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THINKING WHERE I AM (K)NOT: RESISTANCE, LANGUAGE AND THE UNCONSCIOUS IN FREUD AND LACAN

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Abstract

In this work I discuss the relevance of the psychoanalytic concepts of resistance and transference for an understanding of language from a psychoanalytic point of view, in particular how it is that human beings *relate* to language and whether or not we can conceive of a relation of reference between word and thing from the point of view of Jacques Lacan's notion of the subject of the unconscious. This investigation takes us through the notion of reference and how it is possible (or not) for language to even refer to anything outside of itself from a psychoanalytic point of view. How does psychoanalysis force us to confront our prejudices about language? How might we understand the status of knowledge differently (and productively) after Lacan, taking into account the concept of the unconscious as "structured like a language"? We are concerned throughout with understanding the unconscious in material terms.

Keywords

Psychoanalysis, Post-structuralism, Structuralism, Freud, Discourse, Derrida, Lacan, Resistance, Transference, Reference.

"It may thus be said that the theory of psycho-analysis is an attempt to account for two striking and unexpected facts of observation which emerge whenever an attempt is made to trace the symptoms of a neurotic back to their sources in his past life: the facts of transference and of resistance."
- Sigmund Freud

"The unconscious is neither the primordial nor the instinctual, and what it knows of the elemental is no more than the elements of the signifier."
- Jacques Lacan

"The wounds that language inflicts upon human thought can not be healed except by language itself."
- Ernst Cassirer

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Finally, it would be the most unforgivable academic dishonesty were I not to acknowledge here the hard work of Melanie Caldwell-Clark who, in her position as Graduate Program Coordinator, is nothing less than the *representative of the representation* that is The Centre for the Study of Theory and Criticism. Thank you.

Such are the names of those who comprise what we shall call the *object-cause* of the present work.

- Ian R. McCausland
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INTRODUCTION

Resistance is a peculiar notion in psychoanalysis, and it is precisely its peculiarity—which might announce itself as a feeling of perplexity, or even anxiety—that should pique our interest. Resistance suggests a certain—we might say, motivated—ignorance that crops up on the road to self-knowledge. This Socratic road is in fact always under construction and, as a result, in order to follow it, one is forced to take a number of detours. Perhaps counter-intuitively, the notion of resistance indicates that there are certain parts of our lives with which we would rather have nothing to do. I assume here that what constitutes our lives—that is, how they are primarily represented to us—is our history as a series of *mise-en-scènes* composed from the sum total of our experiences starting at this present moment and moving backward toward our beginnings. The fact that we cannot experience, much less comprehend this 'sum total', whether all at once or by trying to recall it in some kind of sequence, is significant here. We seem to inhabit a place somewhere between memory and perception, and it seems at times as though some experiences erupt into consciousness out of nowhere and make very little sense to us. This is precisely the kind of experience that psychoanalysis is curious about.

The unconscious, so the story goes, comes into being through the repression of certain things that are somehow disturbing, or that otherwise rile us in some way—certain experiences, perhaps, although this word does not quite capture the extent of what is at stake. In fact, it cannot be just certain 'things' or 'experiences' that are disturbing and thus repressed, but certain *truths*—or, rather, certain things coming into contact with a dimension of truth, for if they were not truths, or somehow experienced as touching the

true, it is difficult to see what could possibly be so disturbing about them and thus what reason we might have to repress them.

What is truly revolutionary about Lacan's 'linguistic turn'—what makes it, say, more than the fashionable product of an epoch obsessed with tacking structuralism onto anything-and-everything—is that by adapting the model of language introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure to psychoanalytic experience, he succeeds in grounding psychoanalysis in something more concrete than, say, mysterious agencies pulling levers in the psyche. To be sure, as we will develop in more detail in chapter three, language was there right from the beginning in Freud's thought. His curiosity about how hysterical symptoms function and particularly how it was that Anna O. (arguably the first patient of 'psychoanalysis', although there was no properly psychoanalytic theory to speak of in the late 1800s when she was treated by Josef Breuer, who co-authored, along with Freud, *Studies on Hysteria* in 1895) seemed to get better by talking, by narrating her symptom, led him to a study of the aphasias, and to the relationship between language and thought—what he called word-presentations and object-presentations—in the process of speaking or otherwise using language (as in writing, etcetera). Structuralism provided Lacan with a more rigorous language in which to foreground Freud's own thinking about language, which seemed to get lost in later conceptions of his work or otherwise sacrificed on the alter of the ego.

Such an overlooking of the role of language in the subsequent theorization of psychoanalysis after Freud was not without its effects, which reverberated, in a sense, 'between the lines' of the theory. Thus, one of Lacan's chief complaints about the psychoanalytic literature of his time was that one "continually find[s] Maxwell's little

demons making an appearance in analytic writing, possessing foresight, intelligence", alluding to a thought experiment by the Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell (*Seminar I* 24). The point that Lacan is making here is that much of psychoanalytic literature, in his view, reaches a certain limit and falls back on certain notions of the 'little man within the man' or a ghost in the machine, often without even paying much heed to these slights of hand; this is not without significance for the question of resistance, for the conception that we will develop through Lacan and Freud is a conception of resistance as the moment when words fail and transference begins, transference here being a complex symbolic structure that articulates that which the words could not, as a dream articulates such desires as cannot be put into words, in a strange language made up of the mnemic residues.

We can understand Lacan's method of reading psychoanalytic theory as an attempt to figure out what to do with these little demons, how they function and what they reveal or conceal in the text of analysts' theorizing—in particular, Lacan is concerned with how they function as signifiers or can be read as elements of a dream. He treats theory itself, then, as Freud treats the manifest content of a dream; he treats the discourse that psychoanalysts and theorists produce by writing about psychoanalysis is a hysteric's discourse, which envelopes a symptom expressed through the very language of psychoanalysis itself.

So it is that with Lacan's linguistic turn, repression functions not as the obscure will of some agency keeping a careful watch over the ego[1], deeming certain things disturbing and

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[1] I am not suggesting here that Freud *meant* this with his metaphor of the censorship that appears in *The Interpretation of Dreams* and is later re-worked into the super-ego in his second topology; nevertheless, these metaphors can and have been read in this way.

suppressing them. Rather, we might say that if the repressed and the return of the repressed are the same thing, then this means that what is repressed lacks a proper means of expression[2]. Instead of words, the neurotic 'speaks' with his or her being (*Seminar III* 155), something Freud refers to as 'repeating' in one of his 1912 papers on technique, as though there are too many thoughts and not enough signifiers to contain them, like in Lacan's allegory of the honey pot in *Seminar VII*, where honey that is "very liquid" will be "suddenly all over the place", overflowing its container (19). In effect, Lacan uses structuralist linguistics to think the *dynamic* unconscious in terms of the material phenomenon of language. In this way, we understand his orders of the imaginary and the symbolic as loosely based on the signified and the signifier, respectively: the symbolic structures the imaginary and comes to be an issue for language when it escapes this structure of signification. In this sense, Lacan's understanding of meaning is radically opposed to that of the Derridian/post-structuralist understanding: meaning, or the effect of meaning over-and-against signification or the symbolically constituted universe of (discursive) knowledge, for Lacan, comes about through a surplus that eludes signification. In other words, where signification 'fails'—in the sense that it fails to contain or register meaning in language—meaning erupts. This fits into the (Lacanian/Freudian) dynamic conception of the unconscious precisely insofar as meaning is not a 'hunch' or an 'intuition' on the part of the analyst; on the contrary, it comes about

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[2] Consider, for example, the following passage from Lacan's third seminar: "What is repression for a neurotic? It's a language, another language that he manufactures with his symptoms, that is, if he is a hysteric or an obsessional, with the imaginary dialectic of himself and the other. The neurotic symptom acts as a language that enables repression to be expressed. This is precisely what enables us to grasp the fact that repression and the return of the repressed are one and the same thing, the front and back of a single process" (60).

through a systematic and rigorous process of exploring how meaning is expressed through other cues such as bodily tics or other symptomatic gestures, rituals or thought-processes, etcetera. Meaning must always be *revealed* through some means, some (pseudo)symbolic, symptomatic means of expression rather than through a projection onto the Other. In this way, psychoanalysis is fundamentally empiricist: the analyst is always searching for signs that may disprove (or prove) his or her theories about the analysand's behaviour.

Language, or, more precisely, Saussure's model of language allows Lacan to rescue the unconscious from the obscurantist terms in which it is often thought, as a wellspring of drives and infantile fantasies. Thus, it is language that has to do with its inception[3], and so we can situate the unconscious at the outset as an effect of the inability of language to register everything (we experience). Or, to put this in another way, one that is deliberately tautological but nonetheless more accurate: language can only account for what it is capable of accounting for—it can only account for that which already has a place carved out for it in language. The paradox is that language cannot say everything but within it everything can be said. The signifier is in some sense responsible for the registration of reality at the level of consciousness, granting determinate existence to some part of the amorphous mass that Lacan calls the real, but it does not *refer* to the real, for there are no objects in the real to refer *to*. Objects are made, not born; they are the product of complex processes. The world of objects, for Lacan, is derived from the world of the imaginary, of images, for perception refers primarily to the surface of things and not essences. In this way, images are also bound up with the body, for perception is in the first place *embodied.*

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[3] See *Seminar XVII*, where Lacan insists, "language is the condition of the unconscious" (41).

So language refers not to the real as such but to objects of perception that are derived from our being *in* the world, but there is not for all that a necessary relation between perception and object at least in the sense of perceptions reflecting the 'objective' state of reality. According to psychoanalysis, we create the world of objects that we inhabit and to be sure, this gives rise to a tension between word and thing, language and the world of objects, insofar as language links us to the social. Individually, there is no necessary relation between the world we perceive and the world of objects, but this does not, obviously, mean that we can make language refer to anything we want. Language, indeed, begins to play a role in shaping the world of objects—but what of, for example, perceptions from childhood before language could exert this formative influence? The wager here is that such experiences do not simply disappear; the fact that they do not come easily to mind is not evidence that they do not exist but rather evidence that they exert themselves elsewhere than in consciousness, such as in fantasy: not only the kinds of fantasizing with which we might be most familiar, such as daydreams or other sorts of semi-conscious introspective indulgences, but unconscious fantasies which structure our spontaneous mode of relating to the world, such as the things from our experiences that we are most apt to remember, the words that are most apt to come to mind, our spontaneous way of interpreting intersubjective situations, etcetera. All of these things require a choice that is already made and that we are not even aware of having made. Things that come into conscious awareness do so at the expense of other things; things that we choose to say come at the expense of other things that we have chosen not to say; words that we choose to use come at the expense of other words. All of these choices will also depend on the person to whom we are speaking. For psychoanalysis, language does

not consist of words alone: every ounce of our being participates in the symbolic and, in this way, speaks. It is precisely when words fail that we are most ourselves.

And so, the dimension of language that Lacan is concerned with has to do with the breakdown of meaning, of the dimension of *non-sense*. If Lacan emphasizes the signifier it is precisely insofar as, abstracted from the signified, it is the non-sense of language, the enigma that persists and motivates the search for understanding; it is only by *excommunicating* or *exiling* non-sense that understanding is achieved. Like Napoleon on Elba, however, non-sense is tenacious and busy plotting its return. Why? Because this non-sense is part of the subject's being that resists signification, which cannot be accounted for in language. This resistance is at the same time structural: a kernel of non-sense is necessary in order for sense to be maintained. To situate the problem in Cartesian terms: something must remain un-thought in order to sustain a correspondence between the *I think* and the *I am.*

Language introduces a radical cut between these two sides of the *cogito*: the *I think* takes place elsewhere than the *I am*. The two 'I's in the *cogitio* should not deceive us: they do not refer to the same locus. Thus one of Lacan's formulations of the *cogito* is "I am thinking where I am not, therefore I am where I am not thinking" ("Instance" 430). The 'I' that holds the place of the subject in language is not at all a simple matter for psychoanalysis, for it is not immediately clear whether or not, "when I speak of myself, I am the same as the self of who I speak" (430). Such is what is at stake in Lacan's formulation of the split subject, which will be explored in chapter one.

The symbolic order, serving as the social link, establishes the relation between the subject and Other: being is situated on the side of the subject and meaning on the side of

the Other. My being, in other words, has no meaning without the existence of an Other, but this is not to say that the meaning imputed there is the whole story. Although being and meaning overlap slightly, one will never be reducible to the other; it is impossible to come to possess with certainty, for example, the meaning of (one's) being unless one can somehow possess the Other utterly; the psychoanalytic name for such a *fantasmatic* possession is *perversion*. Fantasy is the name given to representations of impossibility. Fantasies are little scenes that contend with, and try to signify the impossible, but they bear the trace of this impossibility; the pervert, for example, overcomes in fantasy the impossibility of possessing the meaning of being by making himself (perverts are invariably masculine) into the instrument of the Other's desire. Lacan, we should add, distinguishes between ordinary, neurotic fantasy and perverse fantasy according to their respective stances vis-à-vis the *objet petit a*. Ordinary, neurotic fantasy attempts to use the *objet petit a* as a means of answering the question of the subject's desire: it is the lost object that the neurotic wants to recapture. Perverse fantasy, on the other hand, strives to embody the *objet petit a* in order to master and fill out the Other's lack. In this way, the pervert's being gives way to the Other: his being is defined by and expressed through the Other. The pervert himself disappears.

What is at stake, ultimately, in terms of the relation of language to the unconscious is how the subject's discourse is linked to the Other—that is, how the process by which signifiers come to shape the subject's reality, to determine what can be 'seen' (or not seen), is mediated by the reality of a shared language. Lacan develops his conception of the subject—the subject of the unconscious—in contrast to Descartes' subject, which Lacan calls the subject of certainty. His method is not simply to 'oppose' the Cartesian

subject, but to 'traverse the fantasy' of self-transparent subjectivity: the subject of the unconscious, then, develops *out of* an encounter with the Cartesian subject, instead of simply in opposition to it.

Thus, in chapter one, we examine the logic of this encounter, especially in terms of the relationship between psychoanalysis and philosophy as two discourses whose function is to *refer* in some capacity: in a word, to produce knowledge (about the world). The entirety of the world presented here turns, ultimately, on this question of the relationship between psychoanalysis and (Cartesian) philosophy and what is at stake in their respective attempts to produce knowledge. We are interested in Descartes in particular not only because of the way that Lacan, as early as his well-known 1949 paper on the mirror-stage, situates psychoanalysis in relation to the *cogito*, but also because for him, as for us, the *cogito* represents the fundamental structure of modern subjectivity and in particular the subject of science, exemplified in the quest for transparent, indubitable knowledge about the world. For such a purpose, all manner of institutions and apparatuses are created, to be sure, in order to compensate for the uncertainty of linguistic reference.

Descartes was ultimately concerned with securing a foundation for certainty within discourse itself, which, amounts to securing a foundation from which knowledge can *refer* to the world, can refer outside of itself within discourse, without any prosthetic apparatuses or institutions. Of course, the problem we will encounter in chapter one is that God itself in Descartes' discourse functions as a prosthesis that facilitates reference, which Lacan identifies as a structural position inherent to discourse. He calls this position the *sujet supposé savoir*, which is, as we will see, behind the mechanism of transference,

closely related to the interruption of speech, and thus the suspension of even a semblance of reference, which is manifested in resistance. Chapters two and three will continue to unravel this relation between knowledge and reference from two different angles: first by looking at psychoanalytic theory itself as a knowledge, albeit a peculiar one, insofar as it bears the mark of its founder, Freud, whose desire was put utterly into the service of psychoanalysis; and then, in chapter three, we will return to the problematic relation between psychoanalysis and the *cogito* from the point of view of the physiological disturbances of speech found in the aphasias and how they can shed light on the Lacanian theory of the subject and Derrida's "Différance", which we see as an attempt by Derrida to forestall the problematic closure of being brought about by the *cogito*.

The problem of reference is indeed a thorny one, to say nothing of the storied history of psychoanalysis itself. As such, this thesis constitutes less a thorough study of the issue and more a starting point for further research. If I had only one reservation about what unfolds in the following pages, it would be, perhaps, that I might be interpreted as being a little too easy on psychoanalysis, a little too willing to give it the benefit of the doubt. This may be true, but I think the merit of this study nevertheless consists in another way of looking at what psychoanalytic theory contributes to the study of the problem of being (human). There is, to be sure, already a bulk of criticism on the subject of psychoanalysis and especially its founder, Freud. In the following pages, I have explored this only through the medium of one of psychoanalysis' most vocal critics, Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen. Nevertheless, I think this work represents a productive starting point for further thinking about the problem that psychoanalysis poses for the discourses of both philosophy and science, which I hope to continue thinking about in the years that follow.

The death of God, we might say, seems to have given way to the undead Father Freud, who continues to stalk the 21st century despite myriad pronouncements of the death of psychoanalysis[4]. If we conclude in chapter three that God is a symptom, in particular, a symptom of the impossibility of certainty, we can only allude to the supplementary problem of how the figure of Freud functions as a symptom, not only for psychoanalysis, but for the Humanities in general. Such a question merits a thorough study of its own, for which I believe I have succeeded only in laying the foundation.

This work's primary concern, on the other hand, is in thinking about how the psychoanalytic notion of resistance can shed light on the problem of the relationship, which we see as being at its core the problem of referentiality, between discourse, being and thought. The Lacanian notion of the *objet petit a* as that little piece of being caught up in signification will inform our journey through this problem. For Lacan, it is ultimately a surplus element that escapes being pinned down either to thought or being. It escapes signification, which is to say that it cannot be directly represented, but at the same time it cannot be thought purely on the side of being, either. This is, ultimately, our point of departure and if we begin with thought in chapter one, we end on the question of being, especially how it the *objet petit a* is tied up in the psychoanalytic notion of the act and fantasy, fantasy, for us, being not quite a discourse proper, but nevertheless playing an important role in structuring our very relationship to the world.

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[4] Some examples of these pronouncements of the death of psychoanalysis include: the November 29th, 1993 issue of Time Magazine, which famously asked on its cover, "Is Freud Dead?"; Todd Dufresne's 2003 book, *Killing Freud* and his February 2004 op-ed for the LA Times titled, "Psychoanalysis is Dead…So How Does that Make You Feel?".

CHAPTER ONE

Language and the Subject in Psychoanalysis

Our story of the psychoanalytic concept of resistance begins with the problem of reference, with not only the question of the thing or things to which language refers but what makes it even possible for language to *refer* in the first place. While it is commonplace to understand Jacques Lacan's well known 'return to Freud' as a distinctly *structuralist* reinterpretation of Freud's works in light of the theories of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, it would be a mistake, as Richard Boothby rightly points out, to put "too much stress on the linguistic side of Lacan" (21). The notion of reference, in our view, moves beyond a too narrow focus on language by bringing it into relation with a world and the subject or rather, the subjectivity that dwells within it, whose objects make up this world, from which meanings are also derived through these objects. At the same time, the subject itself is not reducible to its objects or their (conscious) meanings; this is, in the first place, what is meant by the unconscious: something eludes the field that constitutes that which is referred *to*. We situate, then, the notion of reference in the relation between Lacan's orders of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. Lacan's notion of the symbolic and its role in the unconscious "must be understood in its dynamic relation to his earlier and seminal conception of the imaginary" (21). To put this another way, if the unconscious is indeed 'structured like a language', then we must understand it not only in terms of the *signifier* but also of the *signified*, which is often overshadowed in Lacan's work owing to the stress he places on the signifier. Only in this way, as we will see, does the real come to be understood as something outside this relation of the symbolic and the imaginary. The (Lacanian) real is not something that is easy to talk

about directly, but we will nevertheless approach it in this chapter through the various ways that the subject tries to avert signification or disown it, namely, repression and resistance, which are, ultimately, two sides of the same process.

Resistance has to do with the fact that these two parts of the Saussurian schema of the sign are ultimately incommensurate; they are separated by a gap that precludes their ever coming together to form a perfect unit(y). Thus, in translating the Saussurian schema into what he calls an algorithm (figure 1), Lacan draws attention to the bar, that part of Saussure's schema between signifier and signified, where he 'says more than he intends'.

