project," this division might be better articulated as that between association and practical thinking. Associative "thinking" belongs to the domain of the primary processes and tends toward satisfaction along the most expeditious, i.e., facilitated or associated, pathways. In terms of the "Project," this is not thinking in the proper sense because the tendency is regressive, seeking the psychically optimal path to satisfaction via hallucination. Yet, Freud admits that this form of associative regression is the prototype or "biological justification of all thought."²⁵ Freud explicitly attributes thinking to primary processes in his subsequent work, notably The Interpretation of Dreams. However, in the "Project," the aim of all thinking is to form an identity between a wish fulfilling memory and a perception. Therefore, thinking, properly speaking, requires the inhibitory function of the ego. The success of this identity signals permission to release energy

²⁵ "Project for a Scientific Psychology," p. 418.

and effect discharge. The purpose of all thinking, then, is practical. In establishing this identity, thinking aims to bring the two halves of the split subject into accord, erasing the difference between them and uniting them as one in satisfaction.

Thus, associative regression corresponds to, what Freud later calls, unconscious thought and practical thinking corresponds to conscious thought. There is in thinking, then, a strong life sustaining function which is manifest in conscious thought processes brought about by the inhibitory power of the ego. The affiliation of thinking and death is restricted to unconscious thought processes. However, it is important to keep in mind that these associative processes are the prototype and foundation of all thought processes, and that the ego, as an agency, must develop out of a psychic organization that initially functions without it. All this suggests, as was previously asserted, that the fundamental tendency of the psychic apparatus is toward death, and that life is a deviation from this tendency.

But now it appears that there is a threefold distinction to be made. Not only is a perception distinct from a memory, but a memory is also distinct from a hallucination. As Freud writes in The Ego and the Id, ". . . the most vivid memory is always distinguishable both from a hallucination and from an external perception . . ." ²⁶ In differentiating memory from

²⁶ Freud, The Ego and the Id, p. 10.

both hallucination and perception, Freud is outlining an affinity between hallucination and perception. ". . . a hallucination . . . is not distinguishable from a perception . . ." ²⁷ That affinity, mapped out earlier in the discussion, belongs to the form of their manifestation. The representational domains of both hallucination, as the paradigm of unconscious processes, and perception are defined by images. Yet, obviously, the two are not identical. It has already been claimed that hallucination is a kind of thinking and, therefore, in terms of the earlier discussion, is an activity, whereas perception is merely receptive. In energetic terms, hallucination involves a recathexis of impermeable neurones, while perception takes place in the permeable neurones, is instantaneous and non-retentive.

Therefore, in order to compose a clear picture of the general tendencies of psychic organization, it may be helpful to reconstruct the descriptive schema presented earlier to see how the new categories of the discussion line up with the previous ones.

		given by:		
PERCEPTION	perception	- images	- life	- perm
MEMORY	conscious thought	- words (+ images)	- life	- imperm
HALLUCINATION	unconscious thought	- images	- death	- imperm

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 10.

Naturally, these alignments are only schematic, for it is apparent that the boundaries between terms are not so incisively defined. For example, hallucination must involve memory, i.e., hallucination is just such an extreme revivification of memory that it presents itself as a perception. "When a hypercathexis of the process of thinking takes place, thoughts are actually perceived - as if they came from without - and are consequently held to be true."²⁸ But it does seem that the current threefold distinction and the one made earlier integrate and confirm one another, clarifying the definition between the categories while building a complex picture of the psychic apparatus.

Thus, whether the constitution of the subject is construed in terms of psychical energics or content, the same conclusion follows, i.e., the subject is inscriptive. In terms of energics, the subject is scored by the passage of quantity coursing through the impermeable neurones of memory, leaving the mark of its passage by permanently altering the contact barriers. These alterations, these memories, articulate the foundation of subjectivity. In terms of psychic content, both conscious and unconscious processes, as well as perception, manifest their content representationally; therefore, the subject is defined by the representations that manifest this content. Whether the content assumes the form of images or words, both are kinds of Vorstellung, kinds of

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 13.

representation. And because these representations are not static entities, but bound together in a network which allows mobility, the subject is inscriptive in a more dynamic sense, in that the subject is an inscribing activity.

But, perhaps, it is best now to try to redefine or clarify what exactly is meant here by the term "inscriptive." A definition of this term would seem to involve some connection to language. However, up to this point in the discussion, the issue of language has been both alluded to and eluded. What, then, is the relation of the inscriptive to the linguistic? Is the inscriptive subject merely a creature defined by language? In order to properly answer these questions, it is essential to investigate the relation of language to the unconscious. This investigation first involves articulating an account of language given from the perspective of structural linguistics, for it is from the elaboration of the unconscious defined through structural linguistics that the relation between the inscriptive and the linguistic is illuminated.

CHAPTER 3

According to a structuralist account of language, language is a system of differential units, deriving signification from their relations to one another. The system is organized by basic principles or laws which govern or motivate the relations. Saussure conceives the basic unit of language to be the sign which is composed of a signified, or concept, such as the concept "dog," and a signifier, or sound image, the sound "d-o-g" or "c-h-i-e-n," etc. Although the sign is defined by these two elements, they are not to be thought of as two distinct and separable entities, but rather as two sides of one surface, i.e., bound together in the same respect as the top and bottom of a page are bound together. Thus, technically, a sign unites a signified and a signifier. Also, and this is new in Saussure, the sign does not simply name some fixed concept; it carves out the concept.

Saussure originally represents the relation of signified to signifier as $\frac{s}{S}$

where 's' is the signified and 'S' is the signifier. In this configuration, the signified assumes a dominant position over the signifier. Lacan, however, inverts the order to $\frac{S}{s}$

such that the signifier is over the signified, privileging the signifier rather than the signified. Lacan attributes his own schematization of the relation of signifier to signified to

the intentions of Saussure despite its inverted appearance. Lacan admits that in Saussure's Course in General Linguistics ". . . it is not found in exactly this form in any of the numerous schemas," yet, Lacan insists, they "none the less express it. . ."29

Lacan's inversion is meant to be neither an oversight nor a deliberate misrepresentation, but implicit, according to Lacan, in Saussure's intentions. In support of Lacan, it can be said that the predominance of the signifier is a direct consequence of the claims of structuralism. Logically, it can be argued that if the signified and the signifier are inseparable, then the possibility of any signified always must entail a signifier, and, conversely, where there is no signifier, there can be no signified. The very possibility of the signified is dependent upon the necessity of the signifier. Although it might seem, as it does for Saussure, that the signified holds some priority over the signifier in that it is what the signifier attaches itself to and represents or articulates, it is, in fact, the signifier that allows the

²⁹ Jacques Lacan, "The agency of the letter in the unconscious or reason since Freud" in Écrits: A Selection, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977), p. 149. For a comparison to Saussure, see Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, trans. by Wade Baskin (New York, Toronto and London: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), pp. 66-67. Lacan's formulation is adopted by Jean Laplanche and Serge Leclaire in their essay, "The unconscious: a psychoanalytic study" trans. by Patrick Coleman in Yale French Studies 48, 1972, p. 152. My elaboration of the structuralist account of language is predominantly drawn from these three sources.

signified to be anything at all. In effect, this is the same claim that has already been stated in Freudian terminology, namely, that all ideas, conscious and unconscious, are kinds of Vorstellungen, that ideas, if they are to be anything at all, must be (psychically) represented.

Furthermore, if, according to Saussure, the relation between the signified and the signifier is arbitrary, i.e., there is no natural or necessary connection between them, then what determines linguistic signification is simply the mutual exchange of difference between them. Signified and signifier can be indissolubly bound and yet be different. The particular nature or "stuff" of the signified is irrelevant to the determination of signification; the signified need only be other than the signifier and, therefore, can simply be another signifier. ". . . the linguistic unit is form rather than substance, defined by the relations which set it off from other units."³⁰

The argument for the predominance of the signifier has further consequences than just a realignment of the significant powers of the elements of the sign. It also calls into question the sign's very structure and the ontological status of its elements. Ideas or concepts (signifieds) are not merely represented or carried by forms (signifiers) ontologically alien to them. The impossibility of the signified being

³⁰ Jonathan Culler, Ferdinand de Saussure, (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), p. 22. Cf. also Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, pp. 113 and 122.

anything outside of this form forbids its ontological independence, relegating its ontological status to the stuff of signifiers. For example, there could be no concept "dog" were there not the signifier "d-o-g." It follows from this that linguistic signification ultimately reduces to the mutual relations between signifiers, privileging the signifier as the unit of difference. But this is not to say that the signified becomes totally obsolete. Within the structure of the sign, signified and signifier are no longer determined in regard to their ontological discreteness, but, rather, in terms of their roles as place holders within the order established by the structure of the sign. Reduced to place holders, the locus of signification is now shifted to the bar of difference that separates signified from signifier and, as a result, allows the possibility of their relation. Signification, then, hovers in the oscillation of the relation of signifier to signified. But more needs to be said about this and a full account of how and why this results and what it means for the unconscious will follow.

The first consideration is difference. Difference as simple division or opposition is dyadic. This dyadic division is evidenced linguistically in the Fort! Da! syllables uttered by the child Freud observes in Beyond the Pleasure Principle to simulate the absence and presence of his mother. Following Saussure, it can be said that the dyadic is apparent in the opposition of the two concepts "absence" and "presence" as

well as in the opposition of the two syllables that reproduce those concepts. But it also operates between concepts and syllables as the split between the signified and the signifier. The course of signification is then driven by the conditions of exchange, or substitution, and combination made possible by the dyadic structure of difference. According to Saussure, exchange works in two directions: "vertically" between signifier and signified and "horizontally" between signifiers or between signifieds. Thus, gridlike, a signifier is defined positionally in relation to its signified as well as in relation to the other signifier(s). Combination, on the other hand, works "horizontally" connecting signifying units together in a chain, and is, thus, according to Saussure, primarily responsible for the direction of discourse.

This dyadic schema seems sufficient, then, to implement the fundamental moment of language. Yet, something appears to be amiss, for, given the Saussurian model of dyadic opposition, what results is a language that is unstable or, as Jean Laplanche refers to it in the essay "The unconscious: a psychoanalytic study,"³¹ univocal or unilinear.³² If signi-

³¹ The essay was written as a collaborative effort between Laplanche and Leclaire and presented in five chapters. The contribution of each author is divided by chapter and specified at the end of the essay. Laplanche is responsible for chapters I, II and IV and Leclaire for chapters III and V. I will cite the appropriate author for all material I quote from this essay.

³² Perhaps it is best to credit the source of the terminology to Lacan in the essay "The agency of the letter in the unconscious" who, no doubt, takes it from Saussure. Lacan

fication depends upon specifying a signifier's definition in relation to (its difference from) another signifier, then the definition of any signifier must always be deferred to its other, which then defers to its other, and so on, until the entire domain of signifiers is implicated in the definition. Thus, to posit the definition of any signifier is to define it against, and by means of, the totality of all other signifiers of the language. For instance, the signifier "cat" can only be defined by virtue of its relation to signifiers such as "feline" and "dog" which, in turn, can only be understood by their relation to other signifiers such as "animal" and "canine" and so on. Ultimately, the signifier "cat" is specified only in its differential relation to the totality of signifiers of the vocabulary. Given the dyadic construction, the definitional counterpart of any signifier becomes the totality of all other signifiers in the language. Thus, to give the definition of a signifier amounts to siting its differential position in and against this totality, and in doing so, naming and implicating the totality within the definition. Reduced to a totality, to a unity of signifiers,

writes:

The linearity that Saussure holds to be constitutive of the chain of discourse, in conformity with its emission by a single voice and with its horizontal position in our writing--if this linearity is necessary, in fact, it is not sufficient.

See Lacan, "The agency of the letter in the unconscious," p. 154. Cf. Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, pp. 122-123.

the only significant difference remaining is that occasioned by the bar of resistance separating (the totality of) signifiers from (the totality of) signifieds. But, the prospect of fixing any one signifier to any one signified seems problematic. As Laplanche writes:

. . . if the signifier refers to the signified, it is only through the mediation of the entire system of signifiers--there is no signifier that does not refer to the absence of the others and that is not itself defined by its position in the system. And the only correspondence between the signifier and the signified is the correspondence of the totality of signifiers to the totality of the signified, which correspondence is a perfect one, without any overlap.³³

Always, the dyadic structure of the signifying unit is returned to as the site of signification, yet, it cannot hope to signify much beyond itself, i.e., continuously, circularly repeat its differential structure. Reduced to the singular moment of the structure of the signifying unit, signification stagnates in the oscillation of dyadic difference. It remains stuck in the ambivalence produced by this oscillation because of the bar of resistance that separates signifier from signified. As Laplanche comments:

As for the bar that separates them, it is there, in our opinion, that the essence of the problem lies, for if the very possibility of this formalization implies the bar's resistance to any crossing over from one level to the other, it must, however, lend itself to what we have to call effects of meaning, that is, it must account for what, in the final analysis, appears to phenomenological analysis as

³³ Laplanche and Leclaire, "The unconscious: a psychoanalytic study," p. 154.

the openness of language to the world of meanings.³⁴

Saussure contends that signification involves exchange not only "horizontally" between signifiers, but also "vertically" between signifier and signified. Yet, if exchange between signifier and signified is denied by the bar that separates them, as Laplanche rightly concludes, how is it possible to get beyond the ambivalence of the dyadic structure of the signifying unit to effect any signification, any meaning, at all? How can exchange between signifier and signified ever occur? How can signification, a third element, be produced from a dyad? How can the dyadic ambivalence be brought to rest or resolution in signification? In effect, how is language possible?

According to Lacan and Laplanche, the problem originally arises as a result of a false conception of the relation between signifier and signified, i.e., of conceiving the signifier as merely representing the signified, where, to borrow Lacan's words, the signifier is seen as "nothing" but a "dress" or garb for the signified which is the true "cause" or "thing" underlying signification. The problem continues as long as the bar of resistance separating signifier and signified is conceived as separating two ontologically distinct categories, i.e., ". . . as long as we cling to the illusion that the signifier answers to the function of

³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

representing the signified, or better, that the signifier has to answer for its existence in the name of any signification whatever."³⁵ Resolution comes in the understanding that underlying the arbitrary relation between signifier and signified is a motivation for the relation, i.e., the motivation of substitution or, more specifically, symbolization which is regulated by certain operations or principles. What this amounts to is a recognition that the dyad functions already within a prior context, i.e., that of signification itself which is given by the operations or principles at work in the dyadic structure. Thus, signification is both the effect of the relation of signifier to signified and the field or context as well.