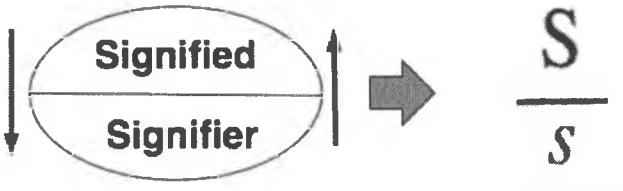

Figure 1: Lacan's Modification of Saussure's Schema of the Sign

Lacan's algorithm is the germ cell or embryo from which his reinterpretation of psychoanalysis develops. By drawing attention to the bar, Lacan is drawing attention to the unconscious. He is not saying that it is impossible for language to carry meaning, but rather that the recognition of meaning necessitates a loss of meaning elsewhere: one is effectively (although not consciously) choosing a meaning at the expense of other possible meanings. This is how we can understand Lacan's answer in his seminar on the *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* to one of his students, Jacques-Alain Miller, who asked whether the unconscious implied an ontology. Lacan replied that the unconscious was "neither being, nor non-being, but the unrealized" (30). In every 'crossing of the bar' (into consciousness), in every attempt to put a thought into words,

there is something that gets left out. This does not mean that what is left out goes 'in' to the unconscious, as though the unconscious were some kind of holding cell for unwanted thoughts, but the things that get left out do have what we might call unconscious *effects* because there are reasons why they are left out. This will become clearer over the course of the next three chapters, but I should point out that there is no definitive explanation or theory in psychoanalysis that explains everything that has to do with the unconscious. Part of our task here is to follow Lacan as he tries to understand what is implied by Freud's discovery[5] of the unconscious and how it might be understood to operate in human beings.

Lacan's algorithm brings the unconscious into the structure of language, owing to which there is a resistance that is structural to language itself, that one cannot escape and that is at work from the moment one puts language to *use*. The bar indicates that the signifier *resists* signification: contrary to Saussure's schema where the signifier and signified happily co-exist, Lacan's signifier does not imply any meaning whatsoever, much less a meaning we might expect. Such a structure implies that language itself, which is the "condition of the unconscious" (*Seminar XVII* 41), introduces an unbridgeable gap between the human being and the representation of its world.

This first chapter, then, will examine, within the framework of resistance, the status of language for the human being *as such*, that is, distinct from the subject, which is—in the strict Lacanian sense—an effect of human being's entry into language, a product of our

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[5] That Freud 'discovered' the unconscious is something that is sometimes thought contentious. Suffice it to say that when I use the word here I am talking about the *dynamic* unconscious. Obviously the term itself has a long history in philosophical discourse. For more information on the philosophical and cultural underpinnings of the unconscious, see Henri Ellenberger's *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Development of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York, Basic Books, 1974).

dwelling in a linguistic universe, and not a category denoting substance. Language is, as it were, the field from which Lacan mounts a critique of the Cartesian *cogito*, a structure that Lacan returns to again and again over the span of his teaching and which he considers to be the foundation of modern subjectivity.

In "The Mirror Stage", Lacan goes so far as to suggest that his formulation of the mirror-stage, and the "light it sheds on the *I* function in the experience psychoanalysis provides us of it" sets us "at odds with any philosophy directly stemming from the *cogito*" (75). Cartesian subjectivity—as a fundamental opposition between subject and object, of subject *qua* thinking-substance (*res cogitans*) over-and-against a world-substance (*res extensia*)—is considered to be fundamentally at odds with the psychoanalytic conception. As Mladen Dolar puts it: "in the very first paragraph of the first notorious *écrit,* there is a clear alternative, an emphatic choice that one has to assume: *either the mirror phase or the cogito*" (11). And indeed, although Dolar suggests that what is at stake is that "one has to decide one way or the other between psychoanalysis and philosophy, which has, in the past three centuries, largely issued from cogito, despite its variety of forms and despite its often proposed criticism of cogito" (11), it is also crucial to note that with this statement Lacan situates psychoanalysis in proximity to a specific (philosophical) discursive horizon. Psychoanalysis, as Lacan conceives it, is not merely *opposed to* the aims of this philosophy but exposes its foundation; its aim is to enter into the discourse in order to 'traverse the fantasy' that underpins it. In this way, the *cogito* becomes the *fantasmatic* core of modern subjectivity. The aim of psychoanalysis is to call into question the very thing that sustains knowledge production: the fantasy of transparent consciousness.

Psychoanalysis concerns itself with the *cause* of knowledge. Descartes, according to Lacan, situates the thinking subject in a specific relation to the world; however if this makes possible the production of the knowledge with which science is concerned, this is because God functions as the guarantor of truth (Fink, "Science" 60), of *cause*: not, to quote one of Lacan's formulations of the *objet petit a*, "the cause as logical category, but as causing the whole effect" ("Science and Truth" 738). God is thereby the exception that simultaneously constitutes and delimits the field of reality: through a kind of slight of hand, Descartes overcomes the problem of reference, setting "modern man free of the burden of truth" and allowing him "to go on to develop knowledge that referred to nothing outside of itself" (Fink, "Science" 60). Of course, at the same time, the field of reality itself becomes a kind of 'symptom' of this *foreclosure*.

If the tradition of German Idealism from Kant to Hegel is any indication, Cartesian 'reality'—what we are calling 'modern subjectivity'—nevertheless bears the trace of the act of the foreclosure of God. It is not within the scope of the present study to go into any detail regarding the relation of Descartes to the tradition of German Idealism[6]. Our point is that Lacan's first move is to situate psychoanalysis in relation to a philosophical tradition and secondly, as that discourse which concerns itself with what Lacan calls (regarding Cartesian subjectivity) the 'subject of science', psychoanalysis concerns itself with how the discourse of science *puts into practice* a certain self-transparency of the subject that is a vestige of the Cartesian legacy. This vestige appears to us in the form of a certain illusory relation to language that continues to persist today: that language is capable of referring to things in the world in the sense that it can be evaluated in terms of

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[6] See Slavoj Žižek's *Tarrying With the Negative* for an excellent analysis of this problematic.

propositions possessing 'truth values'. On closer examination, the paradox of this position should become clear: in order to determine the truth-value of a proposition, it must be measured against a certain objective knowledge of the world that somehow persists *beyond* any particular propositions or claims. Propositional logic paradoxically presumes and disavows a *subject supposed to know*—the position of God in the structure of Descartes' discourse.

No wonder, then, that Lacan insists, against the Nietzchean claim that "God is dead", that the true formula of atheism is that "God is unconscious" (*Four Fundamental* 59). This statement, of course, is truer to the Nietzschean meaning of his oft-misunderstood phrase anyway. "God is dead" in the Nietzschean sense needs to be supplemented with "but he has not been properly buried"[7] and this is precisely how we should understand the unconscious. Formations—slips of the tongue, dreams, bungled actions, etc.—of the unconscious operate precisely because they have not been properly buried. How does one 'bury' them? Through analysis, or, more specifically, through understanding how they operate in (the patient's) discourse. Although the analyst offers what are called 'interpretations', psychoanalysis is not a hermeneutic practice. As a first step to understanding this (we will examine the interpretive method of psychoanalysis in more detail in Chapter 2), we need look no further that Freud's 1925 paper on negation.

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[7] I am referring here to aphorism 125 from the *Gay Science* (page 181 of the Walter Kaufman translation, New York: Vintage, 1974): "Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing yet of the divine decomposition?"

An Introduction to "Negation"

Objects, both abstract and concrete, surround us. Daily life is a veritable deluge of objects: we manipulate them, affirm them, assert connections between them, and, as often as not, try to ignore (some of) them. Under normal circumstances, language facilitates this almost seamlessly so that it appears that we are at one with the objects that populate our world. No wonder, then, that Saussure's diagram of the linguistic sign (figure 1) reflects this spontaneous relationship of language and object. Lacan, working from a discourse that has always taken as its starting point those instances where this relationship fails, had more opportunity to notice that this very failure tells us something about the nature of language. Lacan's algorithm, in other words, is descriptive: it describes the way in which this failure to fully 'connect' with the world is in fact a *part* of language and not the product of some insidious external influence, whether psychological such as psychosis or other forms of madness or physiological such as brain lesions or other forms of brain damage[8]. Yet if language does not naturally form a unifying bond or otherwise seamlessly interface with a pre-existing world of objects, then where do objects come from and what role does language play, if any, in their constitution and perdurance? Psychoanalysis has always been very curious about how the subject comes to inhabit a world of objects and, its corollary, how these objects come to be. In fact, we can think of the Lacanian subject as being always *in* question and always *a* question (situated in the register of *becoming* rather than *being*), which is reflected back, however enigmatically, by the failure of the

[8] We should note, to Freud's credit, that he was never one to mark rigid distinctions between the normal and the pathological, or otherwise quarantine them off from one another. Neurosis is, for him, an 'exaggerated' version of normal functioning, just as the psychoses, too, although incurable by Freud's standards, guide his thinking about the 'normal' functions of the ego.

objects, which (in)form the subject's world, to satisfy, to be *it*. The subject is sustained by this kernel of non-sense that supports the meanings he or she makes—whether or not the aim is to affirm or deny them.

There is, at the very heart of the human organism's entry into the symbolic, of its coming into being as subject, an impossible-to-say. All of the subject's discursive formations crystalize around a void that cannot be symbolized, that *resists* symbolization and yet at the same time is, paradoxically, its *cause*[9]. As early as 1895, Freud had named this impossible-to-say the 'pathogenic nucleus' in order to account for a peculiar phenomenon in his early technique (which we will describe in more detail in chapter two): "[t]he deeper we go the more difficult it becomes for the emerging memories to be recognized, till near the nucleus we come upon memories which the patient disavows even in reproducing them" (*Studies* 289). This is the first description of resistance, and Freud posits the pathogenic nucleus in order to account for it. As the analysis progressed toward what Freud assumed was the origin of patients' symptoms, they would exhibit a steadfast refusal to recognize the mnemic material that entered consciousness as having anything to do with them.

Are we to assume here that resistance 'traps' the patient into confirming the analyst's preconceptions, that any agreement on the part of the patient is confirmation but any disagreement is evidence of resistance and therefore also confirmation? Such an understanding of the logic of resistance completely misses the mark, jumping too quickly into ascribing *meaning* to the patient's discourse, a step that Freud does not take or

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[9] Note that these are the exact words that Slavoj Žižek uses to describe the Real, but for the purposes of the argument I am developing here, we will leave to one side this complex Lacanian notion.

condone in any of his accounts of technique. Such an argument against Freud as we are outlining here is situated in the register of what Lacan calls the imaginary, which is to say, in ego discourse and the relationship of ego to ego that gives rise to ordinary understanding. Freud's concern was not to intervene at this imaginary level, but to take account of the patient's discourse as a symbolic formation, to defer the moment of understanding and the attribution of meaning in order to get a more complete picture of the symbolic constellation that makes up the patient's world. Freud's technique here consists in a curiosity about this peculiar logic of the patient's statements: that one would bring something up only to immediately deny or disavow it. The question at the outset is not *what does this mean?* or *what truth-value should be ascribed to these statements?* but *where did this material come from, if not from the 'patient'?* In other words, Freud is effectively saying to the patient, "I believe you! The problem is, there is another you, at another scene, who is apparently begging to differ." The task is, then, to find out how this other scene functions in the patient's psychic economy without dismissing it outright or reducing it to some privileged imaginary meaning. Freud seeks the coordinates of a knowledge that is operating somewhere unbeknownst to the patient. In order to bring this knowledge into the foreground, meaning must be suspended. Such is precisely what the technique of free association aims at: the suspension of meaning.

We see evidence of this suspension in Freud's technique outlined in his 1925 paper, "Negation". Here again, the peculiar opening of this article might strike one as scandalous insofar as it appears to put into question—even deny—the patient's precious ability to distance him- or herself from misunderstanding; it appears to remove the patient's last line of defense against the analyst's own prejudices. At first glance, one is tempted to

dismiss "Negation" as further proof of the 'heads I win, tails you lose' mentality attributed to psychoanalysis by Freud's interlocutor in a later paper, "Constructions in Analysis". Since Freud maintains that such a view is mistaken, let us follow him awhile and see if we can tease out a different interpretation. The first paragraph of "Negation" reads:

> The manner in which our patients present their associations during analytic work gives us occasion for some interesting observations. 'Now you'll think I want to insult you, but I don't really mean to.' This, we realize, is a thought being rejected, as it emerges, by means of projection. Or: 'You ask who this person in my dream can be. It's *not* my mother.' This we amend: 'So it is your mother.' In our interpretations we take the liberty of disregarding the negation and seizing on the pure content of the thought. It is as if the patient had said: 'My first thought was, it's my mother, but I have no desire to admit this.' (96)

From the first sentence, then, Freud stresses "[t]he manner" in which patients present associations and this is what the entire meaning of the paragraph turns on. He is concerned not with the implicit meaning of his patients' utterances, but with their form; reference and meaning are suspended. We should notice that Freud's 'correction' of the patient's utterance—"So it is your mother"—does not for all that ascribe any Oedipal meaning to it, thereby forcing the analysand into some kind of nefarious psychoanalytic trap. It merely suggests that 'mother' came to mind without any prompting[10]. It is, in other words, a particular way of listening and of registering the patient's speech rather than paying attention to what is a search for some kind of underlying 'deep' significance. If we read his or her statement for meaning alone, we are led astray, toward a referent that is elsewhere rather than right in front of us—we supplement the statement with our own ideas, whether favorably or disparagingly, of what the Oedipus complex means instead of

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[10] One should pay attention to the way in which this utterance reveals the analysand's *anticipation* of the analyst's knowledge, a scenario that is rife with significance in terms of transference.

tarrying with the word 'mother' until a later time when its meaning might present itself in the patient's own words. By "disregarding the negation and seizing on the pure content of the thought", Freud allows the imaginary contours of the analysand's specific mode of relating to the world, his or her own way of cutting it up into determinate, workable objects, come into view.

Negation, somewhat paradoxically, conjures a presence, as it were, *ex nihilo*. After all, in order to deny the existence of this *something*, it must first be made present. Statements structured along the lines of, "*you'll* think *I* want to insult you, but I don't mean to", are so commonplace that we might be inclined, in ordinary conversation, to pay little attention to this bizarre logic. And yet, if we concern ourselves not with *meaning* but with *manner*, with what the statement reveals apropos of the interplay of presences and absences, and that it contains an associative element, whether or not the goal is ultimately to disavow it, we see that out of the almost infinite array of possible intentions that this analysand could impute to the other, the analysand's statement *affirms* the existence of an insult-intention[11]. Why does the patient assume that the analyst will be insulted, as opposed to, say, curious or perhaps even relieved that the patient has finally spoken his or her mind? Some rather convoluted psychic gymnastics are implied, whereby the analysand 'steps into' the mind of the analyst, hearing his own words through the ears of this other and trying to anticipate in advance what impact that might have.

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[11] The crucial point to keep in mind here is that, of course things would be different if the analyst first said, "you mean to insult me." The point is, however, that the utterances Freud is concerned with here are ones that appear spontaneously, without such overt prompting by the analyst. This is why, although transference does occur in the analysand's ordinary relationships (insofar as it is an effect of language), it is more difficult to pin down. There are too many presences to contend with. The analytic situation attempts to distill this, so that the presences can be dealt with in a more controlled setting.

Meaning and reference go hand-in-hand here. By suspending the meaning of the analysand's statements, the referential function of language is also obscured. Indeed, part of what might strike one as scandalous about Freud's short paper is that we are so used to thinking about language as what Jacques-Alain Miller calls a "tool for reference" ("Language" 25). What is not adequately stressed in Freud, but is evident in his examples, is the way in which the negation attaches itself onto the Other qua analyst. In Freud's examples, there is always a 'you', whom the patient is attempting to distance him- or herself from: "*you* ask who the person in my dream is," says the patient, or, "*you'll* think I want to insult *you*." Even in statements that do not explicitly contain this 'you', but which follow the same logic, such as (my personal favorite), "I'm not racist, but…", there is an implied '*you*'—whom, otherwise do we suppose is the one who might think the statement following the 'but' *is* racist? For whom do we feel the need to preface our statement? In "Negation", Freud brings into focus the fact that, ultimately, the "analyst *is* the reference of the analytic process" (25). More generally, the Other (which, in analysis, the analyst functions as) ultimately sustains the referential function of language, acts as a guarantor of reference so that the suspension of the negation is effectively a suspension of any reference to an 'outside' at which the patient's speech might aim: Freud "seiz[es] the pure content of the thought" by refusing to be drawn into the overt meaning of the statement, by refusing, in other words, to play the role of the *subject supposed to know* for the patient. By frustrating reference in this way, he draws attention to how the 'outside' of language, in the sense of a language referring to things in the world, is effectively sustained by a fantasy that 'sutures' the gap between 'inside' and 'outside', word and thing: reference is supplemented by a *supposed subject of knowledge*.

A *supposed subject of knowledge* or *subject supposed to know*—Lacan's term, *sujet supposé savoir* can be translated into English either way—is structurally necessary in order for knowledge to refer. By reading Freud's "Negation" alongside the Cartesian structure of the *cogito,* we can discern its importance for Lacan's thought: in particular, what we are concerned with is how his psychoanalytic theory can reveal a materialist understanding of the human relation to language. Language, as we are accustomed to acknowledging without really believing it, is not magical—and yet, that language can refer straightforwardly to things in the world, that truth, as logic would have it, is a correspondence of language to a factual state of things, requires nothing less than a divine intervention: Descartes, if nothing else, proved as much in his *Meditations*. If Lacan is concerned with a materialist conception of language, it is to the extent that God is an element in a structure that is immanent to human experience through the use of language; it cannot be simply cast aside or ignored (lest something else take its place), but rather it must be brought 'down to earth' in the general form of the *subject supposed to know.* For Lacan, as I have already alluded to at the beginning of this chapter, God is *unconscious* insofar as the signifier 'God' continues to have a function and hold a place in the structure of human experience: to facilitate reference, to bridge the gap between word and thing. The *subject supposed to know* is the gateway through which knowledge of the external world is encountered; it must be taken into account as a function if we are to understand in material terms how meaning functions.

The Subject of the Unconscious

The *cogito* is a primary point of reference for Lacan at least as far back as his 1949 paper on the mirror-stage where he presented the mirror stage and the *cogito* as mutually

exclusive. Indeed, the very notion of the unconscious, as introduced by Freud, would seem to corroborate this mutual exclusivity, and sign, as it were, the *cogito*'s death warrant: the "self-transparent subjectivity that figures as the foundation of modern philosophy—even in those parts of it that were critical of cogito—seems to be submitted a decisive blow with the advent of psychoanalysis" (Dolar 12). And yet this 'choice'—either psychoanalysis or the *cogito*—is not as clear-cut as it might at first seem. For Lacan, the self-transparency generally associated with the Cartesian subject is really only half the story. As he points out in *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, the Cartesian subject of certainty—for Descartes is in the first place concerned with determining how one can be *certain* of knowledge—is built upon a foundation of doubt: "Descartes tells us—*By virtue of the fact that I doubt, I am sure that I think*, and…*by virtue of thinking, I am*" (35; emphasis in original). Moreover, Lacan claims that the respective methods of Freud and Descartes are brought into close proximity owing to their interest in this function of doubt. Freud's patients, as we have already seen in the previous section (although there are examples in abundance in his work), also doubt—"It's not my mother", "I'm not insulting you"—and in their doubt, Freud, like Descartes, "is assured that a thought is there" (*Four Concepts* 36). It is, however, here that Freud and Descartes also part ways: whereas for Descartes this thought becomes the support of being *qua* (self-)presence, becomes (literally, we might say, by an act of God) identical to being, for Freud doubt is the assurance of a thought "which is unconscious, which. . .reveals itself as absent" (36); it is, in a sense, the trace of a being which is elsewhere. In this way, doubt is "a sign of resistance" (35), resistance being an eruption of being into thought, a disruption of

thought *qua* the signification/representation of being. It is in precisely this way that resistance takes us to the limit of reference.