Replacing Saussure's differential exchange and combination with terminology borrowed from Roman Jakobson, Lacan identifies the operations or conditions that determine the field of signification as metaphor and metonymy. Metaphor allows an even exchange of signification in the substitution of one signifier for an equivalent signifier. Metonymy, on the other hand, occasions exchange through deviation. It is out of the concatenation of signifiers borne from the splitting and slipping of metonymy that the signifying chain is produced. A metonymic exchange not only performs a substitution of one significant element for another, but also, in

³⁵ Lacan, "The agency of the letter in the unconscious," p. 150.

doing so, extends the associative possibilities into a chain of exchange. As Leclaire states:

Technically, metonymy is precisely the figure that emphasizes the connection between one signifier and another, thus sustaining the whole elementary mechanism of language . . . the metonymic connection establishes a bridge between two (or more) signifiers whose relationship [SIC], in form or content, is much less obvious (much more arbitrary and singular) than in the case of metaphor . . . [M]etonymy . . . indicates . . . the displacement and the interval that separates the terms it joins.³⁶

In regulating the exchange of difference, then, these two operations establish the field of signification through which the relation of signifier to signified functions. As the context of this relation, signification "speaks" through the relation. This occurs, according to Lacan, because ". . . the signifier enters the signified, namely, in a form which, not being immaterial, raises the question of its place in reality."³⁷ Signification is possible, then, because the signifier can "enter" the signified.

But how can metaphor and metonymy, as conditions of signification, introduce the signifier into the signified? Metaphor and metonymy are conditions that operate between signifiers, allowing exchange based on the "quantitative" values ascribed to signifiers. How, then, is the vertical structure of the signifying unit affected by these operations?

³⁶ Laplanche and Leclaire, "The unconscious: a psychoanalytic study," p. 150.

³⁷ Lacan, "The agency of the letter in the unconscious," p. 151.

As Lacan clearly shows, the very structure of the signifying unit is always implicated in the functions of metaphor and metonymy, for exchange always invokes the vertical dyad of signifier and signified. For Lacan, exchange is primarily and ultimately a vertical movement. In this he differs from Saussure. In substituting one signifier for another, one signifier must assume the role of signified and the other its signifier. For example, suppose that 'S' (the letters "m-o-o-n") is a signifier for some signified 's' (the image of the moon) such that

S (the letters "m-o-o-n").
s (the image of the moon)

Now suppose 'S*' (the letters "a h-a-r-s-h m-i-s-t-r-e-s-s") is some signifier that is a substitute, a metaphor, for 'S'. Though both 'S' and 'S*' are signifiers, the relation between them assumes the configuration

S* (the letters "a h-a-r-s-h m-i-s-t-r-e-s-s")
S (the letters "m-o-o-n")

such that 'S' (the letters "m-o-o-n"), while still a signifier, now drops to the position of signified. In other words, 'S' becomes the signified signifier. Therefore, the vertical structure of the signifying unit reflects the relation of metaphor.

Properly speaking, then, signifier and signified are not "united" in the sign, for this implies a prior separation of two distinct entities superseded by (the unity of) signification. Instead, it is the case that the signifier crosses the

bar of resistance and enters the domain of the signified. Metaphor and metonymy occasion this crossing over by operating on the values ascribed to the significant elements. Thus, signifier and signified must be ontologically "constituted" of the same "stuff," i.e., "constituted" by their differential values. Since it is the signifier that enters or becomes the signified, the ontological status of the signifier can no longer be conceived as a mere "nothing," a subordinate garb for the signified, but must be taken, according to Lacan, quite "literally," i.e., in its literal or material form, as the site of signification itself. Signification, then, is not the effect of the unity of signifier and signified, but a movement of the (position of the) signifier. Thus, the difference between signifier and signified cannot be based in ontology, but rather, must be determined by the position occupied within the relation of the signifying unit. This explains how the bar can both resist "crossing over from one level to the other" and, yet, be able to "lend itself to effects of meaning." While the bar continues to separate signifier and signified and keep them distinct as differential elements, it can be crossed over in signification as an exchange of value between signifiers. In effect, signification, as an act of substitution or exchange, relies on the bar's resistance to mark the difference that is to be exchanged.

Given the signifier's entrance into the signified,

signification rightly seems to be a matter dominated by the movement of the signifier. Yet, even though the vertical structure of the signifying unit now seems conducive to the possibility of signification, it is still not quite clear how metaphor and metonymy actually motivate this movement to produce the field of signification, i.e., it is not quite clear how they make language possible. To answer this, it is important to keep in mind that metaphor and metonymy are not to be thought of simply as two principles operating in language, but that their operations are the defining features of language. Fundamental to language is substitution, for even given the arbitrary relation between the elements of the dyad, a signifier is, by definition, a substitute for the signified. In conferring a transfer of significant value, i.e., a substitution of one value for another, metaphor simply is the operation of substitution. As the condition of substitution, metaphor institutes the structure of the signifying unit as the relation of signifier to signified through the movement of the signifier as shown above. Thus, in language, metaphor is that condition which authorizes substitution.

But the operation of substitution also encounters loss, for although it occasions a transfer of value, it cannot authorize a transfer of the complete value that is the signifier's identity. Because the bar between signifier and signified maintains difference and resists crossing over if

signification is to occur at all, something of a signifier's value must always remain intact and inviolable, for signification involves a relation of two elements, signifier and signified, and a relation necessarily implies not only the communicability of its elements, but also their distinctness. Thus, the singularity of a signifier's significant identity is determined both by its equivalence to another signifier as well as its difference from it. Even though a substitute "takes the place of" another signifier, e.g., the signifier "a h-a-r-s-h m-i-s-t-r-e-s-s" takes the place of the erstwhile signifier "m-o-o-n," it only really "displaces" it, for the other signifier qua signifier remains "silently" present as the signified, i.e., as the definitional force of the substitute. In an act of substitution, the identity of a signifier is only displaced, but never destroyed.

Any substitution, then, always leaves something out and pronounces this deficiency in its work. Though each substitution authorizes a transfer of value, it cannot occasion a transfer of complete identity. Thus, substitution involves an element of deviation indicating the "displacement and the interval that separates the terms its joins." A transfer of value is only a transfer of part of the whole significant identity of a signifier. This deficiency or loss in substitution is what is issued most profoundly in the function of metonymy. While metaphor aims for an even exchange of value, metonymy performs its acts of substitution through associa-

tion. Metonymy acknowledges the loss inherent in substitution and functions by splitting the signifier and displacing signification in the various "parts" of associated signifiers. The exchange is not even, but disproportionate. The splitting of the signifier subsequently locates signification in the collection or chain of signifiers associated by their relation to the original signifier, i.e., the signified. Because signification is distributed among the various associated links, the chain accounts for the combinatorial aspect of metonymy.

Thus, while metaphor courts the side of substitution that grants the crossing of the bar in signification, metonymy highlights the side of resistance. While metaphor emphasizes the equivalence or correspondence between signifiers, metonymy underscores their difference. Substitution, then, is defined both by metaphor and metonymy, and it is out of these two operations that language is borne. First, language is given breath and mobility through metaphor as the possibility of exchange or substitution of value. Implicit in these capacities is the erection of the skeleton or structure of the signifying unit. Metaphor, as substitution, establishes relations of equivalence between signifiers. A signifier, determined by another signifier of equal value, drops to the position of signified in the metaphorical relation. Yet, substitution is also metonymic in that an exchange of value is not a complete change of identity. Substitution only succeeds

in transferring a signifier's value but it can never fully capture a signifier's identity. Substitution's loss is pronounced in metonymy as the displacement of signification along the chain produced by the splitting of the signifier. The identity of the signifier, then, can only be given by the total value of the metonymic parts associated in the chain.

Thus, while metaphor orders the vertical structure of the signifying unit, metonymy is responsible for the horizontal direction of the signifying chain. These two functions weave the signifier through the field of signification. Along the chain of signifiers produced by metonymy, the function of metaphor attaches each link not just to another link in the chain, but to other links suspended vertically, each of which are themselves links in other chains, and so on. This complicated interweaving is likened by Lacan to "rings of a necklace that is a ring in another necklace made of rings."³⁸ A unilinear language, such as Saussure's model, can only conceive the relation of signifier to signified as two independent horizontal lines strung out along the bar that separates them. Since the bar can never be crossed, the signifier slides endlessly over the signified, making signification problematic. Lacan, however, shows that language is not unilinear but is, instead, "multidimensional." Signification occurs as the movement of the signifier in the signified

³⁸ Lacan, "The agency of the letter in the unconscious," p. 153.

along the chain of signifiers.

Granted that language is not unilinear but multidimensional and given by the movement of the signifier through this multidimensional field rather than along one horizontal line, the problem of signification is not quite solved yet. Still the signifier remains a differentially determined element, i.e., it is defined in relation to its difference to another signifier, and, thus, the question asked previously can also be asked now. If the signifier is defined by its differential relation to another signifier, what keeps the signifier from moving endlessly through the entire field of signifiers for its definition, and, in doing so, implicating the entire field in its definition? Even though the resistance separating signifier and signified is overcome in metaphor by the signifier's entrance in the signified, the signified, as latent signifier, is itself differentially determined and derives its definition from another signifier, which derives its definition from another, and so on. If signification is reduced to the movement of the signifier, i.e., to the movement of difference, then any signification will involve an exhaustive deferral through the entire field of signifiers. Therefore, the attempt to fix a signifier to a signified remains problematic. Without this fixation, it is not clear how signification, how language, is possible at all.

In response to this dilemma, Lacan proffers the notion of

"anchoring points" (points de capiton).³⁹ These are the moments at which signification does seem to occur, i.e., at which the signifier hooks up with the signified and the endless deferral of signification comes to a halt. Lacan proposes a "horizontal" and a "vertical" moment of anchoring. First, "horizontally," in the direction of the signifying chain, anchoring occurs in the sentence with the completion of its last term. The signified, i.e., the "meaning," of the sentence is disclosed only after the last term of the sentence is articulated.

For the signifier, by its very nature, always anticipates meaning by unfolding its dimension before it. As is seen at the level of the sentence when it is interrupted before the significant term: 'I shall never...', 'All the same it is... ', 'And yet there may be... '. Such sentences are not without meaning, a meaning all the more oppressive in that it is content to make us wait for it. . . . it is in the chain of the signifier that the meaning 'insists' but that none of its elements 'consists' in the signification of which it is at the moment capable.⁴⁰

The meaning of a sentence is not contained in any one of its

³⁹ The term "points de capiton" is most often translated as "anchoring points." See, for example, Sheridan's translation of Lacan's "The agency of the letter in the unconscious," p. 154 or "The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious," p. 303, both in Écrits. Also see David Macey's translation of Anika Lemaire's book Jacques Lacan (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p.40 inter alia. Coleman, however, translates "points de capiton" as "capping points" in his translation of Laplanche's and Leclaire's, "The unconscious: a psychoanalytic study," p. 155. The term "points de capiton" actually refers to the buttons used to hold down upholstery.

⁴⁰ Lacan, "The agency of the letter in the unconscious," p. 153.

words alone, nor is it determined by the meaning of every word considered separately, but "unfolds" through the interrelation of all the words of the sentence "anticipated" in the course of articulation. Compelled in the horizontal direction of the signifying chain, the sentence derives a unity from the interplay of the terms contained within its closure. It is the interplay within the closure of the sentence that determines its meaning, i.e., that anchors or fixes the signifier of the sentence to a signified.

The "vertical" aspect of anchoring traces the trail of metaphorical substitutions back to its origin. This trail ultimately leads back to the introduction of language in the child. This is the mythical moment whereby "the child, by disconnecting the animal from its cry, suddenly raises the sign to the function of the signifier, and reality to the sophistications of signification . . ." ⁴¹ On the vertical level, then, the archaeology of metaphor uncovers the initial moment of division that defines the structure of the signifying unit. Division, as the initial moment of language, is the signified which both defines (i.e., stabilizes) and sets off the signifier in its endless movement of deferral. Language, as a subsequent series of metaphorical (re)moves from this originary split, is ultimately anchored to this spot.

Yet, while Lacan proposes these moments of anchoring in

⁴¹ Jacques Lacan, "The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious" in Écrits, pp. 303-304.

order to allow for the possibility of signification, he also makes it clear that both vertical and horizontal moments are only tentative or mythical. While the sentence attaches itself to a signified with the close of its last term, that signified, being differentially determined, is itself a latent signifier and must also be grounded to some other signified in order to determine its meaning, which, also being a latent signifier, must be grounded to another, and so on. Even though the sentence is composed of a series of interrelated terms, as a unity, the sentence is a signifier and the signifier's definition is determined differentially. The anchoring that occurs at the level of the sentence is only provisional and, thus, the endless movement of the signifier through the field of signification is never really halted. Likewise, the vertical anchoring point is also only hypothetical. The "originary" signified found at the base of the trail of metaphorical substitutions is the initial moment of division in language. As division, this signified is itself an act of flight, i.e., the prototypical split of signifier and signified that ignites the whole movement of the signifier through the field of signification. Thus, ultimately for Lacan, signification is not fixed or stable.⁴² The bar separating

⁴² This point of view is not shared by Laplanche. Unlike Lacan, Laplanche argues in "The unconscious: a psychoanalytic study" that language is stable and that signifier and signified are fixed at certain definite moments.

. . . we may say that what prevents one term from sliding - endlessly - into another is not its

signifier and signified, although it can be crossed over in an exchange of significant value, maintains the upper hand. It asserts its resistance in order to generate difference which is fundamental to the possibility of any signification. Without the bar, there can be no difference, and without difference, language is not possible. Therefore, the bar both makes language possible and, at the same time, makes it elusive. The sliding of the totality of signifier over the totality of signified is, for the most part, impossible to

empirical relation to a thing, but the fact that it is not univocal and includes several definitions, that it is the whole group of meanings b, c, etc. which prevents word x from flying out the door opened by meaning a. (155)

What provides this "ballast," as Laplanche refers to it, is the unconscious signifying chain.

It is indissolubly because of the existence of this unconscious signifying chain that preconscious language possesses a certain fixity of meanings, the stability [capitonnage] that characterizes the secondary process . . . (161)

Laplanche refers to Lacan's notion of anchoring points to support his claim. However, according to Anika Lemaire in her book on Lacan, Laplanche misunderstands Lacan's notion of anchoring points and, as a result, arrives at a conclusion directly opposite that of Lacan in regard to the stability of language. Subsequently, this disparity leads Lacan and Laplanche to formulate opposing claims in regard to the relation of language and the unconscious. While Lacan asserts that "language is the condition of the unconscious," Laplanche conversely concludes that "the unconscious is the condition of language." Lacan himself fiercely criticizes Laplanche for this misappropriation in the preface - written by Lacan - to Lemaire's book. For a detailed account of the disagreement, see Lemaire's book Jacques Lacan.