With the introduction of the unconscious as that place where the subject, in the strict, Lacanian sense (which is to say, the subject as non-substantial, elusive remainder) is "at home", as that place to which thought is relegated and through which "the subject will reveal himself" (36), Freud introduces an irreducible gap between thought and being; it is here, then, between thought and being, that the drama of psychoanalysis plays out. To be sure, the introduction of this gap is not arbitrary; it is the place, ultimately, which functions as the locus of doubt, which suspends or holds in abeyance reference. By doubting, both Freud's patients and Descartes alike enter into the problem of being. Lacan reformulates the *cogito* in light of psychoanalytic experience thus: "I am thinking where I am not, therefore I am where I am not thinking" ("Instance" 430). It is the moment of resistance signified here in the "not", which reveals the gap that forever separates thinking from being and which, crucially, forces the subject, who cannot have it both ways, whose being is not liberated but *alienated* in its signification (the "I think"), to choose.

We can begin to see here how the signifier, as the support of signification *qua* representation, introduces a cut between thought and being. Here, Lacan effectively inherits the tradition of German Idealism (Dolar 14), the development of which, after Descartes, is evident in, among others, Kant and Hegel, aimed to explore the void of subject between thought and being[12] that Descartes was quick to close up by rendering it

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[12] In Kant, this split takes the form of his distinction between the intelligible world and the sensible world; in Hegel, the same split occurs along the lines of desire and knowledge. In both cases the subject is not reducible to either the intelligible world or

as *res cogitans*. In Kant, for example, the split between thought and being introduced by Descartes is conceived of as a split between an intellectual and a sensible world, the point being that the subject is reducible to neither: we might formulate the problem of the subject in German Idealism as being a matter of how to think a subject that has a being that is both 'interior' and 'exterior' to itself. Effectively, what is gained by Kant's distinction between the intelligible and the sensible is an acknowledgement of what amounts to two 'modes' of being in which the subject seems to be caught—or, more accurately, *between which the subject is split*—neither of which is reducible to a final squaring of accounts that would tell us what the subject *is*. The subject remains, as it were, as an empty place, a spot or (in the evocative words of Lacan) "stain" that cannot be reduced to any positive content (*Four Fundamental* 74). Our aim is not to give a complete picture of this long and complex history of the subject[13] but to sketch out, in passing, how this subject has continued to be a persistent problem for philosophy, a fundamental, if elusive piece of the real around which discourse has circulated—even, ultimately, structuralist discourse could not proceed without some acknowledgement of the subject, albeit to situate itself *in opposition* to it. By bringing the subject back into psychoanalytic discourse—and in particular, scandalously, a discourse notorious for its apparent 'structural' reinterpretation of psychoanalysis—Lacan, in the first place, acknowledges the subject as operating on this discourse, he plays the analyst to

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desire (in the way that Descartes' subject qua thought is reducible to its being), but is suspended between 'inner' (intelligible world, desire) and 'outer' (sensible world, knowledge) modes of being.

[13] Those interested may wish to consult Slavoj Žižek's *Tarrying with the Negative* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993), which deals with the subject of the relation between Lacan and German Idealism quite extensively.

structuralism's negation. We can imagine structuralism as a patient on the couch, saying, "Whatever that thing, that empty place, that 'I think', in my discourse is, its not the subject", to which Lacan amends, "so it is the subject...." We will examine the differences between Lacan and (post-)structuralism in more detail in chapter three, however, there is also another, more fundamental, reason why Lacan re-introduced the subject which must be dealt with here: precisely because it is ultimately the signifier that introduces this gap—which is to say that it is structure itself that presupposes the subject.

We have already claimed that Lacan's project vis-à-vis psychoanalysis can be productively thought as providing the materialist coordinates by which the unconscious can be understood[14]. The materialist foundation, then, of the unconscious is sought in language, which was why he turned to structuralism. In this way, Lacan couples the "empty spot" of the subject "with the lack implied by the Symbolic" (Dolar 16). In the last instance, Descartes cannot formulate the *cogito* otherwise than to say it: "this *I think*, for us, certainly cannot be detached from the fact that he can formulate it only by *saying* it to us, implicitly—a fact that [Descartes] forgets" (*Four Fundamental* 36). If the signifier introduces the gap, it cannot be detached from speech, which brings the signifier into play and by means of which the subject is divided into the subject of the enunciation —the "I" of the statement, "I think"—and the subject of the enunciated—the thing, in Descartes' case, which doubts and which is thus the place of the *cause*, the gnawing, inarticulable suspicion which leads Descartes to doubt in the first place, thus giving rise to the *Meditations*. There is, to be sure, ample evidence of this place of the cause in Descartes'

[14] Even today critics of psychoanalysis often consider the unconscious to be fundamentally if not hopelessly metaphysical, which might, moreover, account for why many analysts are wont to abandon it in favour of the (supposedly) less metaphysical 'ego'.

first meditation. Lacan defers to a particularly illuminating passage from the *Discourse on Method*, which sets the stage for the *Meditations* (quoted in italics)[15]:

> What is Descartes looking for? He is looking for certainty. *I have*, he says, *an extreme desire to distinguish the true from the false*—note the word *desire*—in order to see clearly—in what?—*in my actions, and to walk in assurance in this life*. (*Four Fundamental* 222)

We see, then, that Descartes' *desire* for certainty, a desire that is in a sense *realized*[16] in the *Meditations,* founded as this work is upon by a kind of barely perceptible, gnawing suspicion that the world revealed by his knowledge might be otherwise, that Descartes, in other words, might be lacking/missing something. His thirst for knowledge reveals a kind of 'primordial maladaptation' at the core of his very being, which sets in motion a desire for certainty. Already here we see the early signs of a cavity forming in the relation between knowledge qua formalizable propositions about the world and the world *as such*, a sneaking suspicion that *word* does not add up to *world*[17]. Descartes supplements the "I think" with a benevolent, truthful God (who makes possible the 'ergo'), which, functioning as a signifier, allows him to simultaneously affirm and deny the subject *qua* void at the core of being. His discourse circumscribes the problem of the real, which is in

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[15] The original quotation from *Discourse on Method*, reads: "I always had an excessive desire to learn to distinguish the true from the false, in order to see clearly in my actions and to walk with confidence in this life" (9).

[16] His desire is not only 'fulfilled', if only illusorily, but is also lent the symbolic coordinates by which it can be recognized.

[17] On this point, readers may be interested in the following passage from *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*: "For Descartes, in the initial *cogito*. . .what the *I think* is directed towards, in so far as it lurches into the *I am*, is a real. But the true remains so much outside that Descartes then has to re-assure himself—of what, if not of an Other that is not deceptive, and which shall, into the bargain, guarantee by its very existence the bases of truth, guarantee him that there are in his own objective reason the necessary foundations for the very real, about whose existence he has just re-assured himself, to find the dimension of truth" (36).

turn *circumvented* through this God, who stands in for the real, who takes its place *qua representative*, turning it into a discourse.

The Unconscious is Structured Like a Language

We arrive, then, by way of this extended but necessary detour to what is at stake in Freud's "Negation", namely, that to deny something by way of a negation—"it is *not* my mother", "I am *not* insulting you"—one must first bring it to mind, to conjure up by means of language that thing one wishes to deny. This is Freud's patients' conundrum: to say, "It is *not* my mother" is simultaneously a denial and an admission that it was, in fact, "mother" that came to mind in association with whatever it was he or she was thinking about. This negation sets up by way of the patient's discourse, an 'outside' that *belongs* to the patient—that is, an 'outside' for which the patient is responsible, an outside that is projected onto a subject supposed to know in the same way that the 'outside' for Descartes belonged to God. It is no less a symbolic construction for all that. This outside, which belongs—can only belong—to the patient is precisely the place where analytic work is aimed. To anticipate somewhat our conclusion, "Negation" concerns nothing less than this operation of separating—which is, paradoxically wholly *internal to the ego*—the inside from the outside, and thus leads us to Lacan's discussion of his operations of alienation and separation first outlined in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*.

In this way, "Negation" is one of the key texts in Freud's *oeuvre* behind Lacan's formulation, "the unconscious is structured like a language". Far from being a mere structuralist fancy, a quaint but antiquated slogan emanating from a bygone era, it should

be understood as an axiom that aligns the unconscious and thus psychoanalysis along not structuralist but *materialist* lines. To be sure, evidence abounds that the unconscious is structured like a language in Freud's work, but this has not stopped analysts from imbuing it with metaphysical whimsy. A case-in-point is, of course, Carl Jung, who mutates the unconscious into a container for supposedly timeless and immutable 'archetypes'. Less extreme (though equally insidious) views proliferated during Lacan's time (and indeed extend into ours) under the banner of 'ego psychology' to which Lacan placed himself firmly in opposition on account of the fact that the ego psychologists, as the name implies, saw the ego as their primary if not total concern, leaving the unconscious by the wayside. Against this background of ego psychology, we can read Lacan's "return to Freud" as a return to the unconscious. Indeed, too narrow a focus on the ego leads us back to the Cartesian illusion of certainty, reflected in the clinical practice of ego psychology, concerned as it is with getting the patient's "weak ego" to identify with the analyst's "strong ego"—ego psychology, in other words, is founded upon instilling in the patient a confidence in a *subject supposed to know* occupied (or, better still, *substantialized*) by the analyst. By emphasizing the unconscious, Lacan sought to re-situate psychoanalytic theory and practice back within the problematic of the (dis)relation between thought and being.

Let us state the obvious, so as not to miss it: "the unconscious is structured like a language" means, foremost, not only that the unconscious *has* a structure (which is already no small thing since the unconscious has been thought many ways, but never before as a structure), but that it is structured in accordance with that of language. We must insist on stressing, at the risk of tedium, this obvious implication of Lacan's

statement precisely because, in my view, "the unconscious is structured like a language" is usually equated with some variation of the idea that the unconscious is made up of signifiers. To be sure, there is (minimal) support for this reading in the opening pages of "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious", taken to be Lacan's standard text on his structuralist reinterpretation of the unconscious, where he states that "it is the whole structure of language that psychoanalytic experience discovers *in* the unconscious" (413; my emphasis). My contention is that "the unconscious is structured like a language" aims at something more fundamental, namely, the question of why it is that language comes to play such an important role in Lacan's thought. In this way, I interpret this "in", which I have italicized in the above quotation, to suggest the sense of 'reflected in', against any presumption that the unconscious is a container for holding signifiers (as though the unconscious were no different than a satchel for storing one's *Scrabble* pieces). Thus we are led to conceive of the unconscious as, for Lacan, modeled upon the Saussurian algorithm (figure 2), introduced in "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious":

$$\frac{S}{s}$$

Figure 2: The (Lacanian) Structure of Language

The implications of the unconscious consisting of this same structure are far more radical than conceiving of it as a mere container: it allows us to take into account the relationship between the symbolic and the imaginary (rather than fetishize the symbolic); it will require us to take account of Lacan's elaboration of this structure between the so-called

'early Lacan' of the 50's (when "Instance of the Letter" was written) and that found in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, which has thus far been our point of reference for our elaboration of the relationship between the subject, being and thought. Let us note, first of all, that Lacan describes this structure in "The Instance of the Letter" as consisting of "the primordial position of the signifier and the signified as distinct orders initially separated by a barrier resisting signification" (415).

Here we should recall that Lacan arrives at this linguistic structure by way of a modification of Saussure's original schema of the sign. Saussure thought of the sign as a 'linguistic unit', which is formed from the coupling of the signified and the signifier into a meaningful and inseparable (except when considered in the abstract) whole.

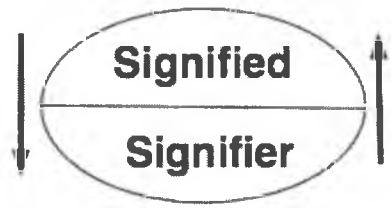

Figure 3: Saussure's schema indicating the unity of signifier and signified

I would like to propose, then, that according to the path we have followed through the reading of the *cogito* presented in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, which effectively reveals the Cartesian subject as irreducibly divided between the twin realms of thought and being, that Lacan repeats the gesture of modification that gives rise to the algorithm (figure 2). In order words, the Saussurean schema of the sign is decidedly Cartesian in its arrangement. Saussure does not so much depict language as it *really functions* but rather as it *ideally functions*. Like Descartes, Saussure's schema relies on a

supplementary *subject supposed to know*, namely, the (ideal[18]) community of speakers. Thus, in order to resolve the problem of referentiality, so as to make of the sign a meaningful totality, Saussure must support it with the "the social fact": "[t]he community is necessary if values that owe their existence solely to usage and general acceptance are to be set up; by himself the individual is incapable of fixing a single value" (*Course* 113). We can, then, on the analogy of Saussure's linguistic unit, schematize the Cartesian subject accordingly, the arrows implying, as they do for Saussure, the transparent movement 'across the bar', signifying a unity of thought and being:

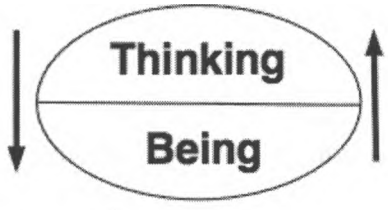

Figure 4: The schema of the cartesian subject

Having thus schematized the Cartesian subject on the model of the Saussurean sign, we arrive at the algorithm that reflects the unconscious as "structured like a language" by inserting the bar between being and thinking, and thereby removing any indication of self-transparent subjectivity:

[18] Let us note in passing that, in order for Saussure's conception of language to function according to his schema, the individuals that make up this community of speakers are Cartesian subjects with all that this implies, including a transparent relationship to language.

$$\frac{\textbf{Being}}{\textbf{\textit{thinking}}}$$

Figure 5: The unconscious is structured like a language

Here, I have, following Lacan's reversal of the signifier and the signified in the shift from Saussure's schema to the algorithm, reversed the positions of being and thinking, thereby marking the primacy of being with respect to thinking. I am not thereby affording 'being' any specific pride of place, but merely indicating that being *persists* irrespective of any meaning afforded to it in thought. This point will become clearer in what follows, but has to do with the experience of anxiety.

By formulating unconscious structure in this way and separating being and thinking into "distinct orders" (to borrow the description of the signifier and the signified from "Instance of the Letter") with the bar which, in Lacan's algorithm of the sign represents the "barrier resisting signification" (415), we are effectively making explicit the coordinates implied by Lacan's matheme for the split subject, represented by an S with a line through it ($). In other words, this bar is not limited to Lacan's algorithm of the sign but is of fundamental importance to the entire formulation of his theory.

How to (Not) Get Outside of Yourself

That "the unconscious is structured like a language" is, not surprisingly, only a part of the story. We might now turn to the question of why the unconscious is structured like a language, or, at any rate, what justification Lacan had for positing this peculiar idea other than the fact that many of Freud's works, especially *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *The*

Psychopathology of Everyday Life, and *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, deal either implicitly or explicitly with the question of the unconscious vis-à-vis language. Following Richard Boothby I have already noted at the beginning of this chapter that we ought not to focus too narrowly on the linguistic side of Lacan lest we miss the crucial problem of how language relates to being. My thesis is that the psychoanalytic theory of resistance, especially as it is elaborated by Lacan, allows us to bridge the gap between this prominent, overdetermined 'linguistic side' and being, which leads us into the territory of Lacan's imaginary order and the real, thus allowing us to grasp the interrelatedness of his three orders.

Our schema (figure 5) has the advantage, in the first place, of foregrounding how what is at stake in the Lacanian split subject ($) is an irreducible fissure introduced into the very fabric of human reality, the effect of which is a division between thought and being. Secondly, by making tangible the parallel between unconscious structure and Lacan's structure of language, introduced in "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious", we are now in a position to examine the significance of the bar that separates being and thought, signified and signifier.

We have seen, then, that Lacan's modification of the Saussurean schema of the sign (figure 1) better reflects his experience with neurotic speech (and, for that matter, psychotic speech, which is nevertheless a slightly different beast as we will see) which, because neurotic symptoms are effectively structured around a certain question or uncertainty that appears in the place of the *sujet supposé savoir*, reveal a dis-relation or rupture at the level of the joint between signifier and signified. In other words, owing to resistance, the patient's speech, rather than following a path toward a unified

representation or a sensible discourse, erupts into non-sense. We have seen, moreover, the great lengths that Descartes went to in order to contain this kernel of non-sense at the very core of his relation to knowledge that led to his desire for certainty.

Ultimately, it is this rupture that disturbs the smooth unfolding of the chain of signifiers that accounts for the bar, which runs from the Lacanian structure of language (figure 2) to the structure of the unconscious (figure 5). The (Lacanian) subject is revealed in these elusive moments of the failure of discourse to make sense, disturbances of speech wherein meaning fails and the ground of being-in-sense becomes, however momentarily, a question mark. This is, to be sure, usually a fleeting hesitation—quickly laughed off or dismissed as unimportant; however, this almost immediate dismissal following the moment of hesitation also has significance in itself. The subject's brief appearance is precipitated headlong into the enigmatic, indistinct presence of the Other. To be clear, this presence has no positive content in this moment. In the analytic setting, subject and Other immediately coincide in what Lacan calls the presence of the analyst insofar as the analyst *qua* Other functions as the bar in our schema of the structure of the unconscious which materializes the gap between being and thought. Lacan has a matheme that correlates to the $ of the divided subject, namely, the barred Other ($\not{A}$). Here, at the moment of resistance, just when the subject "seems ready to come out with something more authentic, more to the point than he has ever managed to come up with up to then, the subject, in some cases, breaks off, and utters a statement, which might be the following—*I am aware all of a sudden of the fact of your presence*" (*Seminar I* 40).

Let us recall the evidence of this precipitation of the subject toward the Other in Freud's "Negation": one of the examples he gives is of a patient whose negation takes the

form of "a thought being rejected, as it emerges, by means of projection" (96). Effectively, an insult-intention comes to mind, which the patient imputes to the analyst by way of the statement, "you'll think I mean to insult you". Behind this 'you'll think" is an attempt to fill out the lack introduced by the $\not{A}$ and brought into play by in the analytic setting, by the position of the analyst as an unknown element, a stranger vis-à-vis the patient (and, for that matter, *vice versa*).

The development of Freud's technique, which we will look at in more detail in chapter two, can be thought as a gradual recognition of the structural necessity of the bar that separates thought and being. In the beginning, Freud's technique was directed toward getting his patients to tell him about the images on the surface of their minds. The aim of analysis was to get them to historicize the parts of their histories that remained foreign to them and thus exerted a pathogenic influence as they attempted to keep these alien elements from contaminating the consistency of the ego. The moment of resistance announced the disavowed parts of the patient's history but not in a form that could be integrated into the subject's universe of meaning; rather, these parts of the patient's history were brought to consciousness as so many scraps of thought: in a word, non-sense. In the throes of resistance, the patient comes up with innumerable clever ways of not saying what comes to mind: perhaps declaring, "I expected something would occur to me, but all I thought was how tensely I was expecting it. Nothing came" (Studies 278). And yet, despite the tenacity of resistance, Freud notes that the patient usually announces, after finally saying what has come to mind, that he or she 'knew it the whole time':

> 'I could have told you that the first time.' 'Why didn't you say it?' 'I couldn't believe it to be that. It was only when it came back every time that I made up my mind to say it.' Or else: 'I hoped it wouldn't be that of all things. I could well do

> without saying that. It was only when it refused to be repressed that I saw I shouldn't be let off.' (279)

This 'I could well do without saying that' is a minimal awareness of the presence of the analyst as something Other, foreign. Something is elided in this statement; what the patient really means is, "I could well do without saying that *to you*"—*I am afraid to tell you, you, who seem to imbue these fragments of the non-sense of my being with sense. I am afraid of the meaning you might give to them.* This indeterminate, enigmatic 'you' indicates a short circuit between the analyst as presence, as presence of a 'something else', as an imago, perhaps, of a judging figure from the patient's past. The Lacanian matheme for the guises in which this 'you' becomes present—for example, a judging figure of the patient's past or perhaps as a seducer, etcetera—is S(Ⱥ), the signifier of the barred Other. It is here that we can locate the relationship between resistance and transference: S(Ⱥ) emerges at the moment of resistance insofar as the recognition of lack (Ⱥ) always implies a signifier, S(Ⱥ), which becomes the rootstock of the transference, a signifier around which the transference crystalizes *qua* symbolic structure. Thus, resistance facilitates the transference, or, more accurately, the recognition of lack *qua* Ⱥ exerts a kind of 'gravitational pull' on content, and thus never simply exists for long (hence the brevity of the moment of hesitation that announces resistance) as void *qua* void, as Lacan puts it in *Seminar I*, "*resistance makes itself felt in the guise of transference*" (46; emphasis in original).