In regard to the issue of the relation of the unconscious to language, the following pages of this paper will be devoted to this issue.

circumvent. Language, then, is always driven by deferral and approximation. Caught in the endless web of signification, language is denied access to the truth of what lies outside it. Yet, the function of language is an effort to grasp, i.e., to articulate, this truth. For Lacan, the possibility of grasping truth in language is illusory, for truth always eludes the signifier. The signifier leads away from truth and toward misunderstanding, for the truth of the signifier is its deception, its displacement, its distance from the truth. Summarizing her conversation with Lacan in December 1969, Anika Lemaire writes:

Discourse, remarks Lacan, leads, through stumblings and errors, towards a vain search for truth. It is inscribed in a dialectic in which the mistake, rather than the truth, is the object being run to ground. Through the play of references back from sentence to sentence and from word to word, 'it is possible' to arrive, not at the real, which is excluded from thought, but at a particularly successful signifying montage which is more effective than another and which proves itself in praxis.⁴³

⁴³ Lemaire, p. 250.

CHAPTER 4

But now it is time to return to the subject of the unconscious where its intersection with structural linguistics will illuminate the relation between the inscriptive and the linguistic. What, then, does all this detailing of language from the structuralist point of view have to do with subjectivity? The connection is found in Lacan's claim that language is the condition of the unconscious. What Lacan is contending is that language precedes the subject's emergence in the world and, as a result, is responsible for effecting the unconscious as a psychic structure and defining the subject. The split between signifier and signified is psychically manifest in the subject. In the mythical moment when the infant tears the animal from its cry and inaugurates herself into the world of language, she also tears herself in two, for now she is split between herself as signifier, or grammatical subject, and herself as signified, or existential referent of the grammatical subject. At the same time, this initial moment of division is registered or fixed in the inchoate psyche as the "originary" signified to which all signifiers are metaphorically anchored. Yet, because it is registered, i.e., psychically marked, this "originary" signified is already a signifier, engaged in a differential discourse with (all) other signifiers.

Impressed into the inchoate psyche as its first "letter,"

division is instituted there as the separation between consciousness and the unconscious. This primary fixation of division becomes the orienting point around which the economics of the psychic organization are subsequently ordered, the signified to which all other signifiers refer. In order to bring about this fixation and compel the psychic separation, some force is necessary. For Freud, this is the work of primal repression, ". . . a first phase of repression, which consists in a denial of entry into consciousness to the mental (ideational) presentation of the instinct. This is accompanied by a fixation; the ideational presentation in question persists unaltered from then onwards and the instinct remains attached to it."⁴⁴ By denying entry (to the ideational presentation of the instinct), the force of repression marks or fixes a limit and, in doing so, confines and, thus, defines what is found within the limit against the limit, as other, as what remains outside. Because language forces its mark upon the psyche, language is the source of repression that compels the separation of consciousness and the unconscious as what is repressed. And because language is an order that operates in accord with principles and regulations, the impression of language into the inchoate psyche is the importation of order. The order is secured by its laws which provide the necessary force (repression, anti-cathexis) or resistance (the bar) to

⁴⁴ Sigmund Freud, "Repression," trans. by Cecil M. Baines in General Psychological Theory, p. 106.

maintain the separation between consciousness and unconscious, signifier and signified. Thus, repression proper, according to Freud, is actually a second phase of repression whereby the order established by primal repression is enforced. In repression proper, not only is a signifier rejected by consciousness as in primal repression, but now, since the unconscious is fully established as a distinct domain within the psyche, the signifier is also attracted by the unconscious by virtue of its associative connections to other repressed signifiers.

Thus, it has been shown that the formation of the unconscious is effected through the pre-existence of language. But is the unconscious itself a language? In the sense that the unconscious is the signified repressed by the signifier(s) of consciousness, it carries on a differential discourse or exchange with consciousness and is, therefore, composed of signifiers - the fixed ideational presentations of the instinct. As stated earlier, because exchange can occur, because the signified is defined differentially, the signified itself is made of the same "stuff" as the signifier, and signification is reduced to the movement of the signifier. Yet, obviously the "signifiers" of the unconscious are different from those of consciousness. This distinction has already been outlined above. Conscious language is verbal, whereas the contents of the unconscious are predominantly pictorial. Language is commonly conceived of as being verbal

and, in fact, this conception is upheld by Freud. For Freud, it is the character of (verbal) language that distinguishes the preconscious-conscious system from the unconscious.

It strikes us all at once that now we know what is the difference between a conscious and an unconscious idea. . . . the conscious idea comprises the concrete idea plus the verbal idea corresponding to it, whilst the unconscious idea is that of the thing alone. The system Ucs contains the thing-cathexes of the objects, the first and true object-cathexes; the system Pcs originates in a hyper-cathexis of this concrete idea by a linking up of it with the verbal ideas of the words corresponding to it.⁴⁵

Outwardly, then, Freud fails to attribute a linguistic status to the unconscious. Yet, implicit in the outline of his work, Freud suggests otherwise. If the primary concern of psychoanalysis is the deciphering of the unconscious - as a formation, as an agency, as a content, then psychoanalysis takes as its function the translation of the unconscious into conscious, verbal language.

How are we to arrive at a knowledge of the unconscious? It is of course only as something conscious that we know anything of it, after it has undergone transformation or translation into something conscious. The possibility of such translation is a matter of everyday experience in psychoanalytic work.⁴⁶

This is most clearly evident in The Interpretation of Dreams which takes as its entire project exactly what its title claims, i.e., an interpretation, a translation of dreams as a mine of unconscious processes. Within the structure of the

⁴⁵ Freud, "The Unconscious," p. 147.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 116, emphasis mine.

dream, Freud discovers the discourse between unconscious and conscious processes - how conscious thought permeates our dream content, and how the manifest, or unconscious, content of a dream is translated into latent, or conscious, content.

The dream-thoughts and the dream-content are presented to us like two versions of the same subject-matter in two different languages. Or, more properly, the dream-content seems like a transcript of the dream-thoughts into another mode of expression, whose characters and syntactic laws it is our business to discover by comparing the original and the translation. The dream-thoughts are immediately comprehensible, as soon as we have learnt them. The dream-content, on the other hand, is expressed as it were in a pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of the dream-thoughts.⁴⁷

Now, if psychoanalysis is able to entertain a translation of the unconscious, it is only because the unconscious is a language, for translation is an operation that works between languages. As Lacan states, ". . . how can one translate what is not of itself language?"⁴⁸

What, then, makes the unconscious a language, a system of discrete, differentially defined units, i.e., signifiers, motivated by certain laws or principles? The signifiers of the unconscious have already been named. They are the characters of the pictographic script that appear in dreams, the images or thing-presentations that are denied "translation" into verbal language by repression, yet nonetheless

⁴⁷ Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, pp. 311-312, emphasis mine.

⁴⁸ Jacques Lacan, "The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis" in Écrits, p. 93.

"speak" in terms of dreams, parapraxes, and jokes, or, more seriously, in symptoms, phobias and obsessional behavior. These signifiers are not isolated or random, but are motivated by specific principles. For Freud, the principles that govern the unconscious are condensation and displacement. Lacan shows that the economic functions performed by condensation and displacement are easily accommodated to those of metaphor and metonymy respectively.

According to Freud, the unconscious works to economize or compact a large body of psychic information into a smaller amount. It is the job of the analyst to unpack all the significant material contained in the small, dense package. The analyst merely translates the condensed contents into their full and expanded form. As images, the signifiers of the unconscious are perfect vehicles of condensation, for, as commonly said, a picture says a thousand words, except that the unconscious "picture" represents a scenario that has been carefully and deliberately composed by the hand of repression to both express and conceal a specific meaning. The unconscious picture is, in effect, a "transcript" of the meaning in a condensed "mode of expression" complete with its own "characters" and "syntactic laws." In expressing that meaning, the picture is a signifier, a substitute for the signified meaning. As has been shown earlier, substitution, as a transfer of significant value, is always authorized by the law of metaphor. And, in that the verbal articulation of

the unconscious picture is a translation of the unconscious signifier into a conscious one, the substitution of significant value that occurs between the two psychic domains is authorized by metaphor as well. By unpacking the dense unconscious signifier 'S,' the conscious signifier 'S*' merely replaces it, such that the unconscious signifier drops to the place of signified.

Naturally, any translation, any substitution, leaves something out. Something always gets lost in the translation, and this seems obviously true in the case of translation from an unconscious pictorial mode of expression to a conscious verbal one. The mode of expression of the unconscious appears as a foreign language rich with its own characters and syntax which must be learned in order to understand its meaning. The resistance of repression colors the meaning of the unconscious picture such that it is not easily recognized. Thus, warns Freud, it is a mistake simply to translate the image into its verbal equivalent in order to understand the meaning. Rather, the unconscious picture must be "read" as a rebus, a picture-puzzle.

If we attempted to read these characters according to their pictorial value instead of according to their symbolic relation, we should clearly be led into error. Suppose I have a picture-puzzle, a rebus, in front of me. . . . obviously we can only form a proper judgement of the rebus if . . . we try to replace each separate element by a syllable or word that can be represented by that element in some way or other. The words which are put together in this way are no longer nonsensical but may

form a poetical phrase of the greatest beauty and significance.⁴⁹

In order to accommodate the translation of value from one language to another, some slipping, some deviation must occur. In that the meaning is concealed or hidden within the composition of the picture, that meaning is displaced among its signifiers. As shown, displacement is the economic principle at work in metonymy. Metonymy functions by splitting and dislocating signification among its various associated "parts" or signifiers, as in the case of the rebus. It is in the chain, the sentence, formed by the combination of the associated signifiers that the signified, i.e., meaning, of the metonymic substitution is given. Displacement works to shift attention away from the primary (repressed) signifier and, instead, toward some other seemingly unrelated one(s). The substitution serves as a distraction and cover for the primary signifier, yet there is some associative connection, some significant thread linking it to the primary signifier such that the primary signifier expresses itself in part or in disguise. Thus, displacement causes what is central to the meaning of the unconscious picture not to appear at the center of the picture.

Since the economies of both consciousness and the unconscious function through the movement of signifiers in accord with certain operative principles, both domains are linguis-

⁴⁹ Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, p. 312.

tic. As languages, the two domains can discourse or dialogue through a translation of economies. A signifier which is denied entry in consciousness by repression enters the signified of the unconscious. Repression operates through the mechanism of anti-cathexis, i.e., a defensive block formed against the signifier's entrance into consciousness by a substitution in consciousness for the signifier. In that there is an associative connection formed between the conscious substitute and the repressed signifier, the conscious substitute is a signifier authorized by the law of metaphor to take the place of the repressed signifier. In that the conscious substitute is other than the repressed signifier, the full identity of the repressed signifier cannot be transferred to the substitute. Something of the repressed signifier is lost in the substitute, yet, it is because it is other and more removed or remote from the repressed signifier that the substitute is able to elude the resistance of repression and function in consciousness. This displacement in consciousness of the unconscious signifier is the work of metonymy. The conscious substitute is able to function as a signifier within the conscious signifying chain in everyday (conscious) discourse, yet because of its metonymic attachment to the repressed signifier, the conscious substitute is also linked to the unconscious signifying chain. The conscious signifier acts as the term through which the repressed unconscious signifying chain can express itself indirectly or in

disguise, either harmlessly in dreams or parapraxes, or pathologically in symptoms, phobias or obsessional behavior.

Thus, both conscious and unconscious domains of psychic life are linguistically constituted, and the event of their inception is itself linguistic, i.e., it is the inscription of language into the psychic organization of the subject. In other words, the division that defines the distinction between consciousness and the unconscious is the impression of the elemental moment of language in the subject, and, as such, is the inscriptive mark of language in the constitution of the subject. Thus, the inscriptive subject is a linguistic subject in this double-edged sense of the term, i.e., both constitutionally and ontologically. The inscriptive subject is defined by division where the negativity of division has the power to bring (the subject) into being by marking, in making, a difference. Thus, the inscriptive subject is a split subject, and, therefore, one in conflict. This general conclusion is consistent with Freud's intentions in characterizing psychic life in dualist terms. The element of conflict engenders and defines the subject, yet is also responsible for its disorder and decline. Conflict is the psychic operative principle that underlies psychoanalysis as a philosophy and as a practice. But this theme will be returned to and fully developed in a later chapter.

To return to a point articulated earlier, now with some added clarity, what this definition entails is not just a

subject that is passively inscribed, but a subject that is an inscribing activity as well. The importation of language for the constitution of the subject indicates the precedence of language for subjectivity. The subject emerges as a subject within a context that is already linguistic. Subjectivity is determined by the inscription of that context on the inchoate psyche. Being linguistic, that context is composed of signifiers operating in accord with certain principles. Thus, the subject's entry into that context is as a signifier. The subject is a subject for himself/herself or another subject as a signifier. Like the animal torn from its cry, the subject, too, is torn between its identification as signifier and as signified. As a signifier, the subject functions within the order given by the rules of the context. It is only through this linguistic context that the "signification" of the subject can be "expressed." The subject's signification is determined by his or her relation to other signifiers in the context. Thus, in being inscribed by language, the subject inscribes or expresses its signification in its differential discourse with other signifiers.

CHAPTER 5

Language is the condition into which the child is born. It imposes itself upon the inchoate psyche of the child and inscribes its order there. The subjectivity of the child emerges with the inscription of language on the psyche. The child is born into language by way of the family structure. The family is its first linguistic experience, its first language. The family constitutes a linguistic order in that it is a system of discrete units - individual family members - whose significance is determined by their differential relations to one another - mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister. These relations, i.e., possibilities of exchange and combination, are motivated by the laws that govern the system. Theoretically speaking, the basic structure of the family is triadic, composed of the father, the mother and the child. As the offspring of the two parents, the child is literally (and letterally) defined by its "relations." The child's first role as signifier is as "the daughter of . . ." or "the son of . . ." As a signifier, the child's singular significant identity is defined both by its relation to other signifiers and its difference from them.

Because of its predominance, language inscribes its order on the psyche. But although the child is born into the linguistic order, the imposition of language on the psyche is not immediately felt. In order for language to make its mark

on the psyche, i.e., be inscribed there, it must be "accompanied by a fixation." What the inscription of language effects in the psyche is division - the division between signifier and signified effected as the division between consciousness and the unconscious. The fixation of division can only be accomplished through an act of primal repression. Language itself provides the force of repression in the power of denial that resides in the authority of its laws. In regulating the relations between signifiers, the laws of language authorize certain possibilities of exchange and combination while prohibiting others. Those sanctioned are the relations which are not prohibited by the laws. In other words, the work of the law is fundamentally prohibitive. The law sets limits on the possibilities of combination and exchange and, consequently, by default, sanctions those relations which are not in violation of the interdiction. In effect, the first, and, perhaps, only word of language is "no" - the primal signified/signifier to which all other signifiers are anchored.

Like any language, the relations between the members of the family also are regulated by laws. In that they are prohibitive, the laws of the family order are responsible for determining the significant identities of its members by limiting the possible relations between them. In that the family is the linguistic order into which the child is born, it is through the laws of the family that language eventually makes its mark. Thus, the prohibitive force of primal

repression necessary to bring about the inscription of language on the psyche comes from the laws of the family order.

The defining relations between members of the family order are sexual relations. Thus, the laws of the family order govern over sexual relations. Initially, the identity of each family member is established on the basis of sexuality. As mentioned, the child's first role as signifier is as "the son of . . ." or "the daughter of . . ." Implicit in "son" or "daughter" is the sexual identity of the child which is determined by its relation to another member - "mother" or "father" - whose significant identity likewise is sexually determined. Within the order of the family, then, sexuality is the currency of signification. Sexuality is the significant field through which language is able to inscribe its mark on the psyche.

The prohibitive force of familial law through which language establishes its order is the incest taboo. The incest taboo restricts sexual relations between family members and, in so doing, defines the distinct (sexual) identity of each member. Psychoanalysis locates the Oedipal complex as the stage in the child's development at which the impact of this law is felt. It is here that repression occasions the fixation, or inscription, of language in the psyche. Within the triangular structure of the family, i.e., child - father - mother, the Oedipal complex marks the moment at which the child, male or female, recognizes his or her (sexual) identity

in relation to the role he or she plays within the triangle. Although the term "Oedipal complex" assumes the mother/son dynamic, the psychic scenario delineated by the term by no means excludes the relation of father/daughter. The mother/son relation of the Oedipal complex merely serves as a model to describe the scenario. Structurally, the Oedipal scenario is characterized by the child's attachment to the parent of the opposite sex and fear of, or even hostility toward, the parent of the same sex. The triangular scheme and the repercussions of prohibition in determining the (sexual) identity of the child hold for both male and female.⁵⁰

Archetypically, prior to the scene of the Oedipus, the infant desires complete union with the mother. For the infant, there is no separation of self from (m)other. The Oedipal phase takes the child from complete union or identification with the mother in its state of helpless dependence to the opening of its individual identity. However, this independence is painfully won, for the child is psychically torn from its blissful union with the mother by the sharp edge of an interdiction which thwarts the unconditional satis-

⁵⁰ For the sake of writerly ease and simplicity only, I have chosen to articulate the general outline of the Oedipal scenario in terms of the mother/son relation. In doing so, I do not wish to demote or dismiss the father/daughter relation, nor am I unaware of the additional factors involved in the female Oedipal complex as described by Freud in several papers. See, for example, "Female Sexuality" (1931). However, I do wish to avoid a lengthy discussion of the particular complications of the female Oedipus in order to arrive at a more general description of the underlying structure of the Oedipal complex that applies to both sexes.

faction of the child's impulses. Specifically, what is denied satisfaction in the Oedipal phase is sexual union with the mother. This interdiction is imposed by the presence of the father. The father's presence not only serves to frustrate the child's sexual impulse, but also, in doing so, institutes the absolute power of the law of the family order. In prohibiting complete union with the mother, the father separates child from (m)other, forces the child to acknowledge and obey the law governing the family structure and to recognize its place within that structure.

In order for language to be inscribed on the inchoate psyche, in order for the division of signifier/signified to be felt, to be registered, an act of repression is necessary. This act is made possible by the prohibitive force of the law of language as it is imposed within the structure of the family by the presence of the father. The father re-presents the demands of the law of the pre-existing linguistic order into which the child is born. The law of language is explicit in the prohibitive word of the father, in the "no" which he articulates. In prohibiting the union of child and mother, the "no" of the father has the repressive power to effect the fixation of division requisite for the inscription of language on the psyche. The first word of language inscribed on the psyche is "no," i.e., the "no" of the father, the "no" of division. And although the separation which the father's "no" prompts is painful, it is necessary for the birth of the

subject, for the subjectivity of the child only emerges with the inscription of language on the psyche. In separating child from mother, the interdiction of the father defines the limits of the child's own (sexual) role in the family in relation to the other members and, in doing so, demarcates the individual identity of the child as a distinct unit within the family order. Therefore, the identity of the subject is contingent upon an incision, a cut, a wound, i.e., the inscription of the division of language, which compels him or her to recognize his or her own distinct position in a system which is defined by the rules of that system.

The family is the first linguistic order the child encounters, but that order will be repeated in the architecture of other substitute systems that the child encounters as it develops - such various social and cultural institutions as table etiquette, traffic signs and regulations, games, money, governmental laws, inter alia.⁵¹ The father, as represen-

⁵¹ Money is an obvious example of a cultural institution that betrays its linguistic structure. Money has discrete units - coins and paper bills - having signification determined by their differential relations to one another - penny, nickel, dime, quarter, dollar, etc. These relations, i.e., possibilities of exchange and combination, are governed by the rules of the monetary system - one dollar is equal to four quarters or ten dimes or twenty nickels or one hundred pennies. The combination of one dollar and two quarters can be exchanged for fifteen dimes or one copy of the Sunday New York Times. But fifteen pennies cannot be exchanged for the same.

Likewise, games have a linguistic structure. A game of chess, for example, has units - individual game pieces - differentially determined in relation to one another - pawn, rook, knight, queen, bishop, king - and rules governing those relations - e.g., those governing the movement of the pieces.

tative of the law of language which divides and originally motivates the order, is, for Lacan, the signifier proper or archetypal signifier of the linguistic order. The first word of language - "no" - is articulated by the presence of the father. The homophony of Lacan's "le nom du père" is intended to include the "no" (non) of the father in the "name" (nom) of the father. In inscribing the division of language on the inchoate psyche, the "no" of the father is responsible for determining the identity of the child. That identity is delineated by the (proper) name of the father as representative of the law of the family order. In giving his "no" to the child, the father gives his name to the child which marks the identity of the child as a subject. In effect, the "no" of the father enacts the transference of the law from father to child in the transference of the name of the father. The repressive force of the father both issues in his "no" and in his name. Both name and "no" articulate the law of language which is necessary for the emergence of the subject.

As the son of . . . , the child must be both like his father and unlike him. Like his father in name⁵² and gender,

The benefit of underlining the linguistic identity of all these institutions is simple. Not only does one get a better understanding of these institutions and, conversely, a better understanding of the structure of language itself, but, in noting the repetition of the linguistic order in human cultural forms, one gains a better understanding of the defining shape of human existence.

⁵² Again, for the sake of simplicity, the Oedipal story is told here from the point of view of the male child. This is not to say that the female child is excluded from the

the child can perform the same (sexual) function as the father in the family order. Equivalent in function, the child can replace the father in the signifying chain of the family. The signification of the paternal role is transferred to the child and the order of the family is maintained through this substitution. Transference of signification through substitution defines the work of metaphor. Thus, metaphor operates in the relation between father and child as signifiers in the family order.

Unlike his father, however, the child cannot have the same "combinatorial relation" with his mother, i.e., the child is prohibited sexual intercourse with his mother. The "combination" of father and mother is sanctioned by the law of familial relations (borne by the dominance of the father) as significant while the "combination" of child and mother is not. The substitution of the child for the father in the sexual relation with the mother constitutes a violation of the law of familial signification and is, thus, denied. Though the child can perform the same sexual function as the father, he cannot perform that function within the signifying chain of his own family. Within that signifying chain, the repressive force of the father blocks the child's path to combination

Oedipal dynamic. Although, in most cases, the mother's name is not actually conferred upon the child, the mother, nonetheless, functions as the interdictive force that says "no" to the union of father and daughter. The further complexities of the female Oedipus do not contradict the fundamental structure of this archetype.

with the mother. The child's wish for complete union with the mother is denied by the force of an anticathexis imposed by the father in the signifying chain. The signification of the child's paternal potency is repressed in relation to the mother. Though like his father in gender and function, the child is not identical with his father. In fact, it is precisely through this deficiency and the loss he suffers because of his difference that the child's own significant identity is measured. In being different, the child assumes only a part of the significant identity of the father. In this respect, the relation between father and child is metonymical.

As a signifier like his father, the child can perform the same function in the signifying chain of the family. But because the child is not identical to his father, because, within the signifying chain of his own family, he is not the father, he cannot assume that function in combination with his own mother. The child's assumption of the paternal role in the context of his own family "makes no sense," i.e., it is a violation of the laws of signification governing familial relations. Though the signification of paternity is transferred from father to child, the child's paternal signification is displaced in relation to his own mother and only realized in combination with (the maternal signifier of) another chain. The child is able to effect the transference of the signification of the paternal role and guarantee the

structure of the family order only by replacing the paternal signifier in another chain. Only then is the child's wish for "union" with his mother fulfilled - but only in part or in disguise, i.e., only symbolically, for union is achieved with a substitute, a signifier taking the place of his mother who is like her in gender and function, but not identical with her.

The signification of the family as a unit is given by the interrelation of its parts, i.e., by the combination of associated signifiers that comprise its signifying chain, for it must be recalled that " . . . it is in the chain of the signifier that the meaning 'insists' but that none of its elements 'consists' in the signification of which it is at the moment capable."⁵³ Thus, in securing the signification of the family, the laws of familial relations preserve the significant identities of its individual members also, for it is only within the context of the family that the identities of its members are determined. Yet, as a result, within the chain of his own family, the child is split between his repressed paternal role and his sanctioned role as offspring, between his wish and its denial. The actual fulfillment of his wish would be a dissolution of the signification of the family and, therefore, a dissolution of his own significant identity. His wish for union with his mother represents a

⁵³ Lacan, "The agency of the letter in the unconscious," p. 153.

wish to annihilate difference - any difference - even that between (m)other and child. In order to preserve signification, in order to preserve difference, then, his wish is denied. The "no" of the father provokes the initial split in the child, cuts the opening through which the child enters subjectivity, enters language. The "no" of the father registers the authority of language's "no." Through the father's "no," the elemental structure of language, i.e., the division of signifier and signified, is inscribed on the child's psyche. This division is psychically manifest as the separation between consciousness and the unconscious.

As it has already been argued, the inscription of language on the inchoate psyche is fundamental for defining the subject. In tearing the animal from its cry, the child realizes the division of language that constitutes its own subjectivity. The signification of the subject is anchored to the initial mark of division, the initial signifier of the split of signification, inscribed on the psyche. As an inscription, the signifier both divides and marks that act of division, i.e., it is both negative and positive "space." The initial signifier of the split of signification is both signified (in that it is the act of division itself to which all other signifiers are anchored) and signifier (in that it designates, i.e., marks that act of division in performing it). Torn between a wish and its repression, between signified and signifier, the subject is defined by what is denied

it, what is cut off from it, i.e., the actual fulfillment of the wish, the unconscious without consciousness, unmediated lived experience, otherness - the signified without the signifier. Without division, i.e., without difference, language is not possible. And without language, without signification, all that is left for the subject is what is left out, i.e., totality, dissolution, oblivion.

As a signified, as a referent of its own discourse, the subject, too, is other to itself, i.e., it can only be defined by relation to a signifier. As a signifier, the subject's identity is given by its relation to other signifiers. Borne into subjectivity by the name of the father, the child begins to articulate its identity in and through that name. As the "son of . . ." or "daughter of . . ." the significant identity of the subject is first determined by the linguistic structure of the family. The subject's identity is further defined as its relational vocabulary expands beyond this immediate structure. The particular identity of the subject is determined by the swelling discourse of its relational encounters. Borne into language, the subject finds its definition in the endless deferral of the signifier. Yet, only as a signifier can the definition of the subject be given, for definition, i.e., signification, belongs to the movement of the signifier. As a signifier, either as the first person pronoun or the given proper name, the subject enters the field of signification and, thereby, entertains the

copula of definition. Thus, language defines the subject in a double sense: it is that which gives the subject its determinacy as a subject, as the kind of thing it is, and, in doing so, it also provides the context of signification through which the singularity of the subject's definition is articulated.

The subject has definition because it is borne into language; yet, because it is linguistic, the subject's definition is split between signified and signifier. The division of language opens the subject's definition to the endless deferral of signification in the signifier. Hence, the entrance into language marks a loss, i.e., the loss of the signified in the signifier, the loss of (presubjective) wholeness. The division of language invokes tension which is psychically manifest in the separation between the unconscious wish and its denial in consciousness. Motivated by the pleasure principle, the psychic mechanism moves to reduce tension. Tension, too, has its other which is rest or the absence of tension. The alleviation of tension entails the negation of division which produces tension. The antidote to division, then, is unity. The model of unity and the relief of tension is found in the wholeness which is lost with the subject's entry in language. This wholeness provides the foundation and force of the wish. Because it precedes the subject's entrance into language, into division and tension, wholeness is the mythic object that motivates the movement of

the wish.

Two things must be said. First, as discussed previously, the primary function of the pleasure principle is to completely evacuate tension. Unrestricted, the pleasure principle would return the organism to the simplicity of the inanimate state, i.e., the organic moment would be quickly succeeded by death. The wish for wholeness, for the negation of division, then, is a wish for the inanimate state. In order to sustain life, the organism must retain a measure of tension. Thus, psychic division is requisite for existence, i.e., the organism must be able to discern a difference between hallucinatory satisfaction and real satisfaction.

In terms of the energetic model of psychic dynamics, the ego is the agency of division. It is through the inhibitory function of the ego that external reality is distinguished as "other" from hallucination. Through inhibition, the ego introduces division into the psyche in the divergence between pleasure and reality principles, primary and secondary processes. Ultimately, the ego forces the psychic apparatus to deflect its primary course toward complete evacuation, toward death, and recognize the order of the animate state, of life, as a means of prolonging pleasure. In doing so, however, the psychic apparatus must sustain a measure of pain, i.e., tension, in order to perpetuate its pleasure. Thus, the ego effects division in compelling the psychic apparatus to retain tension, thereby generating a secondary tendency of

psychic activity which comes out of, but is in conflict with, the primary tendency.