This intersection of resistance and transference takes us to the core of the notion of repression, a fundamental point of reference for Freud insofar as it is by way of the theory of repression that he was able to formulate his idea of the unconscious. The logic of repression seems to presuppose some kind of minimal recognition of something, of an

indistinct, unconscious knowledge which is articulated negatively in such forms as we have just mentioned, namely, a certain *I am afraid to tell you,* or, *I did not want to believe it could be that*, which attach (that is, project) themselves onto to the figure of the analyst. Repressed material does not simply disappear, consigned as it were to some nebulous, metaphysical unconscious repository. The seeming paradox of repression is that "one still knows something about the very thing one doesn't want, in some sense, to know anything about, and the whole of analysis consists in showing us that one knows it very well indeed" (*Seminar III* 149). Freud describes this process in "Negation" as showing how "the intellectual function is separated from the affective process":

> With the help of negation only one consequence of the process of repression is undone—the fact, namely, of the ideational content of what is repressed not reaching consciousness. The outcome of this is a kind of intellectual acceptance of the repressed, while at the same time what is essential to the repression persists....A negative judgement is the intellectual substitute for repression; its 'no' is the hall-mark of repression, a certificate of origin[.]...With the help of the symbol of negation, thinking frees itself from the restrictions of repression and enriches itself with the material that is indispensible for its proper functioning. (236)

In this way, repression implies some kind of process of self-judgment that happens, behind the scene, for without some way for which the patient to judge his or her associations as being indicative of something disturbing, without them somehow entering the horizon of the subject's meaningful relation to him- or herself in the form of an '*is not*' or '*does not want to be*', there would be no reason for material to be repressed. We should, then, understand the terms of Freud's description, those of the 'intellectual' and the 'affective' as suggesting a distinction between the propositional and the descriptive, which will become relevant for our discussion of the aphasias in chapter three. In other words, Freud's description confuses the fact that it is language that is implicated in both

cases: the formulation of propositions do not implicate the repressive function because they allow one to achieve some distance from the propositional content, whereas the descriptive is wholly implicated in the subject; it, as it were, *touches the real*. To be sure, the propositional statement is closer to an 'intellectual' use of language, but the descriptive is not purely on the side of the affective, it has to do, rather, with *describing* an affective state *in language*, it is here that repression intervenes, preventing a description that would *reveal too much*, that would take oneself as referent.

We see then that this unconscious knowledge pointed to by repression connects up to an apprehension and maintenance of a border between inside and outside: *I am not this, I refuse to be associated with that*. Here, then, we can grasp the convergence of the notions of repression, transference and resistance. A repression always refers back to something; it has a point of reference, which Freud calls the ideal-ego, that cannot be expressed in words or recognized as such. If resistance hints at a fundamental *signifier,* which we have called $S(\not A)$, following Lacan, a signifier of a lack in the Other, the transference entering at this point as the production of signifiers that encircle this lack, then repression links this lack up to an image, $i(a)$, the Lacanian matheme for the ideal-ego, which undergirds $S(\not A)$ and escapes recognition (which is a symbolic process) as such insofar as it guides the structuration of inside and outside, being a kind of inverse of the ego, the image that looks back from the mirror surface and makes possible the illusion that gives rise to repression: seeing oneself seeing (oneself).

The inter-related phenomena of resistance and transference make their appearance in the attempt to 'undo' the repression. In fact, Freud tells us in *Studies on Hysteria* that his technique (this was before the technique of free association) involved the "overcom[ing]

of resistance" which suggested to him that "*by means of psychical work I had to overcome a psychical force in the patients which was opposed to the pathogenic ideas becoming conscious*" (268; emphasis in original). Thus, he concludes, "this must no doubt be the same psychical force that had played a part in the generating of the hysterical symptom and had at that time prevented the pathogenic idea from becoming conscious" (268). Here we see Freud setting the stage for an understanding of repression, which he had not yet named, and that allows us to see that a relationship emerges such that resistance is the inverse of repression. The psychical force that keeps the repression intact is loosened in the analytic setting. To put this in terms of Freud's later technique of free association: by inducing the patient to speak through the technique of free association, the patient produces signifiers until such a time when these signifiers fail to surface. At this point, as we have seen, resistance is brought into the foreground, as this 'something else'—which Freud refers to vaguely as a 'force'—which appears, in a sense, as a hole in the patient's signification, represented by a very special signifier, the signifier of a lack, S(Ⱥ), a lack which "hooks on to" (*Seminar I* 48) the Other, which we have seen most concretely in relation to the analytic situation, in the form of an *awareness of the analyst's presence*.

This is precisely why I prefer to think of 'resistance' in a passive sense, rather than to think of it in active terms such as 'the patient *resists*' insofar as the entire point of the notion of resistance hinges upon the fact that there is no patient *qua* individuated, (imaginary) total personality that could *resist*[19]. Resistance, as it were, happens in spite of

[19] If this kind of resistance were possible, which would occur from the solid ground of a self-assured desire, there would be no need of psychoanalysis and in fact, I have no objection to thinking of some variation of this, of perhaps a 'resistance that is sure of

any desire of the patient. Even the most docile patient, obsessed with following the fundamental rule of analysis—to say whatever comes to mind—cannot avoid resistance; it happens whether the patient wants it to or not and is in this way a structural necessity of analysis. It is more fruitful—and more accurate—to model resistance on the metaphor of the resistance that generates heat in an electrical wire[20] rather than on some notion of political resistance or active resistance to power (such as it is sometimes thought: resistance, for example, to Freud's supposed authoritarian power).

If resistance and transference are to have any relation, it is in the environs of the hole in signification that resistance makes manifest. By introducing this hole as such in the patient's discourse, resistance carves out a space for the *sujet supposé savoir* and, as Lacan tells us in *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, "as soon as the subject who is supposed to know exists somewhere…there is transference" (232). It is in this sense that we speak of resistance bringing forth a signifier of lack, and not a lack *as such*, for what is at stake is ultimately a specific place from which the *sujet supposé savoir* in its various guises can be articulated. The entire elaboration of the psychoanalytic view of psychosis marks the difference between the signifier of lack and the lack *as such*. In psychosis, to

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itself' (whatever this might mean) as the end of analysis so that, when a patient can say "No!" and really mean it, the analysis is over. Let me add that the end of analysis is not a clear-cut issue (which is why Freud wrote "Analysis Terminable and Interminable") and the topic of much debate. One will find as many ideas about what constitutes the end of analysis as there are analysts to think them.

[20] Another such metaphor that comes to mind, which is akin to the resistance in an electrical wire, is friction, which, although it is a counter-force that generates a supplement of energy that is useless for work (in the sense physics gives to this term), i.e. entropy, it also makes controlled locomotion possible. I mention it here only for the interest one might take in it for further thinking about the notion of resistance, with no intention to follow up on this metaphor. A more elaborate discussion of the metaphor of resistance in an electrical wire, however, will be found in chapter two.

cut a long story short, the signifier of lack is what is lacking and it is interesting to note that, as a result, the significations of the psychotic are, to a non-psychotic observer, profoundly *non-sensical*, which is to say, absent of any immediate or obvious *reference point* from which to understand them. Paradoxically, from a psychoanalytic point of view, the self-transparent Cartesian subject of certainty is a psychotic and thus it may be no coincidence that Judge Schreber, whose *Memoirs* form the basis of Freud's sustained engagement with the problem of psychosis, saw himself as in intimate relation with God[21].

In our ordinary use of language, then, it is less a tool for referring to 'things' in the 'world' and more a reflective surface, the pool in which Narcissus is captivated by his reflection: meaning is fundamentally narcissistic. As listeners trying to decipher the meaning of what someone is saying to us, we often 'understand' the other insofar as we can situate his or her discourse in relation to our own experiences. As Bruce Fink puts it, "*our usual way of listening overlooks or rejects the otherness of the other*" (2; emphasis in original). Meaning seems to exert a rather tenacious gravitational pull on discourse, eschewing difference and bulldozing the nuances of speech in the name of understanding: "[i]n our haste to identify with the other, to have something in common with him, we forcibly equate stories that are often incommensurate, reducing what we are hearing to what we already know. What we find most difficult to hear is what is utterly new and

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[21] Freud's Schreber case-study makes for fascinating reading, as does the source material, Daniel Schreber's book, whose English translation bears the title, *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*. Suffice it to bring to the reader's attention Freud's observation that Schreber "felt that he was God's wife" ("Notes" 32). Such comprises the core of this elaborate delusion. Those interested may wish to consult Freud's "Notes on a Case of Paranoia", *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume 12* (1911-1913) pp. 3-82. Nowhere is the narcissism of signification more evident than in the case of paranoia.

different" (2). Ultimately, 'understanding' involves a transparent transferential relationship to the Other that "reduce[s] what another person is saying to what we think we already know" (6).

By trying to understand too quickly, in trying to grasp at meaning, the dimension of the other's alterity is completely glossed over; we effectively 'see ourselves', we translate another's discourse into familiar terms supported by our own knowledge and frameworks it provides to our understanding. Furthermore, this way of understanding—which effectively turns the other's chain of signifiers into a purely reflective surface upon which we (re)experience ourselves—situates us rather firmly in the imaginary, which we can conceive of as a 'closed' structure of sense, along the axis of a relation of ego to ego. Thus, if language refers to objects, these objects belong to the order of the imaginary, not unlike Saussure's schema of the sign, which, taken literally, shows the signifier coupled to the signified without any direct reference to external reality. In other words, then, and herein consists the pivotal point that guides our thinking about language psychoanalytically: *language 'refers' by way of the imaginary*; thus, *in order to refer to anything 'outside' of itself, the signifier must pass through the imaginary*. The Other qua *subjet supposé savoir* marks the place of the 'outside' of language which is precisely why the psychoanalytic situation between analyst and analysand (patient) is no ordinary conversation. The aim is to confront the analysand with his or her signifiers, which amounts to the analysand listening intently to him- or herself from the place of the Other—imagining what the Other hears when he or she speak. This place from which we hear ourselves is held by the image of the ideal-ego, $i(a)$, which we mentioned above. This confrontation with one's signifiers cannot but generate resistance, as that which

manifests this locus which we call the signifier of a lack, and which marks the place *from which* the patient situates him- or herself in relation to externality. It is around this locus that the ego *qua* "*representative* in the mind of the *real* external world" crystalizes (Freud, *Ego* 28; my emphasis). In bringing out the necessity of a *representative* of the external world, foremost as a signifier of lack, psychoanalysis is brought into close proximity with the Derridian thesis that, 'there is no outside of language'—indeed, there is no outside to the extent that what is outside must nevertheless possess some kind of *representative.* That is to say that what is 'outside' must be registered *in* language in order to be recognized as such, blurring the distinction between inside and outside.

'Primordial Discord'

Probably the most profound expression of the Lacanian thesis, "the unconscious is structured like a language" occurs, not surprisingly, in Freud's 1915 metapsychological paper, "The Unconscious":

> the conscious presentation [*Vorstellung*] of the object [is]. . .split up into the presentation of the *word* and the presentation of the thing [*Sachvorstellung*]; the latter consists in the cathexis, if not the direct memory-images of the thing, at least of remoter memory-traces derived from these. We now seem to know all at once what the difference is between a conscious and an unconscious presentation. The two are not, as we supposed, different registrations of the same content in different psychical localities, nor yet different functional states of cathexis in the same locality; but *the conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone*. (201; my emphasis)

Let us pay close attention to Freud's logic here: that which is presented to consciousness, that is, the "conscious presentation", consists of the joining of word-presentation [*Wortvorstellung*] to thing-presentation [*Sachvorstelling*]. Repression, then, which aims at preventing something from entering consciousness, is a process by which the thing-

presentation remains but detached from its word-presentation. Crucially, however, this is not the whole story. Freud brings *three* elements into play at the beginning of this passage: object, word and thing [*Sache*]. Interestingly, it is not the thing itself that is subject to repression but rather its word-presentation; the thing-presentation [*Sachvorstellung*] endures regardless of whether or not repression takes place. This is precisely why Lacan insists that "*Verdrängung* [repression] operates on nothing other than signifiers" (*Seminar VII* 44). In this respect, Freud posits an unconscious element—thing-presentation—at the very core of consciousness; but what, then, are we to make of this elusive object, which seems to have no place and is given only a passing reference? This object, it seems, disappears from our purview as quickly as it appears.

Between the thing-presentation and the word-presentation, we are situated firmly in a circuit constituted by the pleasure principle, wherein repression as it is ordinarily understood operates. Here, too, is the domain of ordinary, conscious discourse, where repression often rules the day in those moments when, in the midst of narrating some story or another to an interlocutor, we suddenly forget a word or lose our train of thought. Freud provides an illuminating example of how repression operates at this level in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, where he recounts the story of how, during a conversation with a traveler on a train, he has trouble remembering the name of the painter of a fresco in the cathedral at Orvieto[22]. Substitutes come to mind—*Botticelli, Boltraffio*, etcetera—but none of them is quite right. Upon analysis, Freud recalls that his mind had wandered while talking to his companion about the respect that Turks extend to the authority of doctors, a respect Freud found lacking in some of his patients. During the

[22] For Lacan's account, see (among other places) pages 46 – 48 of *Seminar I: Freud's Papers on Technique*.

conversation he was also thinking about how much value Turks attach to the sexual functions, which he decided not to bring into polite conversation with a stranger. At the same time, another thought occurred to him: "On this occasion I was still under the influence of a piece of news which had reached me a few weeks before while I was making a brief stay at *Trafoi*. A patient over whom I had taken a great deal of trouble had put an end to his life on account of an incurable sexual disorder" (10). He does not share these thoughts with his interlocutor, which is where the trouble begins.

Significantly, the name is not forgotten outright. Part of the discourse that Freud refuses to share with his companion finds expression in a distorted way: in *Botticelli*, the last part of *Signorelli* is remembered; *Boltraffio* partly expresses the name of the place where Freud received the news about the death of his patient, *Trafoi*; *Herzegovinia*, another substitute that came to Freud's mind, expresses *Herr*, which is the German equivalent of the Italian *Signor.* There is a convergence of discourses, where one discourse seeking revelation latches onto a discourse that is present to consciousness. We see here a veritable proliferation of thing-presentations and word-presentations unleashed by the omission of this little word '*Signor*', a chain of associations consisting of scraps of the surrounding context of this forgetting: the importance that Freud felt the Turks ascribe to sexuality no doubt mirrors the importance that he ascribes to sexuality in his psychoanalytic theory, which was not well received and undermined his credibility; the death of a patient that he had cared for a long time, and who moreover committed suicide on account of an incurable sexual dysfunction, was no doubt "experienced by the doctor as a problem of mastery" (*Seminar I* 48). Here then, we have Freud's most succinct dramatizations of the pleasure principle operating at the level of discourse.

Here, too, we are also confronted with the reality principle, which goes hand-in-hand with the pleasure principle, the reality principle being that which sets it within certain limits, isolating it. In the decision not to engage his interlocutor in a discussion about the cultural differences in the importance attached to the sexual function, Freud succumbs to the reality principle. This is not repression *per se*, since Freud is well aware of what he is truncating, but it does set him on the path to repression in the way that he presupposes an idea about this other, his interlocutor, which precipitated a judgment not to mention the thoughts that had occurred to him: the assumption that his interlocutor might have certain (moral) ideas about what should and should not be said in polite company. We see here the relation between the pleasure principle and the reality principle *qua* limit and it is not insignificant that the reality principle intervenes in Freud's discourse around, as I have pointed out, a concatenation of thoughts connected to sexuality. The repression properly so called, according to the letter of Freud's early understanding of this process, occurs in relation to the word *Signorelli*, which disappears from Freud's discourse and which required considerable effort before it could be unearthed.

Although *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* was written some fifteen years before "The Unconscious", we nevertheless see in the repression of the word *Signorelli* an illuminative demonstration of the process Freud describes in its pages. There remains, following the repression of the word-presentation, an intensely vivid thing-presentation: "so long as the painter's name remained inaccessible," Freud writes, "the visual memory that I had of the series of frescoes and the portrait which is introduced into the corner of one of the pictures was *ultra-clear*—at any rate, much more intense than visual memory-traces normally appear to me" (13). If we translate what occurs here into a relation

between resistance and transference, we see that transference is happening at the level of the persistence of this intense visual image. It is more difficult to locate in relation to Freud since he was his own analyst but this should not stop us from noting that the persistence of this image, which to an extent can be put into words, just not the *right* word, the one Freud is looking for, the one that, through an elaborate short-circuit (Freud provides a diagram of it within the pages of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*[23]), was caught up in the process of repression. In the same way that a patient at the moment of resistance might suddenly become aware, however indistinctly, of the presence of the analyst, Freud, too, becomes aware of a certain kind of presence, the presence, no doubt, which is felt as, *I should know this! I have seen it with my own eyes!* Here we are again brought into close proximity with the problem of mastery, the mastery of knowledge in this case, that we described above, which the entirety of Freud's works leave little doubt as to the importance of this signifier for the organization of his symptom.

Let us, then, return to the problem that Freud is faced with in "Negation". We are now in a position to see that it concerns nothing less than the elusive object given only passing mention in "The Unconscious". It persists, as is evident in the manner in which Freud introduces it, beyond the *Vorstellung*, the representation, comprised of its derivatives, thing- and word-presentation. It is, to my mind, no mere coincidence or shortcoming on Freud's part that this object that is our ultimate concern—this object that for us will provide the bridge into the very core of the issue vis-à-vis the human experience of language—attained so little clarity in Freud: it concerns the most profound and indeterminate part of our being, that which fundamentally eludes signification. It is no

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[23] See page 5 of Volume 6 of the *Standard Edition*, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life.*

accident, either, that *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the work that deals with this object most extensively is also one of Freud's most speculative and, in a sense, mythological. Lacan himself devotes an entire seminar to the study of this peculiar object, which he names *das Ding,* drawing attention to the fact that Freud ultimately settled on *Sache* to name his thing-presentation, despite the German language having two different words for 'thing' and, moreover, in relation to *Sache*, *Ding* connotes a dimension of the beyond; Lacan provides the example that in German, one "does not use *Sache* for religious matters, but one nevertheless says that faith is not *jederman Ding*" (*Seminar VII* 62).

Das Ding is most evident in the *Fort/Da* game Freud describes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and which is on the whole concerned with nothing less than an attempt to come to terms theoretically with this elusive *Ding*. Although Freud does not appear to lend any great weight to the fact that an object serves as the enduring point of reference in this child's game of naming and performing the oscillation of presence and absence. As Lacan rather evocatively puts it:

> There can be no *fort* without *da* and, one might say, without *Dasein*. But. . .there is no *Dasein* without the *fort*. That is to say, there is no choice. If the young subject can practise [sic] this game of *fort-da*, it is precisely because he does not practise [sic] it at all, for no subject can grasp this radical articulation. He practices it with the help of a small bobbin, that is to say, with the *objet a*. (*Four Fundamental* 239)

Das Ding in *Seminar VII* is what will become *objet petit a* in *The Four Fundamental Concepts* (*Seminar XI*); it is ultimately the very foundation of signification, the thing around which signification—and especially, as we have seen, *Freud's* signification—circulates: "there can be no *fort* without *da* and…without *Dasein*". It is impossible to articulate *as such* and yet, all of the subject's discourse points back to it and is sustained by it. We have seen this most clearly in our reading of Freud's *Signorelli* example in *The*

Psychopathology of Everyday Life, where his discourse circulates around and is structured by some relation to 'mastery'. To be sure, this 'mastery' does not reveal to us 'the whole story' apropos of *Das Ding/objet petit a*, but it goes a long way toward an approach to it, to the extent that it sets in motion the repression of this innocuous word, *Signorelli*, which gets linked up to it by way of a short-circuit.