The relation between the ego and language is found in the division between these two tendencies, i.e., between life and death. The primary function of the ego forces the psychic apparatus to register the difference between life and death. Language, too, inscribes its division on the inchoate psyche, i.e., the division between signifier and signified. In that division produces tension and tension is necessary in order to sustain life, both language and the ego have a share in promoting life. Because language is itself defined by division and precedes the child's entry into the world, language is the source of the inhibitory function - whether performed by the agency of the ego or not - which imposes psychic division and perpetuates life.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ In the discussion thus far, both the ego and language have been connected to the issue of division. Admittedly, considering this common denominator, a full elaboration of the relation between the ego and language seems warranted; however, for reasons of efficiency, that connection is only glossed here. The issue of the ego - its terminological application, its function and place in the Freudian topographies - is the subject of much reflection and debate. Freud himself is responsible for this quandary since he wrote a great deal about the ego, incorporating it in the operation of both topographic models of the psyche, and employed the term in various and seemingly inconsistent ways. Thus, the project of adequately elaborating the relation between the ego and language involves inviting this whole complex and vast debate. Not only is this task daunting, but, ultimately, it neither furthers nor challenges the claims being made here. The purpose of mentioning the ego here is simply to emphasize the importance of division in determining the subject and to reiterate the fundamental role played by inhibition in effecting division in the Freudian schema of psychic functioning despite divergences in terminology or topography.

Secondly, the wish for wholeness is only satisfied as a return to wholeness, a reunion with the mother, a return to the inanimate state (in death rather than birth). The subject's entry into language imposes a barrier, a distance between the subject and its wholeness. The division that separates the subject from its wholeness, the subject's wish from its fulfillment, is itself formed, like the bar of resistance separating signified and signifier, by the gulf of an incision, an inscription which must be crossed even in erasing the inscription and undoing the incision. Ultimately, the division of language is itself anchored to the signified of the initial inscription of language that separates the subject (of language) from its (non-linguistic) wholeness. The significant configuration of this relation is as follows:

$$\frac{\begin{array}{c} \underline{S} \\ S \end{array}}{\begin{array}{c} \underline{S} \\ S \end{array}} \quad \frac{\text{language}}{\text{inscription of language}}$$

where the signifier of the configuration is language and the signified is the initial inscription of language. Both signifier and signified are themselves divided into a signifier and a signified. As the signifier of the configuration, language is constituted by the division of the differential structure of the sign (i.e., between signifier and signified); as the signified, the inscription of language marks the division between language (as division) and the absence of language (as the absence of division). The initial signified, then, is an opposition, i.e., that between language and the

absence of language, between division and wholeness.

Defined by language, the subject is compelled to be caught up in the scenario of division and, in effect, to continually reenact the initial moment of division. Language compels the subject toward the signified, toward wholeness, yet, the signified can only ever be recaptured in the signifier, wholeness can only ever be symbolically recovered in language which denies wholeness. Though language draws the subject toward the signified, toward recovery of wholeness, because language is anchored to the initial inscription of division, the recovery of the "signified" is always a return to the initial split of language which catches the subject in the flight of the signifier. Thus, the gap separating the subject from its wholeness is insurmountable by the subject qua subject. Presubjective wholeness can only be "recollect-ed" from the distance of the signifier. Because the subject's definition is given by the structure of language, that definition is differentially determined, i.e, both found and lost in the movement of the signifier, motivated by the difference denied it.

Lacan speaks of the issue of the subject's wish for wholeness in the essay "The signification of the phallus." Locating this wish in the context of the Oedipal scenario, Lacan refers to the phallus as the signifier of wholeness. The phallus has the status of a signifier, yet what it signifies is what is lost, cut off from the subject in being

a subject. The phallus, then, is the signifier of the initial moment of the inscription of language. As a signifier, the phallus is an articulation or inscription of its own negation, i.e., it is an articulation of the negation of articulation in that the wholeness that the phallus signifies is the erasure of the inscription and the end of signification. "For the phallus is a signifier . . . intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier."⁵⁵

The phallus is not to be confused with the penis, for the penis is a biological organ that defines the male sex whereas the phallus is a signifier of the wholeness that defines both sexes. This is not to say that the phallus plays no part in determining the gender of the subject. On the contrary, it is precisely by way of the subject's relation to the phallus that gender is determined. As a signifier, the phallus indicates the linguistic structure of sexual relations. It signifies the subject's plunge into the linguistic order in sexuality. As the originary signifier of the initial moment of language, the phallus is the "object" which has been lost or cut off from the subject, what remains apart from it yet a part of it. As its lost "object," the subject, male or female, is directed toward recovering it. Stated in Lacanian terms, the wish for wholeness is the desire for the phallus. The desire for the

⁵⁵ Jacques Lacan, "The signification of the phallus" in Écrits, p. 285.

phallus, then, is the wish for (re)union with the "object" that originally belonged to the subject prior to its castration, prior to its division in language. That "object" is what is other than language, other than division, namely, the unity of wholeness.

The structure of desire is grounded in the relation between signified and signifier. Just as the sexual order is distinct from the purely biological, so too is desire distinct from need.⁵⁶ Like the biological need, the aim of desire is satisfaction. However, unlike need which simply aims at and terminates in satisfaction, i.e., tension reduction or discharge, the path of desire is diverted by an obstruction. What diverts its course from complete discharge and distinguishes it from need is the imposition of repression. Repression, the "no" of the father, stands between the child and his desire for union with his mother, between the subject and its desire for wholeness. With the path to complete satisfaction blocked, desire can only be "satisfied" by means of a substitute that takes the place of the original object of desire. Though desire accomplishes its aim of discharge, it only accomplishes it partially or symbolically, i.e., by means of a signifier. Because it is not completely fulfilled, desire persists. Continuing its course toward complete satisfaction, it again meets with resistance which forces a

⁵⁶ Cf. pp. 22-28 regarding the distinction between instinct and drive.

detour through another substitute. Desire is sustained in the competition between repression and the organic disposition toward satisfaction. Caught between two forces, desire echoes the relation between signified and signifier in that the signifier is directed toward the signified for its fulfillment, its signification, yet, because the bar of resistance always intervenes to keep them distinct, the signifier can only find fulfillment (i.e., signification) in the company of another signifier. Language is motivated by signification, yet signification is endlessly deferred in the movement of the signifier. Though the subject's desire is directed toward satisfaction, toward wholeness, because the subject is split, borne by the division of language, desire is compelled to be swept up in this movement. Desire for the phallus, for wholeness, can only ever be partially satisfied, i.e., satisfied in the signifier. " . . . man cannot aim at being whole . . . while ever the play of displacement and condensation to which he is doomed in the exercise of his functions marks his relation as a subject to the signifier."⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Lacan, "The signification of the phallus," p. 287.

CHAPTER 6

Language precedes the child's arrival in the world. The child emerges as a subject with the inscription of language on the inchoate psyche. Yet, although the child is born into language, language is not immediately inscribed on the psyche. An act of repression is required in order to fix or inscribe it. Thus, if the Oedipal complex is, as described, the stage in the child's development whereby language is initially inscribed on the psyche, then, obviously, that stage is not immediately preceded by the inanimate state. Until the Oedipal scene, the child exists and functions in a prelinguistic state. The inscription of language, then, is neither concomitant with nor definitive of the moment of life.

Yet, certain claims made in the previous discussion intimate otherwise. It is contended that the subject's wish for presubjective, i.e., prelinguistic, wholeness is a wish for the inanimate state. This suggests an isomorphism between the opposition of language/the absence of language and that of animate/inanimate. Yet, the isomorphism appears to be contradicted by the evidence just given above. Certainly the inscription of language implies the animate state, but the animate state does not imply the inscription of language. The child can and does exist prior to this inscription. Conversely, though the inanimate state is undoubtedly languageless, the animate state is also languageless prior to the

Oedipus. Why, then, must the subject's wish for wholeness be a wish for the inanimate state and not just a wish for the prelinguistic state of existence prior to the Oedipal scene?

The answer to this question requires some terminological clarification. In fact, this dilemma rests, in part, on an equivocation of terms. The child's birth into language and the inscription of language on its psyche are two distinct, consecutive events separated by an interval of time. The child's pre-Oedipal existence is "prelinguistic" only in the sense that language has not yet been inscribed. However, the child has obviously already been born into language. The event of its birth into language is presupposed by the second, inscriptive event. In this sense, then, the child's pre-Oedipal existence is linguistic. Thus, the terms "prelinguistic" and "linguistic" are ambiguous and both terms can be used to describe the pre-Oedipal state. The term "prelinguistic" is ambiguous because it can serve to characterize either the pre-Oedipal existence of the child or the state prior to its entry into language at birth, i.e., the inanimate state. Likewise, the use of the term "linguistic" can be limited to post-Oedipal existence or it can refer to the entire length of the child's existence from the moment of its birth to its death.

With this in mind, it is important to remember that, ultimately, the wish for wholeness is a wish for the erasure of division. The primary function of the pleasure principle

is complete evacuation of affect. Therefore, while the pre-Oedipal period of existence is languageless in the sense that the child's psyche has not yet been inscribed by language, it is not divisionless in that the child is still sustained in the world of language which is defined by division. Only the inanimate state is truly languageless in that it is free of all division. Thus, the subject's wish for wholeness, for the erasure of division, is a wish for the inanimate state.

The justification for the isomorphism rests on the supposition that both language and life are grounded in division. Language is fundamentally defined by division which produces (the effect of) signification. Even though signification is elusive, without division signification is not possible at all. The negation of this division is the negation of language. Once the child is borne into language, division is its world even though that division does not fully imprint or impose itself on the child's psyche immediately. Division produces tension in the resistance of the elements it separates, and a modicum of tension is required in order to sustain life. Thus, division is an elemental factor in promoting life. Without division, there is no tension and without tension, life is not possible. Thus, both language and life are defined by division, and without division, both language and life are negated in the inanimate state.

Because the child is born into language, language imposes its order on the child's psyche. The child enters the world

in the linguistic structure of the family and immediately assumes a role in that structure as "son of . . ." or "daughter of . . ." Distinguished by gender and family name, the significant identity of the child is already determined by its place in the family narrative. And while the actual inscription of language only occurs with the Oedipal complex, language, as the child's environment, begins to exert its influence on the psyche in the organization of the pre-Oedipal state. Even though the division of language is not inscribed on the child's psyche until the Oedipal complex, the Oedipus is not the first moment of psychic division. The Oedipal complex is not a random, isolated event, but is a moment of psychic division prefigured by pre-Oedipal organization. Because the child is born into language and language is defined by division, the pre-Oedipal state, too, must be informed by division.

Prior to birth, self and environment are harmoniously 'mixed up', in fact, they interpenetrate each other. In this world, . . . there are as yet no objects, only limitless substances or expanses.

Birth is a trauma that upsets this equilibrium by changing the environment radically and enforces - under a real threat of death - a new form of adaptation. This starts off or, at any rate considerably accelerates, the separation between individual and environment. Objects, including the ego, begin to emerge from the mix-up of substances and from the breaking up of the harmony of the limitless expanses. The objects have - in contrast to the friendlier substances - firm contours and sharp boundaries which henceforth must be recog-

nized and respected.⁵⁸

Language introduces its division to the psyche at the outset in the opposition between the sensations of pain (increase of tension) and pleasure (tension reduction). This distinction gives rise to the split between self and (m)other as sources of pleasure. As Freud writes,

[the child] must be very strongly impressed by the fact that some sources of excitation, which he will later recognize as his own bodily organs, can provide him with sensations at any moment, whereas other sources evade him from time to time - among them what he desires most of all, his mother's breast - and only reappear as a result of his screaming for help. In this way there is for the first time set over against the ego an 'object,' in the form of something which exists 'outside' and which is only forced to appear by a special action.⁵⁹

But it is perception that most prominently pronounces the effect of linguistic division in the split between self and other. The distance between self and other is given form through perception. Perception transforms the infantile impulse of oral incorporation into psychic identification with the image of the other. Identification sets in motion an exchange or discourse between self and other that forms the basis of signification. However, identification is only a binary relation, and thus, is only reflexive and narcissistic,

⁵⁸ Michael Balint, The Basic Fault: Therapeutic Aspects of Regression (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p. 67.

⁵⁹ Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents, trans. by James Strachey (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1961), p. 14.

a contest of self and other that lacks a mediating context. The other is other only as a reflection of self and is not truly separate and independent from self. Without the interceptive mark of the linguistic law (of the father) that fixes the boundaries between self and other, that anchors division, signification stagnates in the exchange of reflections, in the endless oscillation of the binary opposition in the pre-Oedipal state.

Thus, both Oedipal and pre-Oedipal stages exhibit the signs of linguistic division. The difference between them is the mark of that division. Lacan captures this distinction with the terms "imaginary" and "symbolic." The Imaginary order is that domain of psychic life caught up in the mirror's reflection, absorbed by images and identifications both perceptual and fantasmatic. It is ". . . everything in the human mind and its reflexive life which is in a state of flux before the fixation is effected by the symbol . . ." ⁶⁰ Lacan takes up the issue of the Imaginary most fully in his elaboration of the mirror stage, a phase of psychic development occurring between the ages of six and eighteen months whereby the infant ". . . perceives in the image of its counterpart - or in its own mirror image - a form (Gestalt) in which it anticipates a bodily unity which it still objectively

⁶⁰ Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 61.

lacks . . . : in other words, it identifies with this image."⁶¹

The Symbolic register derails the infinite binary oscillation of the Imaginary through a mediation (the intervention of the father) that fixes signification. The mediation fixes the division between self and other by installing the binary opposition within a context (the context of the law of language) by installing that law in the psyche. The intervention of the law drives a wedge of alienation between self and other which can only be spanned through the mediation of the symbol. The moment at which the child crosses the threshold of the Symbolic is the moment to which signification is anchored. Whereas the Imaginary is binary and immediate, the Symbolic is ternary and mediate.

Lacan defines the essence of the imaginary as a dual relationship, a reduplication in the mirror, an immediate opposition . . . in which each term becomes its opposite and is lost in the play of the reflections. . . .

Henceforth, a certain self-presence is possible only through the genesis of a third term, a mediating concept which determines each term, ordering them and distinguishing between them. We have arrived back at the dimension of symbolization, since this consists in the passage from the dual relationship to the ternary mediate relationship.⁶²

The division that defines language, then, informs both pre-Oedipal and Oedipal phases even though the effect of that

⁶¹ Jean Laplanche and J.-B. Pontalis, The Language of Psycho-Analysis, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1973), p. 251.

⁶² Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 60.

division is different in each. While the child only becomes a subject with its accession to the law of language in the Symbolic order, with the inscription of language brought about by the Oedipal drama, the matrix of the drama precedes the Oedipus. Both pre-Oedipal and Oedipal phases are subject to division because the child is borne into language. The child's first encounter with the division of language is its entry in the world. Thus, it seems, division constitutes the human being from the very start.