Objet a (to call it by its more common name) occupies the place of the bar in our schematization of the axiom, "the unconscious is structured like a language" (figure 5); it is precisely because the *objet a* serves as a 'little piece of the real' that eludes signification but is at the same time the thing around which all signification is organized. In this way, it is the foundation of what Lacan calls in *The Four Fundamental Concepts*, the *vel* of alienation: a forced choice in which one can either choose thought or being, but the choice of one over the other comes at a cost, that is, the choice is destined to give rise to some loss (the *vel* referring to the 'v' symbol that signifies 'or' in symbolic logic). As Mladen Dolar puts it:

> Thought depends on the signifier, which turns the subject into the empty point of enunciation, instead of founding his/her being. In the place of the supposed certainty of the subject's being, there is just a void. It is not the same subject that thinks and that is; the one that is not the one that thinks, even more, the one that is ultimately not a subject at all. One should already mark here that should one choose being, one would have to espouse the object, precisely the object that Lacan has labeled objet a, the object that detains being, but a being over which one cannot be master. Choosing being would entail desubjectivation, one would have to give up the status of the subject altogether. (19)

Thus, it is precisely this object that eludes Descartes' search for certainty and that is destined to manifest itself in such a guise as God, this guise being Descartes' (unconscious) strategy for crossing the bar and ensuring the self-transparency of thought in relation to being. Significantly, the very gesture of introducing God in order to

'complete' the subject is already a choice of thought over being insofar as it is a particular idea of God that is introduced in order for being to make *sense*.

We can trace this elusive core of being back to Lacan's 1949 paper, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" where he hinges the entire drama of the infant's entry into language on a "certain dehiscence at the very heart of the organism, a primordial Discord betrayed by the signs of malaise and motor uncoordination of the neonatal months" (78). It is in the context of this "primordial Discord" at the core of the human organism that predestines the assumption of the specular image of the other in the form of an identification. To be sure, the mirror stage is most often thought of in the context of the imaginary, however, it is precisely this identification with the specular other (that must indeed be situated in the imaginary) that sets the stage for the subject's entry into language, that "situates the agency known as the ego...*in a fictional direction* that will forever remain irreducible to any single individual" (76; my emphasis). The signifier will enter here, in the gap that emerges between "insufficiency" and "anticipation", between the identification with the specular image through which the infant anticipates a mastery, and the insufficiency of its present state of being (78). We can read this oscillation from insufficiency to anticipation as leading toward an oscillation between the non-sense of being and the establishing some semblance of sense in thought via the (imaginary) unity of the ego. In this way, the forced choice of the subject is, at its core, a repetition of this drama of the mirror stage.

The crux of Freud's "Negation" concerns this very choice, the terms of which are discovered through the suspension of the negation. The philosopher Jean Hyppolite, who gave a presentation on "Negation" in Lacan's seminar of 1953-54, stresses that negation

is, for Freud, "a mode of presenting what one is in the mode of not being it" (747). The ego is sustained in its 'I am' *qua* subject of the enunciation only against the background of the 'I am not', for there is, too, a trace of the subject's being in these signifiers found in the field Freud designates as negation, a field which he connects up to the repressed as amounting to "a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed; indeed, it is already a lifting of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed" (235-6). Thus does a statement such as "You ask who the person in my dream is, it is *not* my mother" follows a very peculiar logic in which an avowal and a denial converge in passing through the analyst *qua* Other, the *sujet supposé savoir* who functions for the speaker of this statement as the *subject who is supposedly mistaken/deceived.* As a signifier, 'mother' is seen here functioning as a place holder for the desire of the Other, which is encroaching upon the subject, tries to reject, to cast out by way of his or her negation; in doing so, however, the subject at the same time brings this desire into existence, marking its place with a signifier, and shapes it according to his own image.

Are we to suppose, then, following Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, that the "subject *is* the other, . . . *the same as* the other" ("Freudian Subject" 62), that "the subject continues to subsist in the *representation* of its lack, in the closed combinative of signifiers in which it stubbornly continues to self-represent itself, always vanishing but always, upon disappearance, reemerging" (64)? On the contrary,

> it follows from the basic property of the signifier that it can never be counted for one; "one" signifier already counts for two, because the empty place of its absence also counts. Differentiality, the Saussurean definition of the signifier has to be extended to the point where the signifier differs from itself: ultimately, it is the difference between itself and the void of its absence. Once we find ourselves in the realm of the Symbolic, there is never a simple absence or an innocent lack, and this invisible "missing half" that inherently sticks to the signifier is for Lacan precisely the place to which the subject can be "pinned" [.] (Dolar 16)

Borch-Jacobsen's (fundamentally paranoiac) criticism is founded upon a structural impossibility that conflates the imaginary and the symbolic. In order to follow this logic, we would have to suppose not only that a signifier is capable of carrying some kind of signified content in-and-of-itself (which contradicts the very definition of a signifier) but that this (impossible) signified content is reducible to the signifier itself, that it can represent itself, be counted as one. However, the signifier is not a *representation* of lack, but rather what Lacan calls, in his translation of Freud's *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz,* a "representative of the representation": it is, in a nutshell, the very lack which opens up the space for representation, which makes representation possible. Thus, the dimension of the "*representation* of its lack" *in itself* is impossible; every signification is, on the contrary, at its most fundamental, a representation of lack: the minimal, nonsensical founding gesture of assuming the lack, of submitting oneself to the signifier's unfolding[24]. This dimension of freely assuming the signifier is precisely what is at stake in Freud's "Negation". In saying, "it's not my mother" or "You think I mean to insult you", the patient betrays in the negation the very fact that he has already made a choice, has already submitted to the necessity of the signifier, in the very act of speaking. Against the background of the radical negativity of the void, the signifier cannot but appear in its necessity. Thus, the question underlying the interpretive procedure of psychoanalysis is, precisely: why did the patient say *that* and not something else? Out of all the things the patient *could have said*—indeed the infinite possibilities—why did he or she choose to say *that*? The moment of speaking involves a choice that has *always-already been made*.

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[24] I follow here the logic that Žižek outlines in *The Parallax View* (MIT Press, 2006): "The subject's elementary, founding, gesture is *to submit oneself*" (17).

Thus, for language to refer to anything requires, minimally, that it be supplemented by a choice. The lesson of psychoanalysis is that language is not something that exists 'out there', over-and-against the individuals that put it to use: *objet petit a* means, at its most elementary, that the signifier is caught up in the real of the human organism, the blind, palpitating flesh. After all, a brain supports this so-called deep feeling of 'inwardness' that we call the mind, and the brain is *part of the body itself.* In this way, Freud's entire *oeuvre*—starting with his 1891 book on aphasia, which will introduce him to the strange relationship of signification to brain function through the patterns evident in disturbances of speech due to physical damage to the brain—can be read as an attempt to discover how meaning and signification emerges from this organismic, fleshy thing we call the 'human'. He notices similar disturbances of speech in neurotics who have nothing physically wrong with their brains. Psychoanalysis, then, at its most fundamental, is concerned with the understanding and treatment of the peculiar phenomenon of *psychosomatic aphasia.* What, then, of the founder of psychoanalysis, Freud himself? Certainly he cannot be placed outside of the circuit of signification, constituting psychoanalysis from this safe, neutral position. Chapter two will examine not only how the analyst influences psychoanalytic treatment (whether consciously or unconsciously) but how this influence is unavoidable and constitutive of the treatment itself.

CHAPTER TWO

The Development of Psychoanalysis & the Enigma of the Other

Having characterized neurosis as a *psychosomatic aphasia*, with which we emphasize the peculiar dimension of a body in/of language, that is, the fact that language does not refer transparently to the external world but that a piece of being—*objet petit a*—is caught up in the signifier, let us now turn to the development of Freud's technique. Our aim in doing so is to dramatize this piece of being caught in the signifier vis-à-vis the theory of psychoanalysis itself, Freud's theory. I say dramatize, of course, and not represent, for the *objet a* does not yield to us a signification, only signifiers. Moreover, we cannot provide here an exhaustive account of the development of psychoanalysis, as it is found in Freud's works. We will, however, touch its key themes: the emergence of the concept of resistance in *Studies in Hysteria* out of Freud's abandonment of hypnotic suggestion; the subsequent attention given to transference following Freud's failure with his patient, Dora; and the question of the cure (the end or ultimate aim of analysis, at least from the point of view of the patient). Both resistance and transference emerge as theoretical concepts in their own right out of the problem of the analyst's effect on the analysis; in other words, resistance and transference are each concepts through which psychoanalysis opens onto to question the Other, specifically that Other which the analyst comes to be for the patient, which is to say, the symbolic guises in which the analyst appears to the analysand as itself a discourse (transference) that emerges from and tries to contend with the failure of speech (resistance). Each is named, one after another, following a series of eruptions that the state of Freud's theoretical apparatus at the time of

their emergence cannot contain. Thus, each arrives on the scene, as it were, accompanied by a sense of failure. Here we have a dimension of signification not unlike the neurotic's discourse. This point is not insignificant insofar as psychoanalysis itself is in the beginning the discourse of Freud, who, after all, cannot himself be outside the continuum of the normal and the pathological.

In this way, we are specifically concerned in this chapter with the idea of psychoanalysis as praxis. What are we to make of the theoretical apparatus through which Freud desired to constitute a body of knowledge? This question reveals, particularly with the word *desire* necessary to its grammatical construction, that psychoanalysis is nothing if not the realization of *Freud's desire* in the sense that our analysis in chapter one gives to the term: not as a *representation of a lack*, but rather a signification produced by an encounter with the signifiers *emanating from a lack*, encircling the lack in being—what Lacan refers to in *The Four Fundamental Concepts* as *manqué-à-être*, or "want-to-be" (29)—which drives the human, sometimes with a certain urgency, to speak.

Freud spoke, and founded psychoanalysis. To be sure, that was not all there was to it; there had to be Others who played their part in recognizing this knowledge, not the least among them Wilhelm Fliess, Freud's confidant, and later Jung, who was Freud's *protégé* for a time, to say nothing of the members of the International Psychoanalytic Association, the institution that Freud founded to ensure the continuation of this knowledge. But nevertheless, the question needs to be asked: insofar as we have come to understand, in chapter one, *objet petit a* as a bit of being caught up in the signifier, insofar as we have determined that reference is caught up in this piece of being which is the absent place, from the point of view of the symbolic, of the subject, what should we make, then, of

psychoanalysis as (originally) Freud's speech? To be sure, this question as a whole is too large for the present work, but in gesturing toward it by way of the themes that we have singled out above, it will afford us a different view of the relationship between resistance and reference, two concepts that concern, ultimately, nothing less than the limit of psychoanalytic knowledge itself.

The Opening of/to Resistance

The development of psychoanalysis begins in hypnosis. Freud describes his break with hypnosis in *Studies on Hysteria* as having to do with two factors: (1) that some patients diagnosed as hysteric proved not amenable to the hypnotic treatment; (2) that some patients that "no one could have mistaken for hysteri[cs]", whose symptoms exhibited "genuine obsessional ideas…without a single trait which recalled hysteria", could also be treated with Breuer's 'cathartic method' (256). This would otherwise be unremarkable except that one of the main tenets of Breuer and Freud's theory of hysteria up to this point was that "the basis and *sine qua non* of hysteria is the existence of hypnoid states" (12), which Freud's experience seemed here to disprove. His abandonment of hypnosis, then, occurs in the first place over a dispute about "what essentially characterized hysteria" (256). His experience led him to assume that something else was at the root of the hysteric's illness and not, as Breuer would have it, a pathological state inherent to the hysterical disposition. Thus, what paved the way for resistance began as a problem of nosology. Freud's abandonment of hypnosis was motivated by the calling into question of the theoretical underpinnings of Breuer's method.

As early as 1888, in the preface to his translation of Hippolyte Bernheim's book, *De*

La Suggestion, we see that Freud was well versed in the opposing views regarding the efficacy of hypnosis, which was understood as having either a physiological or a psychical foundation:

> One party...maintains that all the phenomena of hypnotism have the same origin: they arise, that is, from a suggestion, a conscious idea, which has been introduced into the brain of the hypnotized person by an external influence and has been accepted by him as though it had arisen spontaneously. On this view all hypnotic manifestations would be psychical phenomena, effects of suggestions. The other party, on the contrary, stand by the view that the mechanism of some at least of the manifestations of hypnotism is based upon physiological changes—that is, upon displacements of excitability in the nervous system, occurring without the participation of those parts of it which operate with consciousness; they speak, therefore, of the physical or physiological phenomena of hypnosis. (77)

Freud's own understanding of hypnosis was on the side of suggestion[25], as evidenced by his break with Breuer over the latter's idea of 'hypnoid states', which cannot be detached from an explanation of hysteria that involves an innate disposition. The realization that Breuer's 'cathartic method' was unreliable (as far as hysterics' amenability to hypnosis was concerned) prompted Freud to view such a lack of amenability as a significant phenomenon in its own right, one worth taking into account at the level of technique, caught up as it was in his own deficient skill as a hypnotist. Already, then, Freud's break with Breuer's method also exhibits a certain attunement to the fact that suggestive influence is part-and-parcel of an intersubjective situation in which the doctor and the patient are involved.

Resistance, then, emerges as the *inverse* of suggestion, which conceals the *Otherness*

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[25] This point is corroborated in Freud's short paper, "Hypnosis", where he makes numerous references to the efficacy of hypnotic treatment's dependence on the "physician's influence", describing at one point how some patients guard themselves "by not allowing [themselves] to be hypnotized by any physician who does not seem to deserve the fullest confidence" (107). Freud's advice here, for the most part, follows the theme of establishing and maintaining a certain authority vis-à-vis the patient that allows the patient to put his or her trust in the physician.

of the Other—a 'successful' hypnosis is successful only to the extent that it hides the position of the Other behind the charisma of the hypnotist. In Lacan's apt words, the hypnotist "attempts to make an object of the subject...to make him supple as a glove" (*Seminar I* 27). Conversely, resistance has the effect of bringing the subject's relation to the Other into play as an enigma, as an indeterminate presence. This shifts the emphasis of therapeutic technique, in Freud's view, to one of "knowing how to conquer" the resistance so that the patient can "integrate what the resistances [separate] him from" (27).

Freud describes this method of 'conquering' the resistance as requiring a counter-effort on his part, which he describes as '*insistence*':

> if I assured them that they *did* know [what originally occasioned their symptom], that it would occur to their minds, – then, in the first cases, something did actually occur to them, and, in the others [i.e. those patients that already could describe what originally occasioned their symptom without further prompting from Freud], their memory went a step further. After this I became still more insistent; I told the patients to lie down and deliberately close their eyes in order to 'concentrate' – all of which had at least some resemblance to hypnosis....Experiences like this made me think that it would be possible for the pathogenic groups of ideas, that were after all certainly present, to be brought to light by mere insistence; and since this insistence involved effort on my part and so suggested the idea that I had to overcome a resistance, the situation led me at once to the theory that *by means of my psychical work I had to overcome a psychical force in the patients which was opposed to the pathogenic ideas becoming conscious (being remembered)*. A new understanding seemed to open before my eyes when it occurred to me that this must no doubt be the same psychical force that had played a part in the generating of the hysterical symptom and had at the time prevented the pathogenic idea from becoming conscious. (268)

Through this method, Freud situates himself in the position of bearing the burden of his patients' resistance. By not using any direct suggestion, thereby foregrounding this 'psychical force' that prevents certain ideas from becoming conscious, it is *he* that must attempt to overcome it by way of insistence, which amounts to mobilizing the weight of

his authority[26] toward diminishing the patient's doubt about the significance (not to mention the *existence*) of his or her recollections.

Freud tells us, moreover, that this 'psychical force' makes its appearance alongside certain 'pathogenic ideas'. These ideas are "of a distressing nature, calculated to arouse the affects of shame, of self-reproach, and of psychical pain, and the feeling of being harmed; they were all of a kind that one would prefer not to have experienced, that one would rather forget" (269). By way of resistance, we come to a crossroad of affect and idea. We see that a psychical idea does not exist in a vacuum, but that a certain quantum of affect is always attached to it which seeks to discharge itself and whose discharge brings about the manifestation of an idea. The idea is the (qualitative) manifestation of this (quantitative) discharge. This 'affective' side of resistance brings into focus the organismic dimension of the human being, which accompanies the problem of the recollection of memories in the presence of another. Such are the dynamics of resistance.

Bumping Up Against the Transference

The significance of resistance lies in the way in which it reveals an indeterminate, enigmatic link to the Other, where suggestion elided it. In this way, that which Freud recognized as a 'psychical force' is nothing other than a certain gap or hole in the patient's discourse, a hole that Freud attempts to compensate for with what he calls 'insistence'. This method involves, as Freud is well aware, a kind of light hypnosis, which amounts to introducing a strategic, controlled transferential relationship built on a

[26] I do not mean some kind of 'personal' authority but an authority that is structural in this doctor-patient relationship, something akin to what Lacan calls 'the subject supposed to know'.

foundation of authority that Freud tries to convey. He does not recognize what he is doing as manipulating the transference (since he had no idea of the significance of transference at this point), but that is what it is. He tells us that he supplements his insistence with a physical application "of pressure to the forehead" (270), which, as he is perfectly aware, is pure artifice: "a pressure on the forehead like this could be replaced by any other signal or by some other exercise of physical influence on the patient; but since the patient is lying in front of me, pressure on his forehead, or taking his head between my two hands, seems to be the most convenient way of applying suggestion for the purpose I have in view" (271).

Freud supplements his insistence with this 'pressure technique' because he discovers that assurances such as, "'of course you know it', 'tell me all the same', 'you'll think of it in a moment' do not carry us very far. Even with patients in a state of 'concentration' the thread breaks off after a few sentences" (270). Breaks of this kind indicate to him that there is something else at play in this relation between the patient and the therapist, that his statements are not reducible to the level of the subject of the enunciated; they need to be lent a specific weight from the position of the enunciation, the position from which Freud speaks or, more accurately, from which the patient hears him. By occupying this place, his insistence can take root and affect the resistance. He tells us, rather flatly, that insistence "on the part of a strange doctor who is unfamiliar with what is happening is not powerful enough to deal with the resistance to association in a serious case of hysteria" (270). Indeed, Freud is not unaware that both this 'pressure technique' and hypnosis involve a certain "influence…on the part of the doctor" and that, moreover, it is a "*sine qua non* to a solution of the problem" of resistance (266). Here we see his first attempts to

situate his utterances in the position of a *sujet supposé savoir*, which involve, instead of a spontaneous unfolding of the transference, an active manipulation of it in a strategic but limited way, in order to facilitate in overcoming the resistance.

Freud's first mention of the transference occurs near the end of *Studies on Hysteria* where he describes three scenarios in which his 'pressure technique' fails. In each of these it is clear that the specific mode of this failure involves a certain disturbance in the doctor/patient relationship, a resistance to his manipulation of the transference. Of these, Freud highlights one specific disturbance which involves the

> transferring on to the figure of the physician the distressing ideas which arise from the content of the analysis. This is a frequent, and indeed in some analyses a regular, occurrence. Transference on to the physician takes place through a *false connection*....The content of [a] wish had appeared first of all in the patient's consciousness without any memories of the surrounding circumstances which would have assigned it to a past time. The wish which was present then, owing to the compulsion to associate which was dominant in her consciousness, linked to my person, with which the patient was legitimately concerned; and as the result of this *mésalliance* – which I describe as a 'false connection' – the same affect was provoked which had forced the patient long before to repudiate this forbidden wish. (302-3)

The 'pressure technique' fails in this situation owing to the patient's thoughts having to do with Freud himself. He surmises, however, that these thoughts do not really have anything to do with him, but reveal a distressing idea that cannot find its way directly into consciousness and thus finds a means of expression by attaching itself to the Other *qua* physician, or, more specifically, something in the past is confused with the present here and now of the analytic situation.

Such an attachment facilitates a resistance that cannot be overcome by Freud's manipulation of the transference, because it is directly implicated in his technique:

> In one of my patients the origin of a particular hysterical symptom lay in a wish, which she had had many years earlier and had at once relegated to the

> unconscious, that the man she was talking to at the time might boldly take the initiative and give her a kiss. On one occasion, at the end of a session, a similar wish came up in her about me. She was horrified at it, spent a sleepless night, and at the next session, though she did not refuse to be treated, was quite useless for work. (303)

Having been unable to properly remember, to properly historicize this experience, the patient symbolizes it through the very means that Freud uses in order to get the patient to speak—his person. What could have otherwise been a simple, detached association of the form, 'I had these feelings for this person' facilitates resistance by implicating the presence of the analyst, becoming transformed into the statement, 'I have these feelings for you'[27]. Freud, to his credit, recognizes here that the patient's desire is aimed elsewhere than his person, that he occupies the symbolic position of the Other apropos of the patient's psychic reality. He very well could have taken this patient's mode of expression as having some straightforward correspondence to some 'objective' state of things, repudiating the wish as vile and unacceptable. Instead, he views it as signifying something, the meaning of which remains indeterminate.

The transference recognized by Freud in the failure of his technique reveals to us, nevertheless, the hint of a social relation playing out spontaneously in the *present*. It involves certain features of the analytic situation through which a part of the patient's history is expressed that otherwise cannot be put into words. As Lacan notes:

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[27] As Freud will point out in his 1912 paper, "The Dynamics of the Transference": "it is evident that it becomes particularly hard to admit to any proscribed wishful impulse if it has to be revealed in front of the very person to whom the impulse relates. Such a necessity [in the analytic situation to say everything that comes to mind] gives rise to situations which in the real world would scarcely seem possible", because, of course, we can choose to keep these wishful impulses secret (104). Freud also explores the consequences of keeping these wishful impulses from another in his example of the forgetting of the word 'Signorelli' in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. See Chapter 1 (pages 1 to 7 in Volume 6 of the *Standard Edition*).

> at the level of neurosis, which brought about the discovery of the realm of the Freudian unconscious *qua* register of memory, our good fellow, instead of using words, uses everything at his disposal—he empties his pockets, he turns his trousers inside out, he puts his functions, his inhibitions inside, he gets completely inside himself, with the signifier, it's he who becomes the signifier. His real, or his imaginary, enters the discourse. (*Seminar III* 155)

Transference involves remembering in the guise of repeating, a remembering at the level of *being* as opposed to in speech. If this is the case apropos of the *failure* of the 'pressure technique', and if, as I have claimed, transference is still at play even when it is *successful*, then what kind of repetition might be involved in the latter?

Jonathan Lear emphasizes the way in which the 'success' of Freud's 'pressure technique' depended on how well it reinforced a certain pre-existing, invisible (social) relation of doctor and patient, within which the patient's associations are situated. Freud "conceptualizes the transference in such a way as to preserve the standard image of the doctor-patient relationship" in a way that "reassures the doctor that, really, this has nothing to do with him" (119). As Lear puts it, the transference

> also include[s] the *social world* of both patient and doctor. In this case, the social world is turn-of-the-century Vienna, with its mores, artifacts and other manifestations of European culture. The social world must be included in the assumed background because the possibility of Freud recognizing this moment as transference requires that he see it as abnormal. (119)

If a disruption of this 'social world' is what is foregrounded in Freud's initial recognition of the transference, we might say that the pressure technique's success consisted in a manipulation of the transference such that it reinforced and maintained the harmony of the doctor-patient relationship peculiar to this social world: it says to the patient, 'you may not want to reveal to just anyone your most intimate thoughts, but I am a *doctor* and the treatment demands it.' So long as the manifest content of these thoughts do not refer directly to the analyst, which would breach the unspoken contract, the 'pressure

technique' seemed to be enough to reinforce the doctor-patient relationship and thereby encourage the patient to speak.

However, when Freud's technique 'worked', it did not provide any way for him to discern the underlying process, the source of its efficacy. We should note here the connection that Freud's pressure technique has with the problem of mastery, which we noted in chapter one as being significant in his forgetting of the word *Signorelli*. Freud is blind to the way that the transference operates even at the level of the successful functioning of his technique owing to the stock he places in assuming the position of the *sujet supposé savoir* in order to facilitate the patient's associations. In this way, he occupies by way of his technique the position of a subject of certainty vis-à-vis the patient's "conscious searching and reflecting" (271)—in a word, the patient's *doubt*. It is in consciously occupying this place of the *sujet supposé savoir* that Freud is able to bring about in the patient the confidence that the first thing that comes to mind *will indeed* be what is significant, that there is no need to apply any judgment to it because it has already been determined *in advance*, regardless of its content, to be exactly what Freud, the authority on the matter, is looking for. At the same time, what is crucial is that the 'pressure technique' does not determine the *meaning* of the material, but only breaks through the patient's resistance to bringing it to the surface through the medium of speech, so that it can be worked over. The fact remains, though, that Freud's early technique was conceived of in terms of a problem of mastery, of how to master the patient's doubt; his overlooking of a transference that continued to function even when he seemed to achieve the mastery required by the resistance was to have a profound effect on his practice.

The Pathogenic Nucleus in Freud's First Schemas of the Psychic Apparatus

Early in *Seminar I*, Lacan draws attention to a rather intriguing image first evoked by Freud in *Studies on Hysteria* in order to schematize the relationship of resistance to what he (Freud) calls the pathogenic nucleus lying beyond or 'outside' ordinary consciousness. It does not enter the purview of the (conscious) ego directly but has very profound effects at the level of its structure. Lacan invites us to imagine a "stream of parallel words, and these broaden out at a certain moment to encompass this famous pathogenic nucleus which itself is also a story, they move away from it in order to include it and join up a little further on" (22). If the pathogenic nucleus is a story, it is one that gets the psyche rather riled, to the extent that it causes the chain of signifiers (the "stream of parallel words" described above), which would otherwise tell this story, to split apart the closer one gets to it in a way that is rather unpredictable. Only one part of the story gets told (to consciousness). In fact, in chapter one, we encountered an arrangement similar to the one Lacan describes here, in Freud's metapsychological paper, "The Unconscious":

> the conscious presentation [*Vorstellung*] of the object [is]...split up into the presentation of the *word* and the presentation of the thing [*Sachvorstellung*]; the latter consists in the cathexis, if not the direct memory-images of the thing, at least of remoter memory-traces derived from these. We now seem to know all at once what the difference is between a conscious and an unconscious presentation. The two are not, as we supposed, different registrations of the same content in different psychical localities, nor yet different functional states of cathexis in the same locality; but *the conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone*. (201; my emphasis)

Here again we have this object, "split" into parallel word- and thing-presentations, whose joining comprises a conscious presentation. But are we to suppose, then, that should we be able to restore the two chains, we would have the full story? As we have already examined in the previous chapter, this might be the case if consciousness were a

representation of the unconscious, in a manner no doubt that writing, according to Derrida, is thought to 'represent' speech; in which case, the psychoanalytic cure could be defined as the moment when the unconscious could finally be put into words. Here we would arrive at precisely the dimension Borch-Jacobsen singles out as the *representation of the lack*. However much Freud may have desired a cure such as this in the beginning, as is evidenced by what he felt the aim of analysis was at the time of *Studies on Hysteria*—to 'conquer the resistances' and restore the chain of signifiers to consciousness—this was never to be effected so long as he had to contend with this pathogenic nucleus. As early as 1895, in what is considered to be one of the founding texts of psychoanalytic experience, Freud had already stumbled upon psychoanalysis' ultimate obstacle, *Das Ding/objet petit a*, the very place or lack *from which* the subject speaks.

Freud introduces the pathogenic nucleus amidst his theorization of the pathological organization of memories, which his (pre-psychoanalytic) technique aims to impact. This was his first attempt to formulate in words what the data that was made available to him by applying his technique implied about the organization of the psyche. Significantly, Robert Leventhal points out in his study on German hermeneutics that Freud articulates a relation "between the nucleus and the surrounding mnemic material, as well as that between the types of ordering this material must be subjected to, not as a relation between *depth* and *surface*, but as a relation precisely of linear-chronological, concentric, and logical 'stratification,' as a surface archive or group of files that encompasses the nucleus" (*Disciplines of Interpretation* 317). Leventhal situates Freud within an anti-hermeneutical tradition that "dispensed with the classical hermeneutic assumption of

there being a deep 'meaning' or sense beneath the surface of the text" (311). This tension between textual representation and the thing represented, a fundamental tension at work in psychoanalytic theory about language, plays out also at the level of Freud's own attempted schematization. He was no doubt aware of this, noting that the series of similes that he presents us with in this section "have only a very limited resemblance to [the] subject and…are incompatible with one another" insofar as the psychic apparatus is a "highly complicated topic which has never yet been represented" (*Studies* 291). This section deserves our attention because the logic of Freud's three schemas will continue to be elaborated throughout his entire *oeuvre*. It represents an attempt, as Leventhal suggests, to 'read' the unconscious in a fundamentally new way, not as a well-spring of already existing meaning concealed under the surface text, but following a linear, temporal logic better represented by movement along a Mobius strip, where one always ends up on the same side as one started from. Meanings are secondary; what matters is following the chain of associations, that is, the path of the signifiers.

A peculiar structure of memory in language, then, emerges from the beginning of Freud's researches into neurosis in the form of a thematic organization of memory. Language does not relate to memory as surface to depth, as representation to thing; the point is not that the patient's narration *represents* his or her memories qua some 'depth' of the psyche or essence of his or her being. Rather, memories are grouped in the first place according to a theme. What emerges is an autonomy of the signifying chain, a "distribution of the sensible", to use Rancière's apt phrase[28] (12). Memories *qua* images

[28] Rancière calls the distribution of the sensible "the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it. A distribution of the

or ideas accessible to consciousness are distributed according to the logic of signification peculiar to the subject. Thus, in Freud's first schema, memories are arranged in a metonymic, linear-chronological order stemming from a theme, which is itself a metaphor—the example he uses is the theme of Breuer's patient, Anna O.'s deafness, which we will examine in more detail in the next section, becomes a metaphorical substitution for her father. The theme of deafness was "differentiated according to seven sets of determinants, and under each of these seven headings ten to over a hundred memories were collected in chronological series" (288). 'Deafness' itself expresses a metaphorical relation to some *thing*, which is lacking any other means of signification—for what is a father, in the end, but a *thing* of which no signification can grasp the essence? As metaphor, 'deafness' is the trace of a symptom, produced by an otherwise unsignifiable conflict or antagonism in the subject's history; it is thus not so much as a *representation* but as a *representative* of something that otherwise cannot be integrated into the structure of Anna O.'s experience, pointing to a limit in her mode of relating to the world through the Other, specifically, the Other's desire. For the world is not only 'out there', but also concerns how we relate to it in language, how it is represented to us through language, which implicates other beings, who also belong to the world and who, along with us, comprise the social.

Contained within this thematic organization of experience, there is an implicit theory of the structural organization of memory that has to do with forming memories and not

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sensible therefore establishes at one and the same time something common that is shared and exclusive parts" (*The Politics of Aesthetics* 12). To my mind, there is no better way to describe speech in the analytic setting, the words that are shared in common between patient and analyst, and that organize sense-perception into something communicable to another always at the same time has at its foundation something that cannot be said or that the patient does not want to say.

just simply accessing them. The theme as an 'empty' signifier, metaphorizing something in experience that cannot otherwise be symbolized, exerts a kind of gravitational pull on fresh perceptual experiences, foregrounding some at the expense of others. The theme exhibits the contours of objects whose constellation comprises the subject's economy of sense. We remember certain initially perceptual material because they can be linked associatively to something else according to a certain logic or pattern.

In the second schema, we get a better idea of the associative arrangement of mnemic material along a continuum from most to least conscious. The themes by which memories are grouped in meaningful relation to one another are "stratified concentrically round the pathogenic nucleus" (288). The "most peripheral strata contain the memories (or files), which, belonging to different themes, are easily remembered and always have been clearly conscious", which is to say that immediate consciousness, accessible through the subject's immediate (spoken) associations, is characterized by a proliferation of themes, whose traces can in turn be followed to the deeper strata. These memories at the periphery of consciousness are overdetermined with respect to their themes; associations at this level condense a large array of thematic material.

It is crucial to point out here that this way of understanding the relationship between theme, memory and nucleus avoids situating the nucleus as some kind of originary 'cause' in a straightforwardly deterministic causal chain. The second schema exhibits a dispersal of themes along different strata that should be considered as permutations issuing from an embryonic structure, a densely packed knot or tangle of memories. While there is no doubt that this is the core from which all subsequent significations emanate, there is no way to predict from this core the form that these significations will take. It is

all content and no form, and as such, the content is radically inaccessible, *un*conscious. Quite literally, this core is a bunch of non-sense, a bundle of non-sense, what will become the Oedipus complex: the non-sense from which sense emanates. For, after all, what can the Oedipus complex be, in the end, but non-sense? There exists a father and a mother, who together conceived a child—what can this strange origin of the subject possibly *mean*?

While speech is not a dimension manifestly recognized by Freud, when we read him with it in mind, a meaning is foregrounded that was hitherto obscured in Freud's 'third arrangement' of the pathogenic material:

> What I have in mind is an arrangement according to thought-content, the linkage made by a logical thread which reaches as far as the nucleus and tends to take an irregular and twisting path, different in every case. This arrangement has a dynamic character, in contrast to the morphological one of the two stratifications mentioned previously [and discussed above]. While these two would be represented in a spatial diagram by a continuous line, curved or straight, the course of the logical chain would have to be indicated by a broken line which would pass along the most roundabout paths from the surface to the deepest layers and back, and yet would in general advance from the periphery to the central nucleus, touching at every intermediate halting-place – a line resembling a ziz-zag[.]... The logical chain corresponds not only to a zig-zag, twisted line, but rather to a ramifying system of lines and more particularly to a converging one. It contains nodal points at which two or more threads meet and thereafter proceed as one; and as a rule several threads which run independently, or which are connected at various points by side-paths, debouch into the nucleus. (289-90)

Do we not have here a perfect schematization of how Freud as listener attempts to follow (the path of) the speech presented by his patient at the level of its signification? The meaning of the subject's speech here resonates on the many levels of Freud's concentric model simultaneously, although the speaker does not recognize many of these meanings. The signifiers of the subject's (spoken) discourse zig-zag throughout the structure, spinning a kind of delicate web of connections to the various levels, situating him or her,

qua subject, at many levels simultaneously within the psychic apparatus. We might say that Lacan's focus on speech foregrounds the dimension of the speaking situation implied in Freud's early reflections on technique by naming it as such, so that it could be thought as a concept in its own right.

The Unconscious is the Discourse of the Other

It is, of course, a characteristic of case histories that they are a product of their praxis, that is, they are limited by the state of the theorist's knowledge and the influence this knowledge has on his or her actions; regarding the case histories presented in the *Studies*, their value is in the fact that they are written up at a time when there was very little knowledge about hysteria. In this way we witness the development of a symbolic-imaginary structure emerging out of an almost absolute darkness of the real, they are the products of two doctors who come face-to-face with some bizarre phenomena and grope around in the dark for a way to explain it at a time when theoretical frameworks for a 'psychosomatic' view of hysteria were only beginning to materialize.

How then, finally, is the pathogenic nucleus "also a story"? We find in Breuer's case-history of Anna O., whom we will call by her real name, Bertha Pappenheim, support for the thesis that the pathogenic nucleus is the story of the Other. In this nucleus, subject and Other meet around an enigma. At the furthest limit of signification, in the presence of the Other who functions as the representative of the outside, who holds the place of the outside of signification, there are no signifiers that can account for this radically indeterminate place. The subject must thus contend only with a reconfiguration, through metonymy and metaphor, of the signifiers already at his or her disposal in order to signify this strange place outside of the ego, marked by the Other. Interestingly, we get the most

radical confirmation of the Derridian thesis that "there is no outside of the text" in the Lacanian axioms, "the unconscious is the discourse of the Other" and "desire is the Other's desire". At the furthest limit of signification, there is only a desire, that appears to come from the outside and that is written in a language comprised of a reordering of one's own signifiers.

Let us, then, examine the passage from Breuer's case study of Bertha Pappenheim that Freud refers to in his theorization of the pathogenic nucleus. Here we can see at least in part how what Freud calls the "theme" of deafness is a metaphor organized around the enigma of the *father*:

> [i]t was our regular experience that the patient did not hear when she was spoken to. It was possible to differentiate this passing habit of not hearing as follows:
>
> (a) Not hearing when someone came in, while her thoughts were abstracted. 108 separate detailed instances of this, mentioning the persons and circumstances, often with dates. First instance: *not hearing her father come in.*
>
> (b) Not understanding when several people were talking. 27 instances. First instance: *her father, once more, and an acquaintance.*
>
> (c) Not hearing when she was alone and directly addressed. 50 instances. Origin: *her father having vainly asked her for some wine.*
>
> (d) Deafness brought on by being shaken (in a carriage, etc). 15 Instances. Origin: having been shaken angrily by her young brother when he caught her one night *listening at the* [her father's] *sick-room door.*
>
> (e) Deafness brought on by fright at a noise. 37 instances. Origin: *a choking fit of her father's, caused by swallowing the wrong way.* (36; my emphasis)

This recurrence of the figure of the father at the 'origin' of Pappenheim's symptom tells us a little something about the *social* nature of Pappenheim's symptoms. Breuer is knee-deep in the transference and does not know it, something that Freud is said to have recognized in retrospect with a comment to the effect that Breuer 'held the key in his hand'. The result is that Pappenheim's memories are structured around the enigma of Breuer's presence *qua* Other, indeed her symptoms are realized *through* his presence, her desire mobilized through the 'game' being played between them, without either of them

recognizing it: Pappenheim's illness was, indeed, "as real (as surreal) as they get—until the day she decided that this sterile and desperate game was no longer worth the trouble" (Borch-Jacobsen 92).

We see in this excerpt from Breuer's case history that deafness is Pappenheim's symptom, which holds together in metaphorical relation a constellation of elements all pointing back to this signifier, father, through which Pappenheim contends with the enigma of Breuer's doting presence: *is he an object of satisfaction or not*?[29] Pappenheim returns to the theme of the father in order to find some way to symbolize, to come to terms with, Breuer's enigmatic Otherness. We find further confirmation of this strange short-circuit that occurs between the father and Breuer in Breuer's own case history, even though he does not explicitly recognize his own role or relation to it. Breuer finds himself in this place purely circumstantially, a simple matter of him being in the wrong place at the right time; out of this contingency emerged a necessity, a structure that played out to a logical end since Breuer had the theoretical means at his disposal neither to recognize what was happening, nor to intervene productively.

Pappenheim's illness emerges around the time that she is nursing her father, of whom, Breuer describes, "she was passionately fond" (22). During her father's illness, she

> devoted her whole energy to nursing her father, and no one was much surprised when by degrees her own health greatly deteriorated. *No one, perhaps not even the patient herself, knew what was happening to her*; but eventually the state of

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[29] I am referring here to Freud's disputation over Breuer's observation, early in the case history, that the "element of sexuality was astonishingly undeveloped in her", which he refers to in a footnote in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (*Studies* 21). In the same section in which the footnote appears, Freud surmises, in a way that might point toward an understanding why this transference emerges in response to Breuer's person: "Between the pressure of the instinct and his antagonism to sexuality, illness offers him a way of escape. It does not solve his conflict, but seeks to evade it by transforming his libidinal impulses into symptoms" (*Three Essays* 165).

> weakness...became so bad that to her great sorrow she was no longer allowed to continue nursing the patient. The immediate cause of this was a very severe cough, on account of which I [Breuer] examined her for the first time. (23; my emphasis)

Soon after Breuer's first visit, her "adored father" died:

> During her illness she had seen him very rarely and for short periods. This was the most severe psychical trauma that she could possibly have experienced. A violent outburst of excitement was succeeded by a profound stupor which lasted about two days and from which she emerged in a greatly changed state. (26)

In his opening lecture delivered at Clark University in September 1909, Freud himself admits that Pappenheim's symptoms "can only be regarded as mnemic signs of his [her father's] illness and death" and that they "correspond to a display of mourning" (*Five Lectures* 17). Here we are in a position to grasp the significant place of the father in Pappenheim's psychic structure.