The whole field of psychoanalysis is rooted in this supposition. Freud's investigation of the human psyche uncovers the divided constitution of the human being in the tension and conflict that lie at the base of psychic functioning. The theories he builds upon this investigation not only provide an understanding of the complex organization of the psyche, but also offer insight into what it means to be a human being. Thus, the implications of Freud's work, and that of psychoanalysis in general, are philosophical in scope. In particular, psychoanalysis is concerned with the ethical consequences that follow from the dynamics of psychic division. This concern is obviously evidenced in Freud's more sociological writings, i.e., those on group psychology, in particular Civilization and its Discontents and Totem and Taboo. But the tenor of this theme runs throughout his work and is apparent even in his most theoretical writings on psychic functioning such as the "Project." There he writes

that because the child is incapable of satisfying its own impulses at a very early age, it must rely on the help of another human being to perform the actions that will bring about the necessary discharge of tension. Thus, the tension that defines the human psychological condition has, from the outset, ethical implications.

This path of discharge thus acquires an extremely important secondary function - viz., of bringing about an understanding with other people; and the original helplessness of human beings is thus the primal source of all moral motives.⁶³

It seems, then, that not only does division found the possibility of organic life, but it founds the possibility of ethical relations between human beings as well. However, along with its positive effects, division also has negative consequences for ethical relations, for the tension that arises from division leads to anxiety, conflict and aggression towards others.

In all that follows I adopt the standpoint, therefore, that the inclination to aggression is an original, self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man . . . This aggressive instinct is the derivative and the main representative of the death instinct which we have found alongside of Eros and which shares world-dominion with it. And now, I think, the meaning of the evolution of civilization is no longer obscure to us. It must present the struggle between Eros and Death, between the instinct of life and the instinct of destruction, as it works itself out in the human species. This struggle is what all life essentially consists of, and the evolution of civilization may therefore be simply described as the struggle for life of the

⁶³ Freud, "Project for a Scientific Psychology," p. 379.

human species.⁶⁴

The division that is encountered and "etched" on the human condition from the start is simply the division between the animate and inanimate states, between life and death. To be animate, to be a living being means to be divided, i.e, at the very least, it means to be separated off from the inanimate, the non-divided. But more importantly, division is the defining pulse of human existence. It makes human beings what they are. It is that which both anchors and defers human definition, makes it possible yet elusive. "Man's alienating division is, then, simply a fact of human nature, as that which divides him is also that which makes him man."⁶⁵ It is because human beings are born into language, which is defined by division, that makes them divided in the more significant sense. It is because human beings are informed by the division of language that that division "speaks" through us.

This passion of the signifier now becomes a new dimension of the human condition in that it is not only man who speaks, but that in man and through man it speaks (ça parle), that his nature is woven by effects in which is to be found the structure of language, of which he becomes the material, and that therefore there resounds in him, beyond what could be conceived of by a psychology of ideas, the relation of speech.⁶⁶

Thus, it is as a signifier that the human being articulates, symbolizes, the structure of language in division, for

⁶⁴ Freud, Civilization and its Discontents, p. 69.

⁶⁵ Lemaire, Jacques Lacan, p. 130.

⁶⁶ Lacan, "The signification of the phallus," p. 284.

it is only as a signifier that the human being can articulate, i.e., signify, that division. The signifier articulates division in its very being, for the signifier is, by definition, that which is constituted by division. In being divided, the human being is a signifier whose signified, i.e., division, is articulated in its very being. The inscriptive constitution of the subject, then, is already given in the very condition of human existence. Although the subject qua subject only emerges with the psychic inscription of language, as a human being, the existential constitution of the subject is scored by the structure of language in being born into language. In being so inscribed, the human subject then becomes the inscribing activity, the expression of language.

The basic outline of this position, though captured in different terminology, is distinctively Heideggerian. Heidegger most fully elaborates this theme in his text Being and Time. Like Lacan, Heidegger recognizes that the human being, i.e., Dasein, is not an isolated entity, but is borne into a given context which both determines what Dasein is and is determined by Dasein. The human being can neither escape this context nor be what it is outside of this context. For Lacan, that context is, of course, language; for Heidegger, that context is temporality. According to Heidegger, Dasein is thrown into the world, i.e., thrown into temporality. In being in the world, Dasein's being is in time. Thus, the human being is structured by its given context.

Because Dasein is thrown, its being is in the world, a world already present upon its arrival which defines or shapes its being. From Heidegger's anti-Cartesian point of view, the human being is not essentially defined by thinking, but by its being there in the world. By definition, Dasein is the being whose being (Sein) is there (da), i.e., in the world. Therefore, according to Heidegger, Dasein's being is "ekstatic," i.e., it stands out or is there in the world. Linguistically speaking, it can be said that by being there in the world, Dasein's being is ex-pressed, i.e., its being stands out or is pressed out or articulated in the world. As the ex-pression of being-in-the-world, Dasein is already a signifier that articulates or signifies being-in-the-world.

What distinguishes the human being from other creatures is that it can ask about its own being. To ask about its own being, says Heidegger, involves an inquiry into "Being," i.e., the source or foundation of all being which goes beyond Dasein's particular everyday existence. To ask about Being, then, is to ask what it means to be, what makes being what it is. Obviously, this is a difficult philosophical task and Heidegger acknowledges this at the outset of Being and Time in enumerating the various obstacles involved in such an inquiry. Yet, despite these difficulties, an answer is already given just in asking the question, for to ask the question of Being implies something about the asker, i.e., that the being of the asker is a mode of Being, a mode of Being that can ask the

question of Being. Dasein can ask about itself and come to know its being-in-the-world because it has language. If Dasein's nature is to ask the question of the meaning of Being, then what is included within the limits of the world is language. As Lacan writes, "for there even to be a question . . . there must be language."⁶⁷ And if language belongs to the world into which Dasein is thrown, then Dasein is thrown into language.

According to Heidegger, Dasein discovers the world through language, for Dasein has language. Dasein uses language in interpreting and understanding the world and in ex-pressing its own being-in-the-world. But Dasein is itself an ex-expression, an ex-expression of the mode of Being that is in the world. In using language, Dasein comes to discover its own being-in-the-world as ex-pressive, for being-in-the-world, like language, is ex-pressive in its very structure. In using language, being-in-the-world is rendered intelligible or meaningful for Dasein, for language mirrors the underlying ex-pressive structure of being-in-the-world.

The relation of Dasein to Being is that of signifier to signified: the signification, the meaning, of Being "speaks" in the ex-expression of Dasein's being-in-the-world. The relation articulates a difference, a division, between Dasein and Being which allows the possibility of exchange between

⁶⁷ Lacan, "The agency of the letter in the unconscious," p. 172.

them. As a signifier, (the signification of) Dasein's being is itself ex-pressed, directed outward in the world, deferred in the other (signifier). The structure of being-in-the-world reveals a movement between being (signified) and being-in (signifier) that ex-presses being (signification) in the movement. Thus, the signification of Dasein's being is preserved yet alienated in the movement of its ex-expression. Signification is ex-pressed in the dialogue between being and being-in.

According to Heidegger, discourse is the foundation of language because it is "the articulation of intelligibility."⁶⁸ Discourse assumes the very movement of ex-expression in its function, for it functions to articulate, i.e., ex-press - press out into the world - intelligibility which is "the totality of significations."⁶⁹ Intelligibility, signification, is given in articulation, in ex-expression, i.e., in the movement of the signifier. Dasein, as a mode of ex-expression, articulates the intelligibility or signification of being-in-the-world. Dasein then ex-presses this intelligibility in words. Thus, the ex-pressive impulse of discourse gets "put into words," i.e., language in the everyday sense, by Dasein to ex-press its own ekstatic being-in-the-world.

All discourse about . . . which communicates in

⁶⁸ Martin Heidegger, Being and Time, trans. by Joan Stambaugh (from a typescript forthcoming at Harper and Row), 1927, p. 94.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 94.

what it speaks has at the same time the character of expressing itself. In talking, Da-sein expresses itself not because it has been initially cut off as "something internal" from something outside, but because as being-in-the-world it is already "outside" when it understands. What is expressed is precisely this being outside . . . ⁷⁰

Another factor underlying the function of discourse is exchange. Discourse is dialogue. It is directed, i.e., expressed outward to engage, interact or ex-change with other ex-pressions. Discourse is directed toward the response of the other even if that response is silence. Intelligibility, i.e., signification, can only be produced through an exchange of difference. Discourse, as the articulation of intelligibility, must involve exchange. Thus, discourse, as the foundation of language, reveals the structure of being-in-the-world as being-with (others).

Discourse is the "significant" articulation of the intelligibility of being-in-the-world, to which belongs being-with, and which maintains itself in a particular way of heedful being-with-one-another.⁷¹

As Dasein is never alone in the world but exists with other beings, Dasein engages in relations, in conversation with other (ex-pressions of) beings. Ex-change requires Dasein to be open or attentive to the ex-pression of others. This attentiveness, which Heidegger calls "hearing," is constitutive of discourse because it allows the exchange of ex-pression. In hearing (the ex-pression of) the other, Dasein

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 95.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 94.

recognizes the integrity of the other and, in doing so, recognizes its own distinctness, its own definition, in relation to the others of its being-with. In hearing, Dasein understands; in not hearing, Dasein denies its own definition in denying that of the other. If the other is not heard, then exchange, discourse, is not possible. Without discourse, the intelligibility of being-in-the-world cannot be articulated. In other words, without exchange, signification is not possible.

In hearing the other, Dasein is not only attentive or open to other beings like itself, but to the "other" of itself as well. The "other" of Dasein is its authentic being-in-the-world. For Dasein to hear the other of itself means that it is directed toward authentic being-in-the-world which has been covered over by the various preoccupations of average, everyday, inauthentic existence. Dasein gets caught up or, as Heidegger puts it, "ensnared" in everyday inauthentic existence where the question of the meaning of Being is forgotten. Dasein allows itself to be distracted by average everydayness because the question of the meaning of Being forces Dasein to face the "facts" of its existence in time. These facts, which include Dasein's thrownness and its limit in death, are very difficult to accept, to live with, and so Dasein takes flight in everyday inauthentic existence to avoid confronting them. Yet, these facts define Dasein and cannot be denied. Everyday existence only succeeds in covering over them, in repressing

them, but it can never negate them. In repression, the conscious anti-cathexis only drives the signifier (the wish) into the subterranean order of the unconscious, only replaces it, but does not destroy it. The "truth" of Dasein's temporality, the question of the meaning of Being, belongs to Dasein, is always there with Dasein, and, though repressed, moves to be heard. Like the repressed wish which "speaks" in dreams, slips of tongue or neurotic symptoms and phobias, Dasein's truth ex-presses itself in everyday guises. According to Heidegger, in everyday life, Dasein's truth is expressed in the form of "mood" or "attunement," particularly fear. Although Dasein turns away from this truth in changing its mood, attunement shows that Dasein "senses" or "is attuned to" the ex-pression of truth in turning away from or avoiding it.

In hearing, Dasein must be open or attentive to other beings like itself. But in listening to other beings, Dasein gets lost in their mundane, inauthentic chatter and cannot hear the other of itself, its authentic being. The other of Dasein has a "voice" that "calls" to Dasein and attempts to be heard above the noise of everyday "idle talk." The voice of Dasein's other is what Heidegger calls "conscience." Conscience is the voice of Dasein's authenticity which calls to its other, i.e., to inauthentic Dasein. It is the signifier that has been covered over or repressed by everyday, inauthentic existence. Because it is repressed, the signifier, the

voice of conscience, is blocked but not totally quelled. It calls within Dasein's hearing range, but is faint, distant. Conscience summons Dasein from its inauthentic slumber to its full potential as being-in-the-world by making Dasein hear or remember the facts of its temporal existence, i.e., its thrownness and its limit in death. In compelling Dasein to confront these difficult facts, conscience makes Dasein aware of its definitional deficit, i.e., its lack of wholeness or "guilt," as Heidegger calls it.

To be, to have definition, is to have limits, to be defined by and against the other (signifier). In having definition, Dasein is limited. Dasein's definitional limits are, as stated, its thrownness and its end in death. These limits are circumscribed by Dasein's temporal context, i.e., its being-in-the-world is being-in-time. Dasein is what it is because it has limits, and, because it has limits, like the subject, it lacks something, i.e., it is not whole. Dasein's limits both belong to it as what defines it, as what is integral to its definition, and, yet, are outside of or other than it. In other words, the signification of the signifier is always given by, deferred in the other signifier. What belongs to Dasein, then, is what is other than it, what is outside, or out-standing to it, i.e., what it lacks to make it whole. That which belongs to Dasein, yet is still out-standing is its death. As with the subject, the retrieval of wholeness is an erasure of the limits, the determinateness,

that define Dasein. Thus, only in death, in the end of Dasein, does Dasein "find" its wholeness. As Dasein's limit, death both belongs to Dasein's whole definition, yet, as the closure, the end of Dasein's being, is other than it.

Thus, in being-in-the-world, Dasein lacks wholeness, for Dasein's accession to this wholeness is the end of Dasein, the end of its being-in-the-world. As a temporal being, Dasein is always moving toward its wholeness, toward its death. However, while that wholeness belongs to Dasein, as long as Dasein exists, it is out-standing or potential. Dasein's being is caught in the tension of its temporal predicament. Its wholeness, i.e., its end, is an undeniable fact of its existence, yet, in being-in-the-world, that end, though inevitable, is still to come, is still out-standing. In being inauthentic, Dasein escapes the tension by forgetting the unavoidable conclusion of its temporality. In hearing the call of conscience, Dasein is ready to accept its "guilt," its lack of wholeness. It is ready to hear the voice of its other through the noise of inauthentic chatter and begin recalling the difficult facts it has repressed.

But, the move toward authenticity involves more than just an acceptance or acknowledgement of these facts, it involves an understanding of them as well. In understanding, Dasein's being-in-the-world is affected by the facts, i.e., it is transformed or realigned by them. Authentic understanding means that Dasein does not simply accept death as its defini-

tional limit, it anticipates death. This is not to say that Dasein waits idly by for death to arrive, nor lives in constant fear of its imminent arrival, nor tries to create a death-like state in life, nor perpetrates its own death.

Thus, if being toward death is not meant as an "actualization" of death, neither can it mean to dwell near the end in its possibility. This kind of behavior would amount to "thinking about death," thinking about this possibility, when and how it might be actualized.⁷²

In anticipating death, Dasein fully comprehends the certainty of death as its end within the temporal bounds that define it, yet also understands that the definite date of its death is something withheld from it. Dasein suffers the tension, the anxiety of its thrownness, of its temporal predicament. Yet, because Dasein is ready to understand the facts of its being-in-the-world, because Dasein has chosen authentic existence, it is resolute in anticipating its death and in accepting its lack of wholeness as the condition of its being-in-the-world.