Breuer arrives on the scene, with his "sympathy and interest" and his unwavering devotion to the case at the moment of the imminent loss of this beloved, (real) father. Let us call Breuer's devotion to finding a cure for Pappenheim's illness by its name: Breuer's *desire*, the desire to solve the enigma presented to him by the hysteric, his Other. Here occurs a crisscrossing of two desires, of two lacks, forming an *X* that marks the spot of the enigma between Pappenheim and Breuer, an enigma around which all of their subsequent significations will stem, forming a transferential bond between them that will run amok since Breuer has no real clue what he is doing. Pappenheim's symptoms will, as a result, structure themselves around the question, to paraphrase Lacan, *what does Breuer (qua Other) want from me*?

Support for this reading comes from an unlikely source: Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen's re-evaluation of the case of Pappenheim, *Remembering Anna O.: A Century of Mystification.*

He intends to show how Breuer's case history reveals the founding of psychoanalysis (Borch-Jacobsen makes no distinction between psychoanalysis proper and the material of *Studies on Hysteria*, which is actually something different) to be marked by a profound ineptitude that should call its efficacy into question by painting Breuer as "a rather gullible Viennese doctor", who gets drawn in by the lure of "a game whose strange rules the two of them made up together as they went along"[30] (92). We cannot but agree with Borch-Jacobsen's premises. Breuer's attitude was indeed marked by a certain gullibility and hysteria, owing to the 'social' character of its inception and repetition, that is, the transference, can certainly be characterized as a 'game' being played between two people.

However, in the first place, the 'cause' of Breuer's gullibility is displaced: it is not simply that he was suffering from an innate imbecility or was otherwise a genetically endowed naïve dupe (which Borch-Jacobsen implies, insofar as he expects we just take Breuer's behaviour at face-value); rather, these characteristics that are imputed to Breuer's personality are symptomatic of the fact that the theoretical perspective guiding his praxis was premature. This is precisely what Lacan means when he describes the counter-transference, which for Lacan is not distinct from the structure of transference as a whole, as "nothing other than the function of the analyst's ego, what I have called the sum total of the analyst's prejudices" (*Seminar I* 23). Breuer approached Pappenheim's symptoms through the use of hypnosis, which he used in order to induce her to speak about them, as would a surgeon (to borrow an analogy from Freud) extract "a foreign body from the living tissue" (*Studies* 290). In this way, he unwittingly and detrimentally

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[30] We should be forced to wonder, moreover, following Borch-Jacobsen's logic here, whether or not the obvious ineptitude of Ptolemy, which we can now discern from our present vantage point, should retroactively call the entire science of astronomy into question.

situates himself *outside* of the analysis, just as a surgeon does not become implicated in the 'foreign body' that is at the root of his patients' (physiological) symptoms. Breuer's use of hypnosis compounded the problem by concealing the resistance necessary to indicate the borders of the 'game' taking place between doctor and patient, thereby obscuring the transference, which, even in 1895 (when *Studies on Hysteria* was published) but especially between 1880-1882 (when the case actually took place), did not comprise a part, much less a *significant* part, of either Freud's or Breuer's theoretical framework. It was operating, obviously, but without anyone being able to recognize it.

All the evidence of Borch-Jacobsen's study points toward a confirmation of the Lacanian thesis, *the unconscious is the discourse of the Other*, and moreover confirms Freud's intuition that the resistance, far from being a mere inconvenience to be overcome through hypnotic suggestion, is in fact a significant and necessary part of the analytic situation that must be taken into account and worked through insofar as it has a significance for the relation between patient and doctor.

We could sum up Borch-Jacobsen's main premise thus: Bertha Pappenheim's symptoms were meant only for Breuer, they manifested themselves in his presence, and were often even induced by his suggestions:

> [a] close reading of her 1895 case history reveals, surprisingly, that *no one close to Bertha Pappenheim noticed any of the symptoms from the so-called incubation period*. But, if we can believe the 'reminiscences' that Breuer obtained during the fourth phase of the illness, Bertha's symptoms at this time—deafness, episodes of fainting, trancelike states ('*absenses*'), nausea, muscular and glottal spasms, visual disturbances—were not symptoms that would have been easy to hide. More than once, it seems, Bertha had even lost the ability to speak....And yet at no time throughout this period did anyone around Bertha Pappenheim notice anything at all. (78-79)

Breuer himself confirms this in his original report of 1882, of which Borch-Jacobsen makes extensive use. Breuer in fact notes in this report, without perhaps realizing it, the extent of his (suggestive) influence on how Pappenheim expresses or signifies her symptom:

> I recount the matter as I learned it from her; it can be verified only by comparison with details from other known dates, since there is general agreement. This part of her illness is altogether hidden from those around her. *Even she herself, I believe, knows in detail only such things as I have told her according to her report under hypnosis, which we deal with later.* (quoted in Borch-Jacobsen 79-80; my emphasis)

The precise wording of Breuer's revelation—this "[e]ven if she herself…knows only such things as I have told her"—clearly indicates that at some level he recognized his role in directing the manifestation of his Pappenheim's symptoms.

This alternative reading, by which we arrive at a different conclusion from the same premises as Borch-Jacobsen, pivots upon a fundamental tension between theory and practice that is exemplified by this section of Breuer's 1882 report, which points toward a limit of Breuer's praxis. The analytic situation has effects whether or not they are explicitly taken into account or able to be recognized; what one is able to recognize depends fundamentally on the present state of their theoretical apparatus. In this short statement of Breuer's, something momentarily irrupts, punches a hole in the network of signifiers mobilized by Breuer to understand his patient. Borch-Jacobsen even goes as far as recognizing that Breuer "certainly had his own theoretical assumptions, and there is every reason to believe that these, especially his belief in hypnotic hypermnesia, are what gradually directed Bertha Pappenheim's treatment toward the excavation of 'memories'" (64). However, he does not elaborate any further. We are apparently supposed to assume that Breuer's (conscious and unconscious) "theoretical assumptions" contaminate his case

and lend further support to the claim that he is naïve and inept. But what is at stake in psychoanalysis proper is the extent to which the analyst's "theoretical assumptions" operate unconsciously. If Freud's recognition of resistance, which sets him on the path to psychoanalysis, is to have any meaning at all, then it is precisely that it indicates such a failure of both the analyst's and the patient's guiding "theoretical assumptions". Unfortunately—and this is the only point at which we can agree with Borch-Jacobsen's assessment that there was something inept about Breuer's methodology—the reliance on hypnotic suggestion did not allow Breuer's "theoretical assumptions" to 'enter into the conversation' as Freud tells us that the patient's symptoms do during analysis.

All practice takes place within a (symbolically structured) horizon of meaning which comprises the particularity of the 'worlds' that each human being lives in. The theories which guide our understanding determine our mode of being-in-the-world. Indeed it is within precisely this problematic that psychoanalysis proper enters the scene; but furthermore, this problematic is the impetus behind Lacan's 'return to Freud', guided by the question, so crucial to the tension between theory and practice, "*what do we do when we do analysis*" (*Seminar I* 10)? This is the inaugural question of Lacan's first seminar in 1953 and it is significant that Lacan does not seek to resolve this question through his seminar. Rather, he intends to point toward it as the limit of the practice of psychoanalysis. It is a question that fundamentally cannot be resolved, but must already remain at the forefront of any psychoanalytic endeavor, to be renewed each time the analyst enters an analytic session. However, far from being merely or distinctly a question for psychoanalysis, it points toward a fundamental discrepancy between the symbolic and the real: every time we act, every time we intervene *in* the world, it presupposes a horizon

of meaning that eludes our grasp because this world that we intervene *in* is a distinctly *intersubjective* world that is beyond our individual control and grasp. Breuer's naïvety, then, consists in misrecognizing the referent of the manifest content of his patient's symptoms. He is searching for a point of reference in the real—in the form of originary 'true' situation a la Freud's initial belief in some actual scene of seduction when in fact the point of reference consists in the intersubjective relation between doctor and patient.

The 'Dialectical Reversal': Freud's Failure with Dora

Interestingly, it will take a repetition of the failure of Freud's technique before he grants the transference the status of a distinctive phenomenon, worthy of being taken into account in its own right, and not as a mere derivation of resistance. This repetition is outlined in the case of Dora, which Lacan elaborates in his "Presentation on Transference" as characterized by "a series of dialectical reversals" and "developments of truth" (178). Crucially, Freud did not structure his case history in this way as "mere contrivance" but rather "the conception of the case history is *identical* to the progress of the subject, that is, to the reality of the treatment" (178). The three schemas from *Studies on Hysteria* were very much on Freud's mind as he wrote up the Dora case-history, as indicated by some of his prefatory remarks in which he states that he proposes to "substantiate those views" of "the pathogenesis of hysterical symptoms and upon *the mental processes occurring in hysteria*" (Freud, "Fragment" 7; my emphasis).

What is involved in the Dora case—and, more generally, precisely what the second schema invites us to consider—is "a scansion of structures in which truth is transmuted for the subject, structures that affect not only her comprehension of things, but her very position as subject, her 'objects' being a function of that position" (Lacan, "Presentation"

178). Our relation to the objects through which we perceive the external world is constituted by the position we adopt in language, how we are positioned as subject. In order for this universe of (meaningful and thus imaginary) objects to be constituted in a totality something must be left out, something must remain, as it were, unconscious, namely, the signifier through which we position ourselves in relation to the world. We see this most clearly in the way that Bertha Pappenheim positioned herself as subject, unconsciously, through a signifier that marked the father's desire and which structured her relation with Breuer as a result. In this way, it is the symbolic guise of the *objet petit a*, the representative of the representation. This is why Lacan insists on translating Freud's *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* as 'representative of the representation'[31]: by drawing attention to its status as *representative*, he emphasizes that the *objet petit a* can never be represented as such (as we have seen, there is no representation of lack), is never reducible to a representation.

Thus does Dora begin her treatment with Freud, according to Lacan's summary, with a proliferation of representations: she "open[s] up a file full of memories whose rigor contrasts with the lack of biographical precision characteristic of neurosis: Frau K and her father have been lovers for so many years, and have been hiding it with what are at times ridiculous fictions; but what takes the cake is that Dora is thus offered up defenseless to Herr K's attentions, to which her father turns a blind eye, thus making her the object of an odious exchange" ("Presentation on Transference" 178). From the beginning, Freud is faced with a dilemma: Dora displays a preternatural awareness of her situation; she suffers no illusions about it. Her discourse, as Freud himself describes it, was a "sound

[31] In particular, see pages 216-222 of Chapter 17, "The Subject and the Other: Aphanisis" in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*.

and incontestable train of argument" ("Fragment" 35). As what we will associate with the first stratum in Freud's model from the *Studies,* we see this narrative curiously marked by the event of love-affair between Dora's father and Frau K. It bears the peculiar feature of Dora's full awareness: nothing "had escaped her perception, which in this connection was pitilessly sharp; *here there were no gaps to be found in her memory*" (32; emphasis in original).

Now, this case comes fresh off the heels of Freud's successes[32] in the *Studies*. There he tells us that the analyst proceeds from the initial stratum by following the traces left by "gaps and imperfections" in the patient's account, which, like Dora's, "sounds as if it were complete and self-contained. It is at first as though we were standing before a wall which shuts out every prospect and prevents us from having any idea whether there is anything behind it, and if so, what" (293). Previously, Freud relied on the resistance to show the way, submitting the patient's speech to a kind of logical analysis. The analyst proceeds by searching out 'weak spots', "detecting lacunas in the patient's first description" (294) where "the train of thought is visibly interrupted and patched up...with a turn of speech or an inadequate explanation" or a "motive that would have to be described as a feeble one in a normal person" (293). What no doubt makes an impression on Freud in the initial stages of Dora's treatment is the way in which the material she initially presents to him is absent of all of these features; this peculiarity is in turn pointed

[32] For the skeptical reader of Freud, let me point out that it makes no difference whether or not one actually considers the treatment of the hysterics outlined in the *Studies* to be successes; on the contrary, what matters is that, without a doubt Freud felt them to be from the vantage point of his theoretical apparatus at that present time. It is precisely this kind of confidence in his theoretical apparatus that is brought into question in the Dora case. The failure of the treatment must be viewed as a failure of the theory to guide psychoanalytic practice.

out by Lacan when he stresses in his short summary that Dora's narrative is marked by a certain "rigor", a "biographical precision" that catches Freud unawares. In short, Freud's procedure consists in seeking out the distortions in the patient's narrative that, as distortions[33], owe their manifestation to resistance, so the fact that these distortions are patently missing from Dora's narrative poses a significant obstacle to his technique. Freud is led to ask, where is the resistance?

The Limits of Cure

Why should Freud bother to be suspicious of this lack of resistance in Dora's narrative? If psychoanalysis is a based on "recollection and narration" as Borch-Jacobsen has suggested, should not this be a sign that Dora is able to narrativize and recollect just fine and thus that she is 'cured' ("Hypnosis in Psychoanalysis" 51)? In fact, resistance is not a motivated or purposive "resistance to the treatment" any more than the resistance in an electric wire is a measure of the electricity's refusal to complete the circuit. In fact, we can expand the analogy still further: in the same way that electrical resistance generates heat, psychoanalytic resistance generates affect.

Indeed, that Freud was puzzled in the presence of Dora's seeming lack of resistance, in the fact that not only was she without any illusion about what was going on between her father and Frau K but that she narrativized it and was exasperated by the way she was treated by the parties in question in a totally reasonable manner, should be enough to

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[33] See the article, written by Freud for an encyclopedia, titled "Freud's Psychoanalytic Procedure" for a useful summary of the technique in *Studies on Hysteria*: "The factor of resistance has become one of the corner-stones of his theory. The ideas which are normally pushed aside on every sort of excuse...are regarded...as derivatives of the repressed psychical phenomena (thoughts and impulses), distorted owing to the resistance against their reproduction....The greater the resistance, the greater is the distortion" (251).

convince us that resistance has nothing to do with any 'resistance to the treatment'. As I have already noted above, Freud proceeds in a very specific and way, which should already give us an idea as to what the notion of resistance actually entails: he works with the gaps and inconsistencies, with, in a word, the *distortions* of narrative, which are not taken by him to be the places where the analysand is 'resisting the treatment' but rather where the narrative veers off or gets redirected down another path in order to avoid something unpleasant.

So it is, then, that Lacan breaks down Freud's written case-history into three "developments of truth" followed by "dialectical reversals", although it is significant that the third development of truth remains in abeyance because the analysis ultimately failed: Freud was unable to contain the transference in time because he had no idea initially what he was dealing with. His *own* development of truth along the path of psychoanalytic discourse begins with the necessary emergence of resistance following the abandonment of his reliance on hypnotic suggestion in *Studies on Hysteria* and is followed by the dialectical reversal that the failure of his treatment of Dora represents. By writing down and publishing the case ("Fragment of An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria") in 1901, Freud is maintaining a fidelity to a second development of truth, the truth of transference.

What is the status of truth in psychoanalytic discourse? It is marked by an irruption into the patient's discourse. We should recall here Alain Badiou's thesis that truth "punches a 'hole' in knowledges"[34], it is "heterogeneous to them", violating "established and circulating knowledges that a truth returns to the immediacy of the situation, or reworks that sort of portable encyclopaedia from which opinions, communications and

[34] This statement is often attributed to Lacan but I have not been able to find its source in any of his writings, nor does Badiou cite it.

sociality draw their meaning" (70). It is precisely this dimension of truth that can be discovered in the Dora case in the sense that a certain complacency in the new knowledge of resistance that Freud tells us about in *Studies on Hysteria* is burst asunder by Dora's unexpected departure from the treatment.

It would be a mistake to exaggerate Freud's complacency here vis-à-vis psychoanalytic knowledge. The merit of this case study, in which Freud offers a rather extensive self-criticism, is that it shows us the moment Freud gives the name of 'transference' to this truth that has unexpectedly burst through psychoanalytic knowledge: a truth, moreover, that re-oriented this knowledge as much as it upset his own prejudices, and which was to be submitted to psychoanalytic scrutiny in the subsequent period in which he writes his papers on technique, starting in 1912.

Here we see, in fact, that Freud is not one to lay his patients on the proverbial bed of Procrustes; rather, he remains attentive to the perforated line that separates theory and practice, an attentiveness that ultimately allows him to register this truth. In this sense, truth is not a measure of knowledge's accuracy—after all, who would be the one to judge that? Rather, truth emerges when the theory (*qua* discursive structure of knowledge) fails. It has a reorienting effect on knowledge, the discursive texture of which can never be the same once the new name or signifier is inscribed within it[35]. Thus, we can think of what Lacan calls "the development of truth" in terms of Freud's schemas of the psychic apparatus from *Studies on Hysteria*: it is the naming of a signifier that takes us from one

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[35] We might also consider as a concrete example, Lacan's quip about a non-sense sentence forged by Husserl, "The green is one for", which suddenly and unexpectedly takes on a meaning when we insert a context, as Lacan does, "about voting with green balls and red balls" (*Seminar XVII* 56). Similarly, Dora's sudden departure from analysis just when Freud thought things were going well is given a name, 'transference', which forces a reorientation of the state of psychoanalytic knowledge up to that point.

stratum to the next along the path of the subject's speech, by 'punching a hole' in the discourse that constitutes this stratum. Each development of truth opens up new signifying possibilities by bringing to light a signifier hitherto omitted.

Thus, we see that Freud himself circulates around the problem of the psychoanalytic cure with all the tenacity of a neurotic trying to come to terms with the question of his desire. In this way, the question of the cure might itself be more productively thought as a question of the desire of psychoanalysis itself, as a body of knowledge used for the treatment of psychic disorder. Jacques-Alain Miller has pointedly stated that psychoanalysis has "therapeutic effects", but that "these effects may only be obtained on the condition that you question the very notion of cure, because for the human condition, there is no cure" (N.P.). Psychoanalysis, then, was born out of this questioning of the "very notion of cure", which, as we have seen, is reflected in the modification of technique that began with the shift from Freud's first applications of Breuer's 'cathartic method', closely aligned as it was with hypnosis and suggestion, to the brief use of the so-called 'pressure technique' and, finally culminated in use of 'free association', through which psychoanalytic technique follows the paths of the subject's desire laid down by his or her signifiers and which implicate analyst and patient together.

CHAPTER 3

Freud the Meta-physician

If I were to sum up the road we have travelled in the preceding chapters so as to form a conclusion, it would be this: God is a symptom. We should understand this conclusion, to a certain extent, symbolically: to say that God is a symptom is to suggest that 'God' is a placeholder, a position in the (linguistic/discursive) structure of knowledge (whether that is scientific knowledge or more informal modes of understanding and reflecting upon our relationship to the world) that cannot be ignored or otherwise negated (that is, in a more Freudian language, disavowed). I have not arbitrarily chosen this word, 'God'; I take it directly from Descartes, who gives it its purest expression in trying to resolve the dissonant relation of thought to being: For Descartes, God embodies precisely all that must be left out in order for thought to represent being without remainder. God becomes, paradoxically, the remainder: I say "paradoxically" because it is a remainder that is not questioned as such, a remainder that is more or less 'successfully' removed from the equation, constituted as external to the problem of thought and being[36]. It is in this sense that I consider God to be a symptom: it is a point of rupture in knowledge, the place of impossibility, where words fail. And so, in returning to God, we return to the beginning; we return to the beginning in order to conclude.

In the beginning was the Word, or rather, *a* letter, the letter *a*.

As we have seen, this letter is no ordinary one. By speaking of the letter *a* in this way, I want to evoke three registers at once: Descartes' God as the possibility if not the origin

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[36] Let us recall, too, that for Marx God is a product of human beings' *alienation* from themselves.

of certainty; the unconscious, in which there is an instance of the letter, according to the title of one of Lacan's *Écrits*; and Derrida's *a*, the *a* in *differance*. These are the three reference points, indeed the three *leitmotifs*, with which we shall compose our ending.