In resolutely anticipating death, in refusing to repress the truth of its temporal definition, Dasein's being-in-the-world is reconciled with the facts of its existence. While resolute anticipation of death provokes anxiety, it brings Dasein to its full authentic potential as the ex-pression of being-in-the-world.

In [the mood of Angst], Da-sein is taken back fully to its naked uncanniness and benumbed by it. But this numbness not only takes Da-sein back from its "worldly" possibilities, but at the same time gives

⁷² *ibid.*, pp. 169-170.

it the possibility of an authentic potentiality-of-being.⁷³

Thus, Dasein fulfills its potentiality-for-being in being-toward-death. In being-toward-death, i.e., in resolutely anticipating death as the completion of its wholeness, Dasein's being-in-the-world ex-presses the truth of its temporal definition. Dasein ex-presses its temporality because in being-toward-death Dasein is futurally directed. Thus, in being-toward-death, Dasein realizes its being-in-time, realizes that it is always moving beyond or ahead of what it is and was in anticipating what it is not yet but will be. In returning back to the facts it has covered over in in-authentic everyday existence, Dasein finds its future in its definition. In retrieving its past and passed truth, Dasein moves forward toward its full potential.

Both Heidegger and Lacan equate wholeness with death (or the inanimate state), yet each seems to have a slightly different notion of wholeness. For both, the living human being lacks wholeness. Human existence implies division or fragmentation. As Heidegger writes, "In Dasein there is inevitably a constant 'fragmentariness' which finds its end in death."⁷⁴

Yet, Heidegger's conception of wholeness is based on the whole/part distinction whereas Lacan defines it oppositionally

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 233.

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 155-156.

to division. Dasein's lack of wholeness means Dasein is missing some essential "part" of itself that completes its definition. This part belongs to Dasein but Dasein has been separated from it and must recover it in order to be whole again. In being-in-the-world, Dasein is, then, only a fragment, a piece of its totality; it is not fully "itself."

Lacan sometimes speaks of wholeness in these terms. The subject's desire for the phallus is conceived as a desire for the signifier or "object" that completes it. But, more importantly, Lacan conceives of the lack of wholeness as a lack of unity. The subject is constitutionally divided, irreversibly split in two. The subject is not separated off from some part or piece that belongs to it, but is "in pieces," is split. The subject's wholeness is the antidote that brings the pieces together and erases or heals difference.

Despite these conceptual disparities, the two positions ultimately amount to the same thing. Whether it is the retrieval of the object that completes Dasein (or the subject) or whether it is the remedy for difference, wholeness is that which puts an end to the division or fragmentation of the human being. However, in doing so, it puts an end to the human being as well. Thus, Heidegger and Lacan agree that wholeness/death is the definitional limit and fundamental organizing principle of human existence.

Still, each seems to have a slightly different attitude about the equation. For Lacan, the equation of death with

wholeness is used in order to highlight the other side of the equation, i.e., the pairing of life with division. Lacan is concerned with understanding how division effects and affects the human being. For Lacan, division is the truth of human existence. To be a living human being is to be divided. Though division is the source of repression, conflict, tension and pain, it is the fundamental condition of human existence. Thus, the subject's desire for wholeness is a move to deny this truth.

Let me simply say that this is what leads me to object to any reference to totality in the individual, since it is the subject who introduces division into the individual, as well as into the collectivity that is his equivalent. Psychoanalysis is properly that which reveals both the one and the other to be no more than mirages.⁷⁵

Heidegger, on the other hand, defines the human being by its wholeness. Dasein's potential is fulfilled in its wholeness and, therefore, authentic Dasein aspires toward being whole in its being-toward-death. Thus, contrary to Lacan, Heidegger claims that the truth of Dasein is its wholeness and Dasein's understanding of the truth of its wholeness is a move toward authenticity.

For Lacan, the human being is defined by division; for Heidegger, the human being is defined in terms of its wholeness. This seemingly glaring discrepancy is really only a matter of emphasis. Both Heidegger and Lacan ascribe divi-

⁷⁵ Lacan, "The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis," p. 80.

sion/fragmentation to the state of human existence and both acknowledge death (the inanimate state) as the definitional limit of the human being, i.e., the human being is defined by and against this limit. The wholeness of the inanimate state is the "other" "signifier" that defines the living human being, that gives it meaning or signification in limiting or structuring the course of its existence. Death unfolds the range of significant possibilities open to human beings by delimiting them: inauthenticity, authenticity, repression, sublimation, desire, etc. If the human being is defined by its wholeness, then what is included in that definition is what is delimited within the bounds of its wholeness. If the truth of Dasein is its wholeness in death, then its existence is defined by fragmentation, division. And if the truth of the subject is its division, this is because wholeness is its definitional limit. In either case, the human being is a work of difference, a signifier of the the primordial split between animate and inanimate states.

Though Heidegger's analysis of Dasein emphasizes death and wholeness, this does not mean he is uninterested in Dasein's existence. On the contrary, his analysis is directed precisely to this concern. Heidegger's project is not meant to be a morbid or pessimistic argument for human self-destruction, but a reconsideration of what it means to be a human being divested of all the standard philosophical categories. In defining the human being in terms of its death, Heidegger

marks off the territory that is human existence. It is within the bounds of this territory that the human being's existential options are determined.

Likewise, though Lacan's work underlines the divided condition of human existence, this does not mean that death plays a minor role in his conceptual scheme. Death, as already elaborated, is a fundamental principle of psychic functioning and a factor operative within division itself, for without the negativity of death, division would not be possible. Death, too, finds its form in the signifier, for death is the defining element of the signifier. The signifier is a negativity, is pure difference, i.e., it is determined solely in relation to other signifiers. "[I]n language there are only differences without positive terms."⁷⁶ But all of this will be discussed in more detail later.

⁷⁶ Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, p. 120.

CHAPTER 7

Reading Lacan through Heidegger has a double effect, for not only is Lacan's work illuminated by way of Heidegger's, but the reverse is true as well, i.e., Heidegger's work is illuminated by Lacan's. This, of course, does not mean that the entire corpus of one thinker's work mirrors, point by point, that of the other. However, the motivation for any reading proceeds from the position of an equivalence relation, for to read is to render or reinscribe one set of terms into another synonymous set. A reading, then, is an interpretation, a work of translation. Naturally, any translation is only an approximation, for something always escapes or gets lost in the translation. Nonetheless, a translation must attempt to justly or adequately render any structural or terminological differences. The reading thus far has located and reconciled several structural or terminological discrepancies between Heidegger and Lacan. But there is another important terminological distinction that must still be resolved. This is the relation between language and temporality.

Both Lacan and Heidegger claim that the human being's arrival in the world is its entrance into a context. For Heidegger that context is temporality; for Lacan, it is language. The common bond between language and temporality is division. The living human being, according to both Lacan and Heidegger, is defined by a lack of wholeness. Entry into the

world - into language, into time - is its introduction to division. This introduction comes in the split between non-being and being which is an oppositional relation. Because the relation is oppositional, the two elements repel one another and, thus, remain distinct. Yet, because they are related, the two are drawn together in correspondence. The initial split between non-being and being creates the two forces, repulsion and attraction, which set off the movement of time and language.

In a sense, in essence, existence simply is the movement of time. Being always is being-in-time. Non-existence is the absence of time and without time, there is only the eternity of the inanimate.⁷⁷ Dasein's being-in-the-world is its being-in-time and, thus, the end of its being-in-time is simply the end of its being. Time always moves Dasein's being forward toward its end, toward the absence of time, moves its existence toward non-existence. Division is what sets off the movement of time, separates eternity from temporality and initiates the movement of repulsion and attraction from inanimate to animate and back again to inanimate. The animate is that which is relationally "present" between its past (as that which no longer exists) and its future (as that which does not yet exist).

⁷⁷ It is to be noted that the terms "inanimate" and "animate" are not used by Heidegger. Rather, they are an importation by the author of Freudian terms to corresponding distinctions in Heidegger. Freud's use of the terms "animate" and "inanimate" will be discussed later in the essay.

Thus, temporality is constituted by division. In being-in-time, Dasein, too, is divided. Dasein's being is the interstice between its inanimate past and its inanimate future. Both past and future constitute Dasein as the "place" of difference where their edges meet. The movement of time draws Dasein forward toward its future in its flight away from its past. Thus, Dasein is "ahead" of itself, i.e., always moving beyond or ahead of what it was toward what it is yet to be.

Dasein is ahead of itself because it is thrown into the world, into time, because its existence is ekstastic and stands out or is ex-pressed in the world. "Temporality is the primordial 'outside of itself' in and for itself."⁷⁸ If existence is simply the movement of time, then to be is to be ex-pressed in time. Time is the ex-pression of Dasein's ekstastic existence. Yet, existence is also the mark of time, the mark that ex-presses the change, the difference, between the inanimate past and the inanimate future. Existence, then, is the ex-pression of time. Thus, the fundamental feature of Dasein's temporal existence is ex-pression. Dasein's temporal existence is constituted by division because it is grounded in ex-pression, in the ekstasis of being-in-the-world. In this sense, then, ex-pression, i.e., language, is logically prior to temporality making temporality the language of being and being the language of time.

⁷⁸ Heidegger, Being and Time, p. 221.

If to be is to be ex-pressed (in time), then Dasein's being only comes to be in its ex-pression. Because existence is ex-pression, i.e., because it is always already outside or ahead of itself, and because ex-pression is defined by division, i.e., because signification is always deferred in the (other) signifier, then Dasein, as an ex-pression, is both defined by division and ex-presses its division as well. Thus, to be is to be divided, to be split between signified and signifier, between what is ex-pressed (being) and its ex-pression (being-in-the-world, being-in-time). And because division is itself given by or as the mark which makes the division, then there can be no division outside or independent of this mark.

In being divided, then, the human being is the mark, the ex-pression - the signifier - of division.

. . . neurosis is a question that being poses for the subject 'from where it was before the subject came into the world' . . . The 'being' referred to is that which appears in a lightning moment in the void of the verb 'to be' and I said that it poses its question for the subject. What does that mean? It does not pose it before the subject, since the subject cannot come to the place where it is posed, but it poses it in place of the subject, that is to say, in that place it poses the question with the subject, as one poses a problem with a pen, or as Aristotle's man thought with his soul.⁷⁹

Thus, being poses or ex-presses its question in the divided constitution of the human being, i.e., the question of being is posed in the very being of the poser as a signifier because

⁷⁹ Lacan, "The agency of the letter," p. 168.

it is only in and through the signifier that the question can be posed. And in posing, i.e., inscribing its question in the human being, the human being, then, inscribes or ex-presses that question with its very being. The human being ex-presses division in being divided, inscribes in being inscribed.

The human being has the status of a signifier and the signifier is that which determines signification. Yet, the signifier, in being constituted by division, is a negativity, a place holder, pure difference without any positive terms. Thus, as a signifier, the human being is also a negativity. This point is broached earlier in defining the human being in terms of its lack. Ironically, then, human existence is a negativity. The human being is divided, split in two and its "being," fluctuating between the two elements, is constituted by the split. The negativity of its existence is ex-pressed in the gap or "void" of its division, of its fluctuating definition. As the signifier of division, the human being is the negative space where the limits of its inanimate past and its inanimate future meet.

Given all this, the security of existence confirmed by the Cartesian cogito is undermined. Existence cannot be secured by thinking because thinking is always bound to the signifier. Thought (conscious or unconscious), i.e., signification, is always displaced and deferred in the signifier. Thus, being cannot "be" without the signifier and the signifier, defined by division, is a negativity, pure difference.

Is the place that I occupy as the subject of a signifier concentric or excentric, in relation to the place I occupy as subject of the signified? - that is the question.

It is not a question of knowing whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather of knowing whether I am the same as that of which I speak.⁸⁰

If human existence is a negativity, is the empty space separating the inanimate past from the inanimate future, then it is an affirmative negativity, for without the negative, without the "no" (of the father) difference is not possible. And without difference, signification is not possible. Existence says "no" to the wholeness of the inanimate, to the primary impulse of the pleasure principle. Existence engenders and requires tension. As a prohibitive mark, existence both provokes division and, as a signifier, is itself constituted by division.

If existence serves as a prohibitive gesture, then, in dividing (the inanimate past from the inanimate future), it functions as the bar of resistance separating signifier from signified. But what exactly is the status of the bar? On one hand, the bar is that which separates signified from signifier by making a difference between them. It is the negativity that initiates difference and sets off the movement of signification. In this respect, it seems to be a third, initial mediating element between signified and signifier. However, because the bar is a (negative) mark, the bar is

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 165.

itself a signifier, a signifier that signifies division. The bar, then, is the "originary" signified/signifier to which all other signifiers are anchored. Because it is the "originary" moment of division that both grounds signification and, yet, sets off the whole flight of signification in the signifier, it is a signified. However, in that it makes a difference by a mark that articulates that difference, it is always already a signifier. As Lacan writes, the phallus, as the "privileged" signifier of this initial split, ". . . becomes the bar which . . . strikes the signified, marking it as the bastard offspring of this signifying concatenation."⁸¹ Though the initial moment of division is the "signified" to which all other signifiers are anchored, because division must always be given by a mark, this anchoring "signified" can never be anything but a signifier. And the bar, while coming between signified and signifier, is itself, ultimately, a signifier.

Thus, as the bar, as the signifier of division, existence divides, yet it also allows the possibility of relation, for without difference, there can be no relation. While the bar offers resistance in separating, it is also responsible for the force of attraction which commands relation. The pulse of existence is found in the push and pull of difference. In generating the forces of repulsion and attraction, existence, as the bar, secures the movement of time. As the bar separates signifier from signified and sets off the movement of

⁸¹ Lacan, "The signification of the phallus," pp. 287-288.

signification in the signifier, existence separates the inanimate past from the inanimate future and sets off the movement of time in the future. Time, like language, in being ex-pressive, is always moving outside or ahead of itself. Yet, while separating signifier and signified, the bar also brings them together in signification. Likewise, existence, while dividing the inanimate past from the inanimate future through resistance, draws them together as the definitional limits of time, of existence itself.

In this respect, it is important to remember that the bar is not a third mediating element, but is a signifier, and that the signification of the bar is itself given by its limits, i.e., by another signifier. Existence, then, too, is defined by its limits. While the inanimate past and the inanimate future are differentially determined in relation to existence, existence is differentially determined by them. Existence, the animate, finds its determination oppositionally to the inanimate, to the wholeness of the undivided, the undifferentiated. The conflicted, divided state of existence is the mirror, the repetition of this "originary" binary opposition, and the negativity of existence reflects the incorporation, the alienated play of the inanimate in the divided state of the animate. Psychically, this incorporation is articulated as the primary impulse of the pleasure principle. Thus, while the inanimate itself is that which lacks division, incorporated in human existence, it functions as the element of

conflict.

The attributes of life were at some time evoked in inanimate matter by the action of a force of whose nature we can form no conception. . . . The tension which then arose in what had hitherto been an inanimate substance endeavoured to cancel itself out. In this way the first instinct came into being: the instinct to return to the inanimate state.⁸²

Existence, as the bar, divides the inanimate and, thereby, creates tension. Manifest as the forces of resistance and attraction, this tension compels the movement of time in the future. Resistance pushes the human being away from its inanimate past while it is pulled or attracted forward toward its inanimate future. Yet, though the movement of time is directed toward the future, in moving forward, the human being is also driven back to its inanimate beginning. Paradoxically, then, while it is tension that motivates the human being forward in time, it is the drive to totally eliminate tension that ultimately determines the course of the future as a return to the past.

⁸² Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, trans. by James Strachey (New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1961), p. 32. Cf. also Laplanche Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, p. 122: ". . . the death drive, a concept that seems quite undialectical, is present, in Freud's final formulations, not as an element in conflict but as conflict itself substantialized, an internal principle of strife and disunion."

CHAPTER 8

How, indeed, could speech exhaust the meaning of speech, or, to put it better, with the Oxford logical positivists, the meaning of meaning - except in the act that engenders it? Thus Goethe's reversal of its presence at the origin of things, 'In the beginning was the act', is itself reversed in its turn: it was certainly the Word (verbe) that was in the beginning, and we live in its creation, but it is the action of our spirit that continues this creation by constantly renewing it. And we can only turn back on that action by allowing ourselves to be driven even further ahead by it.⁸³

Human existence begins in and as an act of division and, because of this, the human being is defined by the mark of division. Division is effected through resistance. As a negativity, the "no" of existence offers resistance to the undifferentiated inanimate and, in a sense, performs an act of repression, for resistance is the operative force of repression.⁸⁴ Obviously, this is not repression in the true sense of the term, for strictly speaking, repression is a psychic vicissitude bound up with the division between consciousness and the unconscious. Yet, if an instinct is a borderland element between the psychic and the somatic, and, if repression is "[o]ne of the vicissitudes an instinctual impulse may undergo" in which it meets "with resistances the aim of which

⁸³ Lacan, "The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis," p. 61.

⁸⁴ See in particular Beyond the Pleasure Principle, p. 36: "The backward path that leads to complete satisfaction is as a rule obstructed by the resistances which maintain the repressions."

is to make the impulse inoperative"⁸⁵, then, it can be said that existence begins in and as an act of repression. Existence functions to make the inanimate and the instinct to return to the inanimate inoperative.

In resisting the inanimate, repression creates tension. This tension is responsible for promoting life, i.e., moving the human being in time, yet it is also responsible for human conflict. Repression, as the "no," as resistance to the inanimate, functions through the incorporation of the inanimate, i.e., it gets its power to resist through the negativity of the inanimate. The alien incorporation of the inanimate in the living human being motivates it, on one hand, to evacuate all tension and return to its previous inanimate state.

The dominating tendency of mental life, and perhaps of nervous life in general, is the effort to reduce, to keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli . . . - a tendency which finds expression in the pleasure principle; and our recognition of that fact is one of our strongest reasons for believing in the existence of death instincts.⁸⁶

Yet, on the other hand, repression uses its power of resistance to block the path to satisfaction, i.e., to complete evacuation, and, thereby, override the dominating tendency and force the human being to sustain an amount of tension.

Thus, the incorporation of the inanimate in existence splits the human being and drives it in two directions -

⁸⁵ Freud, "Repression," p. 104.

⁸⁶ Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, pp. 49-50.

toward resolution and death (as a return to the past) and toward a perpetuation of tension and life (in the future). Even though the primary impulse of the pleasure principle motivates the human organism toward complete satisfaction, toward zero tension, the path to complete satisfaction is blocked by the human being's split origin, by the definitional lack it suffers in incorporating the inanimate in the animate. The impulse for complete discharge meets resistance, for it is not consonant with the minimum requirements of the organic (i.e., a minimum of two opposing or different elements, namely, zero and, at least, one other). Even though the quantity of tension decreases toward zero, the ratio of resistance to zero increases as the reduction gets closer to zero, causing pain rather than pleasure. Thus,

[f]rom the very first, . . . the principle of inertia is upset by another set of circumstances [i.e., the "exigencies of life"] . . . The neuronic system is consequently obliged to abandon its original trend towards inertia (that is, towards a reduction of its level of tension to zero). It must learn to tolerate a store of quantity . . .⁸⁷

Thus, in psychic development, the resistance to zero gives rise to the secondary processes where the pleasure principle is displaced by the reality principle. The secondary processes challenge the function of the primary processes by binding and inhibiting them. The existence of the human being, then, is caught in the push and pull of two directions: binding and unbinding, repression and discharge. Repression,

⁸⁷ Freud, The Origins of Psychoanalysis, pp. 357-358.

as the incorporation of the inanimate, is responsible for creating the human being as it is, divided and in conflict. Obviously, then, this creation is achieved at a cost, for in promoting life by blocking a complete return to the past, human existence must be defined by tension, pain and anxiety. Satisfaction must be denied for satisfaction means a return to the inanimate, to zero, and a denial of existence, of difference. Yet, the repressed, motivated by the pleasure principle, continues to strive for satisfaction and only becomes stronger as the repression continues.

The repressed instinct never ceases to strive for complete satisfaction, which would consist in the repetition of a primary experience of satisfaction. No substitutive or reactive formations and no sublimations will suffice to remove the repressed instinct's persisting tension . . . ⁸⁸

As long as the path to satisfaction is blocked, the repressed continues to seek expression in renewed and repeated attempts. Thus, repression fates the repressed to a tendency or compulsion to repeat.

The compulsion to repeat is not, in itself, indicative of disturbance. As Freud writes, repetition, as "the re-experiencing of something identical, is clearly in itself a source of pleasure."⁸⁹ Repetition brings pleasure in the play and education of children and in the economy of order in general. Even the organic striving toward restoration of a previous

⁸⁸ Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, p. 36.

⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 30.

state is itself a form of the repetition compulsion. But the compulsion to repeat can also be symptomatic of neurosis. Neurosis results from an economic disparity between "the pleasure of satisfaction which is demanded and that which is actually achieved".⁹⁰ In other words, the stronger the repression, the greater the demand by the repressed for satisfaction and the greater the disparity between the two. Neurosis is produced in the intensity of the struggle between repression and the repressed.

It is not easy to understand how it can become possible to deprive an instinct of satisfaction. Nor is doing so without danger. If the loss is not compensated for economically, one can be certain that serious disorders will ensue.⁹¹

Repression denies satisfaction of an impulse, but the repressed impulse continues to seek satisfaction. It achieves some measure of satisfaction by attaching itself to a substitute or derivative, but is never completely satisfied as long as it is repressed. If the repression is particularly strong, such that it is able to "recognize" and, therefore, thwart the repressed even in its derivative form, then the repressed must pursue more deviant or extreme alternative paths to satisfaction. In its fierce struggle for satisfaction, the repressed is forced to repeatedly act out its demand. In the psychoanalytic experience,

". . . the patient remembers nothing of what is

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 36.

⁹¹ Freud, Civilization and its Discontents, p. 44.

forgotten and repressed, but . . . he expresses it in action. He reproduces it not in his memory but in his behaviour; he repeats it, without of course knowing that he is repeating it. . . . The greater the resistance the more extensively will expressing in action (repetition) be substituted for recollecting."⁹²

Existence is the repression of the inanimate and the subsequent drive to return to the inanimate, i.e., the death drive. Of course, repression only succeeds in blocking the death drive but not destroying it. The death drive continues to seek satisfaction through substitute means. It is hard to imagine the struggle between two such opposite forces as life (as the repressor) and death (as the repressed) to be anything but fierce. The disparity between the demand for satisfaction by the repressed death drive and its actual achievement compels the death drive to repeatedly act out its demand in such severe alternatives as guilt, anxiety and, most significantly, aggression.

This aggressive instinct is the derivative and the main representative of the death instinct which we have found alongside Eros and which shares world-dominion with it.⁹³

Thus, although the possibility of human existence is founded on the repression of the death drive, this repression has disturbing consequences, for the repressed death drive finds its expression in the living human being as aggression -

⁹² Sigmund Freud, "Further Recommendations in the Technique of Psychoanalysis: Recollection, Repetition and Working Through," trans. by Joan Riviere in Therapy and Technique (New York: Collier Books, 1963), pp. 160-161.

⁹³ Freud, Civilization and its Discontents, p. 69.

either self-imposed, e.g., self-criticism, guilt or masochism, or directed outward toward others. Unrepressed, complete satisfaction of the death drive results in the demise of the human being. Yet, repressed, the death drive turns into aggression. The question, then, is this: is there a possible expression of the death drive other than its aggressive derivative that does not lead to the termination of the human being? Is it possible to economically compensate for the death drive's loss of satisfaction other than through aggression? This concern preoccupies Freud in Civilization and its Discontents which culminates, in the final paragraph, with these words:

The fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance of their communal life by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction.⁹⁴

Freud poses the question from the position of observer and not prophet, for, as he admits, he cannot predict the course of human action and, therefore, is unable to offer any consolation for the future. Yet, psychoanalysis is not totally mute in responding to the dilemma. If the question Freud poses defines, at least in part, the theoretical field of psychoanalysis, then its technique must be directed toward providing an answer. Thus, perhaps, psychoanalysis can offer some insight.

This insight is found in the psychoanalytic treatment of

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 92.

the compulsion to repeat. Repression not only blocks satisfaction of an instinct, it makes the repeated attempts to return to the previous state, to the past, painful and difficult. Yet, until the return is made economically the future is bound to be lived as an endless and painful repetition of the past. In repressing the past, the human being lives in anxiety toward the future. But psychoanalytic technique proffers an alternative to repetition.

The patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him, and what he cannot remember may be precisely the essential part of it. . . . He is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, remembering it as something belonging to the past.⁹⁵

Thus, it is through remembering the past rather than repeating it (in action) that the analysand overcomes the repetition compulsion. Yet, this is not an easy accomplishment for the analysand, for repression blocks the path to memory. It is the task of the analyst to help the analysand move from repetition to recollection.

These reproductions . . . are invariably acted out in the sphere of the transference, of the patient's relation to the physician. When things have reached this stage, it may be said that the earlier neurosis has now been replaced by a fresh, 'transference neurosis'. It has been the physician's endeavour to keep this transference neurosis within the narrowest limits: to force as much as possible into the channel of memory and to allow as little as possible to emerge as repetition. . . . The physician cannot as a rule spare his patient this phase of the treatment. He must get him to re-experience some portion of his forgotten life, but

⁹⁵ Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, p. 12.

must see to it, on the other hand, that the patient retains some degree of aloofness, which will enable him, in spite of everything, to recognize that what appears to be reality is in fact only a reflection of a forgotten past.⁹⁶

In order to remember the past, the analysand must be made to re-experience some of it. At the same time, the analysand must develop a sense of distance or aloofness to it, i.e., must develop a future removed from the past. Memory allows the possibility of reliving an experience while maintaining a distance from it. In memory, the past is re-experienced but only in thought, i.e., it is experienced in language.

Repression of the death drive serves to sustain human existence yet makes that existence divided and painful. The repressed death drive is forced to repeatedly act out its demand in the form of aggression. In order to end the repetition and diminish the aggressive impulse, the human being must somehow return to its inanimate past and compensate for the loss of satisfaction of the death drive. Since it cannot actually return to its past, it must be made to remember that past by "reliving" some of it. What is to be "relived" is the inanimate, that is to say that the human being must "experience" the "originary" incorporation of the inanimate in the animate, the primary moment of conflict in the binary opposition. In "reliving" this moment and, at the same time, keeping a distance from it, the human being then remembers it as "only a reflection of a forgotten past."

⁹⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

But how can this moment be "relived?" The aggressive impulse only succeeds in acting out the conflict but fails to maintain a distance from it. The past is "relived" as a contemporary experience. The human being can only "relive" its inanimate past and, at the same time, maintain a distance from it in language, in the signifier. In recreating the structure of the binary opposition that grounds human existence, the signifier lets the human being remember that opposition as something past. In engaging the signifier in language, the human being stages its own role as a signifier. It dies and recreates itself, acts out the drama of its divided constitution yet maintains a distance from the scene. In language, the human being is both spectator and actor.

The symbolic function presents itself as a double movement within the subject: man makes an object of his action, but only in order to restore to this action in due time its place as a grounding. In this equivocation, operating at every instant, lies the whole process of a function in which action and knowledge alternate.⁹⁷

Thus, though the divide between signifier and signified splits the subject and throws it into conflict, it also has a mending power, for in reproducing the divided constitution of the human being in its own division, it can help the human being reconcile its past with its future.

Although language can help the human being come to remember its past, obviously, it does not automatically do so,

⁹⁷ Lacan, "The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis," p. 73.

for language itself can be used as a form of acting out or repeating. As in the case of idle chatter which blocks out the call of authentic being-in-the-world, language can be used to augment repression. In using language to remember, the human being does not deny its inanimate past, but carries on a dialogue or discourse with it, that is to say the human being recognizes the inanimate as its definitional other, as what both belongs to it yet is other than it. The human being reconciles itself with the inanimate from the place of the other, from the distance of the signifier, and understands the divided and precarious state of its being. This is the moment of authenticity when Dasein, hearing the call of conscience, is ready to remember the question of Being. For Lacan, in a psychoanalysis, the speech of the subject is "true" only when the subject has entered in this dialogue. The analyst abstains from replying to the analysand until the analysand's speech is true speech.

. . . when the subject's question has taken on the form of true speech, we give it the sanction of our reply, but thereby we have shown that true speech already contains its own reply and that we are simply adding our own lay to its antiphon. What can this mean except that we do no more than to confer on the subject's speech its dialectical punctuation?⁹⁸

While psychoanalysis cannot predict the outcome of the great struggle between "the giants" Eros and Death and, therefore, cannot offer consolation for the future, it can, at

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 95.

least, in caring about and caring for the human subject, moderate the struggle. Though psychoanalysis cannot "cure" the divided constitution of the human being, it can offer a palliative in its talking technique. In discourse, the human being recognizes the other and, in doing so, comes to remember its own definition in the other. Even so, in order to remember the past, the human being must first be made to repeat some portion of it. Will the repetition lead to recollection or only to more repetition?

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