We must, however, begin at the beginning and so begin with another *a*, namely, *aphasia*.

Aphasiacs and their Relation to the Unconscious

The *objet petit a*, we said in chapter one, is comparable to a little piece of being caught up in signification, to which we will now add that, in this way, it evokes the Freudian drive, in the sense in which it is situated at the limit between the somatic and the psychical. With this in mind, let us return to the idea of neurosis as a *psychosomatic aphasia*. We call it this in order to emphasize the way in which psychoanalysis, whose task it is to treat these psychosomatic aphasics, can be thought outside of a strictly hermeneutic framework. Part of what was shown in chapter two was precisely that the psychoanalyst is concerned not so much with assigning *meaning* to signifiers as to aiding the analysand in unearthing them by paying attention to the places where his or her speech stumbles around a psychical trauma. The locus of this psychical trauma, as the meeting point of the real, the imaginary and the symbolic, is the *objet petit a*, which Lacan also calls the object-cause of desire, as that which is the *cause* of desire but also that which *objects* to being put into words. Freud had been contending with something similar as far back as 1895 when, in the *Studies on Hysteria*, he found it necessary to posit the *pathogenic nucleus*, as that which resists signification the closer one gets to it.

For patients suffering from the actual aphasias, speech also stumbles, except the source of this stumbling is physical brain trauma; the physical lesions that cause aphasia can be thought of as a nucleus of sorts, albeit a physical as opposed to a psychical one. In fact, it is in the study of aphasia that we find the clearest expression of this *objet petit a* as a little piece of flesh caught up in signification in the way that aphasia interrupts spontaneous speech. Speech provides a bridge between the psychic and the somatic, or, to put it in terms of an opposition patterned on the *cogito*, between thought and being. Freud was no stranger to the speech disturbances manifested in aphasia, having published a short monograph on the subject, *On Aphasia*, in 1891[37]. It is necessary, however, before examining some of his conclusions in this book, that we place them in the context of some of the early research into the aphasias.

Owing to the complexity of the topic of aphasia and in order to sift through a vast amount of material, I will defer primarily to Ernst Cassirer's detailed account of the early research in the aphasias, with a specific emphasis on the work of Hughlings Jackson (an important point of reference for Freud in 1891) and Henry Head. For Cassirer, as for us, the aphasias reveal an opening to the question "of the relation between the formation of language and the structure of the world of perception" (208).

As early as 1870 Finkleburg introduced the term *asymbolia* in an attempt to find a common denominator for aphasiac disorders, seeing the "core of aphasic disturbances in

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[37] It is often thought that Lacan introduced language into psychoanalysis by way of structuralism, that this was the basis of his well known "return to Freud". The fact of this 1891 monograph, which was not, at Freud's behest, included in the *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, should, I hope, problematize that assumption. On the contrary, Lacan's "return to Freud" seems to me to have been about *reminding* analysts of Lacan's generation, who had curiously forgot, that language had always been there from the start.

the inability to grasp the meaning of such symbols" (211). However, it was soon discovered that what was at issue in aphasia was not confined to language *qua* "a total or partial failure to understand artificial signs" but also affected the aphasic's ability to "identify visible and tangible objects and make appropriate use of them" (211). Thus, in the first place, aphasic phenomena came to be understood as affecting either the 'sensory' or 'motor' abilities of the aphasic (as opposed to strictly confined to various uses of language), depending on whether the main factor involved an "inability to recognize things", with the "ability to make proper use of them…held to be secondary and derived"; or whether the aphasia made it "difficult or impossible to plan and properly carry out certain simple movements or complexes of movements" (211).

In parallel, Jackson's research revolved around the peculiar observation that a "speechless person may retain the word 'no,' and yet have only the interjectional or emotional, not the propositional use of it; he utters it in various tones as signs of feeling only" (quoted in Cassirer 213). For him, this observation changed the emphasis of aphasia from the study of disturbances in the stock of words to that of disturbances in the associative pathways:

> the analysis of the sentence and its function accordingly became the key to the study of aphasia. If in the clinical observation of aphasiacs we start from a mere inventory of their vocabulary, if we seek to determine what words they lack and what words they have use of, this method, Jackson stresses, will lead to highly fluctuating and unreliable results. For clinical experience shows that performances in this field vary exceedingly. A patient who has use of a particular word today may be unable to use it tomorrow; or he may be able to use it without difficulty in one context and not at all in another. (212)

Although the cause of aphasia is physical damage to the brain, it is significant that the specific disturbance in speech does not offer any clues as to how it corresponds with damage to a physical location of the brain. This led Freud, for example, following

Jackson, to an understanding of aphasia as a *functional* disturbance of speech in opposition to the *anatomical* understanding put forward by figures such as Wernicke and Lichtheim, who "restrict nervous functions to anatomically definable areas" (*Aphasia* 1).

Jackson's observations led him to pose a distinction between the affective (or descriptive) and intellectual (or propositional) functions of language. In this way, he divided "the phenomena of speech into two groups, the one consisting of emotional utterances, the other statements and expositions" (Cassirer 212). Curiously, then, aphasic disorders reveal that 'emotional utterances' "tend to be affected far more rarely than the latter, or are damaged in much less degree" (212). Thus, "the observation of these disorders makes it clear that there are two very different and relatively independent strata of speech: *the one in which only inner states are disclosed, the other in which objective relations are 'intended' and designated*" (212; my emphasis).

Already, then, we have some further grounds here for the distinction Freud posed between the affective and the intellectual other than the fact that they were necessary presuppositions in order to fully account for the mechanism of repression and its effect on speech and thought, discussed in chapter one apropos of Freud's "Negation" paper. Moreover, the aphasias allow for a concrete illustration of how the categories of the intellectual and the affective, at their most fundamental, pertain to different *uses* of language, the propositional (or intellectual) use of language, found to be most commonly effected in aphasiacs, has to do with statements directed toward the external world or outside, statements in which the ego of the speaker is not directly implicated—in Cassirer's terms, 'objective relations'—while the affective or descriptive use of language takes as its point of reference the ego, concerning self-reflexive statements that directly

concern the subject or otherwise have a certain emotional immediacy to them. As Merleau-Ponty puts it:

> An intentional language…is alone involved in the majority of cases of aphasia….[W]hat the patient has lost, and what the normal person possesses, is…a certain way of using [words]. The same word which remains at the disposal of the patient in the context of automatic language escapes him in that of language unrelated to a purpose—the patient who has no difficulty in finding the word 'no' in answer to the doctor's questions, that is when he intends to furnish a denial arising from his present experience, cannot do so when it is a question of an exercise having no emotional and vital bearing. There is thus revealed, underlying the word, an attitude, a function of speech which conditions it. (203-4)

Freud, as we will see, will translate the phenomenon described here into the problem of accounting for spontaneous speech. Although Merleau-Ponty clearly observes that intentionality is what is at stake, his observation remains confined to the field of language—an "intentional language" as opposed to an intention to *use* language.

In fact, as Henry Head discovered, following Jackson, the disturbances manifested in aphasia are not limited to concrete language phenomena alone—that is, words, sentences, etcetera—but that there is nothing less than an autonomous "symbolic function" in human activity itself:

> To be sure, language is and remains the most evident exponent of this function, but language does not exhaust the entire range of its activities. Rather, according to Head, symbolic behavior occurs in human achievements and activities which are not directly connected with speech. A close analysis of action in particular shows it to be shot through with the same contrast as may be found in the sphere of language. (Cassirer 213)

In 1933, some twenty years before Lacan's first seminar, Cassirer concludes, in what is probably one of the most illuminating definitions of the Lacanian symbolic order, that there is a relative *independence of the symbolic function from language as such*: "a symbolic relation which as such belongs to an entirely different plane from all those relations between empirical objects, between real things. Instead of reducing this

symbolic relation to thing-like determinations, we must rather recognize it in the condition which makes it possible to posit such determinations" (235). In discovering that language disturbances were actually related to the more general sphere of (symbolic) human action, Head observes that "[a]n aphasiac will be able to perform certain actions, if they are caused and necessitated by a certain concrete situation; but he will not be able to perform the same actions of his own free will, without such concrete stimuli" (Cassirer 214).

What is evinced here is nothing less than a physiological support for the phenomenon of transference, the psychosomatic equivalent of the (physiological) aphasic phenomenon described above. Transference accounts for how,

> at the level of neurosis, which brought about the discovery of the realm of the Freudian unconscious *qua* register of memory, our good fellow, instead of using words, uses everything at his disposal—he empties his pockets, he turns his trousers inside out, he puts his functions, his inhibitions inside, he gets completely inside himself, with the signifier, it's he who becomes the signifier. His real, or his imaginary, enters into the discourse. (*Seminar III* 155)

The signifier is precisely the Lacanian name for this relatively autonomous symbolic function, what we might call *the instance of the letter*, which implicates the body as well as what we most commonly understand as language proper. Lacan indicates the relative autonomy of the symbolic *qua* domain of the signifier by way of the bar between the signifier and the signified in his algorithm (see chapter one). As we have seen in chapter two, hypnotic suggestion seems also to induce the patient, by way of a manipulation of the "concrete situation" to "perform certain actions", such as remembering and narrating, which occurs as if on another plane of consciousness, what Breuer called the "hypnoid state" (*Studies* XX). It was, moreover, hypnotic suggestion that Freud began to call into question through the theoretical developments, first, of the resistance and, then, of the

transference. Thus, if the link to the external world is what seems to be disrupted in the aphasias, it is precisely insofar as this link is manifested in the Other *qua sujet supposé savoir*—that which makes possible reference to the outside of language *within* language itself.

Freud undertook the task, in his aphasia book, of "creating a new model of the speech apparatus…capable of explaining more than anatomical disturbances of speech. He wanted to use the same model to explain normal spontaneous speech and functional reversible disturbances"[38] (Rizzuto, "Origins" 241). In Freud's view, such a model that could properly account for spontaneous speech remained to be satisfactorily developed:

> [h]e observed that when Wernicke applied his notions and model to the *process* of speech, the speech apparatus he presented had no relation to the activities of the rest of the brain and it 'might be applicable [only] to the activity of *repeating* words heard'. This meant that the apparatus could only be stimulated by the external word of another person and capable only of repeating such word. Speech, for Wernicke, was a cerebral reflex…and not a spontaneous act. ("Freud's Speech Apparatus" 114-5).

We see here that as far back as 1891, Freud was already occupied with the problem of speech. In particular, he was interested in finding out how the anatomical disturbances of speech present in aphasia might shed light on (and provide a material framework for) the psychosomatic speech disturbances of hysterics—in 1891 Freud was also in the midst of treating Frau Emmy von N (whose case history appears in the *Studies*), while the

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[38] *On Aphasia* is one of Freud's most specialized texts, aimed primarily at readers with an extensive neurological knowledge often far outside of my own area of expertise. For this reason I rely primarily on Ana-Marie Rizzuto's comprehensive analyses as my guide. In any case, my aim in this section is to provide a context for situating Freud's later work in in relation to this early interest in speech disorders and thus does not involve any extensive analysis on my part but rather a picking and choosing of the relevant details.

monograph itself is dedicated to Josef Breuer, who treated Anna O. from 1880-82[39] ("Object" 241). In contrast to the image of Freud as the hermeneutist of the mind who satiates his patients by handing out meanings for their symptoms, we have here a (more accurate) depiction of a Freud whose patients' strange symptoms prompted him to look to the aphasias for answers rather than the dictionary: he searches for the production and associative movement of signifiers as opposed to yielding to the external imposition of signification.

Freud's study of the aphasias leads him to the conclusion that, regarding spontaneous speech versus reflexive speech, "the pathway by which we speak is identical to that, by which we repeat" (quoted in Rizzuto, "Object" 242). Thus, aphasiac phenomena are not produced by a physical damage to the speech apparatus itself, but result instead from damage to the associative pathways. For Freud, the speech apparatus is elsewhere: he locates it "exclusively in the cerebral cortex", as a function distinct from the "subcortical organs and functions of speech" discovered by Wernicke and Brocha (Rizzuto 242). Having assembled, then, the foundation of a theory that accounts for both reflexive and spontaneous speech, the task remained to produce a new model of the speech apparatus. In particular, the question Freud's model must answer is: where, exactly, does the stimulus come from for spontaneous speech? Why do we speak? And, no doubt the question that was on Freud's mind as he delved into the world of the aphasic, the obverse, *why can't we speak? How does speech find itself knotted up, inhibited, at the moment of resistance?*

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[39] For a more detailed discussion of this point, see A. Rizzuto (1989). "A hypothesis about Freud's motive for writing the Monograph 'On Aphasia'". *International Review of Psychoanalysis*, 16: 111-119.

To provide a model to explain spontaneous speech is nothing less than to model the speech *act*. In order to account for the production and failure spontaneous speech, Freud wants to understand it in terms of a reflex circuit of stimulus/response (to put it in the language of his time): that is, he wants to account for the *drive*—Freud's name for an internal stimulus—that culminates in a speech-response. Freud's conclusion, that the path by which one speaks and repeats are one and the same, suggests that this external prompting has the effect of activating the speech apparatus in the same way that it would have previously been activated by an internal stimulus/will to speak before the aphasic fell ill. Thus, what the aphasic, like the neurotic, loses (although in a physical as opposed to a psychical way), according to Freud, is not the speech apparatus as such but the spontaneous ability to use it to say what he or she wants to say in the manner in which he or she wants to say it. The aphasic and the neurotic both display an inability to form *words*, which are for Freud the activity of this joining of thing- and word-presentation, except that, for the neurotic this inhibition at the level of the activity of joining thing- and word-presentation is by definition, according to Freud's 'return' to this terminology in his paper, "The Unconscious", the product of *repression*. We, again, find ourselves in the territory of the bar between signifier and signified. We have stressed already, in our brief sketch of the aphasias, that studying them lends itself to the conclusion of a relative autonomy of the symbolic function vis-à-vis language. In order to grasp what is at stake here, we must grasp Lacan's algorithm as something operating within the synthesizing activity that gives rise to the subject's self-representation, the ego.

It is well-known that Lacan's point of reference for the correspondence of the Freudian notions of displacement and condensation to metonymy and metaphor, respectively, is the

linguistics of Roman Jakobson, who, in its *Fundamentals of Language,* interpreted aphasic phenomena from the point of view of linguistics and concluded that all aphasias could be distinguished according to disorders of similarity (metaphor) and contiguity (metonymy), thus concluding that these operations were fundamental symbolic operations—hence, *the fundamentals of language*[40]. At the same time, as Jakobson notes, Freud's condensation and displacement were the two 'symbolic' operations put forward in his *Interpretation of Dreams*, that the dream-work has at its disposal in order to overcome the *censorship*, a kind of unconscious counterforce preventing the direct expression of the wish-content (that is, desire) of the dream. Here again, we grasp the significance of aphasia as a fundamental point of reference for understanding neurosis, its psychosomatic counterpart. We can grasp what is at stake in this Freudian distinction between thing-presentation and word-presentation along the lines of a Lacanian distinction between *gaze* and *voice* as objects.

What begins to come into focus here is how the very desire or *drive* to speak is tied to a distinctly abstract/symbolic Other as that which "underl[ies] the word" (Merleau-Ponty 204), setting the word in motion, as it were. In this way, the facilitation of our everyday, spontaneous mode of relating to the world, insofar as the aphasias show us that this relation is thoroughly symbolic, language being not independent of this relation but actively structuring it, is also a transferential relationship. The sum total of our knowledge, beliefs, prejudices—in a word, all the symbolic 'stuff' through which we represent the world to ourselves—is embodied in an abstract *sujet supposé savoir.* What the aphasic ultimately lacks is such an abstract relation to the symbolic as the necessary

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[40] See pages 63-82 of *Fundamentals of Language*.

'stimulus' for spontaneous speech; his or her will to speak, act, etcetera, must always be embodied in a concrete Other—in "concrete situation[s]", as described above by Cassirer[41].

"I Hear Your Voice But Not The Words": Similarity Disorder

Jakobson observes that an aphasic suffering from what he calls a "similarity disorder" (an impairment pertaining to metaphor), not having the combinatory operation of metaphor at his or her disposal, must make due with the operation of metonymy. Curiously, a disruption in the ability to combine and process language along the axis of metaphor fundamentally affects the aphasic's relation to the Other. Jakobson notes that "as long as he does not regard another's speech as a message addressed to him in his own verbal pattern....[h]e considers the other's utterance to be either gibberish or at least in an unknown language" (68). Tellingly, in Jakobson's example of this, the aphasic describes this experience, saying to his interlocutor, "I hear your voice, but not the words" (68). Aphasia reveals that there is a radical dimension of alterity in the Other, that appears only as voice when the Other's words that would otherwise comprise its representation and 'fill out' this voice, cannot be assembled into a meaningful discourse.

Here we approach, in an inverse but illustrative way, Freud's description of the formation of word-presentations in *On Aphasia.* For him, this is a separate nmemic process from that of the thing-presentations. For Freud, a word-presentation is a "complex

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[41] We approach here an understanding of the drive described by Freud as the "frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical *representative* of the stimuli *originating from within the organism and reaching the mind*" ("Instincts" 122; my emphasis). The locus of the drive is precisely the Other *qua* psychical representative, as what Lacan calls the "battery of signifiers". The Other 'activates' the drive, giving body to the psychical representative of the drive.

presentation, which proves to be a combination put together from auditory, visual, and kinaesthetic elements" (210). He enumerates the processes of learning to speak, spell, read, and write; each pertaining to remembering the various muscle movements and visual or auditory patterns necessary for their repetition. For our purposes, however, we will focus specifically on the repetition/production of speech. We learn language, according to Freud, through a process of repetition which involves learning the significant sounds necessary for the reproduction of words from listening to another's speech, which is, moreover, specifically directed at us for the purposes of teaching. This voice of the Other, the medium of the spoken word's transmission, reaches us from outside and commits us to the task of conforming our own vocal sounds, our own voice to its prototype in order, to be sure, not only for the scant praise offered by the Other in return for our 'successful' repetition, but for the more lasting goal of our vocal sounds being recognized as speech, so that we can enter into this linguistic universe as subject as opposed to voice, through the Other's recognition, which establishes a (communicative) link in an intelligible language. Freud gives a rather evocative description of this process as a whole: in childhood, he writes, "we make use of a language constructed by ourselves. We behave in this way like motor aphasics, for we associate a variety of extraneous verbal sounds with a single one produced by ourselves" (210).

We become *subject to* language, whose locus is the Other (mother, caregiver, etcetera) in the process of learning language, of conforming this "language constructed by ourselves" to the Other's language, transmitted through the medium of the voice. This process, as Jakobsons's study reveals, is supplemented by an invisible, inaudible signification indicating context, something that induces us to speak—what for Cassirer

was described as "objective relations". The (m)Other does not speak to us, in the process of learning language, in any way whatsoever but in a way that establishes a link between voice, word-presentation and thing-presentation. In the first place, the context of language learning is a kind of pseudo-metalinguistic context. This view accords with Jakobson's contention that metaphor establishes the context for aphasics suffering from similarity disorder:

> the context is the indispensible and decisive factor. When presented with scraps of words or sentences, such a patient readily completes them. His speech is merely reactive; he easily caries on conversation, but has difficulties starting a dialogue; he is able to reply to a real or imaginary addresser when he is, or imagines himself to be the addressee of the message. It is particularly hard for him to perform or even to understand such a closed discourse as the monologue. The more his utterances are dependent on the context, the better he copes with his verbal task. He feels unable to utter a sentence which responds neither to the cue of his interlocutor nor to the actual situation. (63-4)

What the aphasic suffering a similarity disorder needs is to be provided with the signifier that establishes a relationship of similarity between context and utterance, a signifier which, in effect, allows the aphasic to *see himself in the picture* constituted by the context of signification. Thus, the context for Jakobson's aphasic, who says to his interlocutor, "I hear your voice but not the words", is the very lack of context itself, the point of reference for this utterance is the inability of Jakobson's aphasic to see himself in the picture; he is thus saying, effectively, "I cannot *see* myself in you, in your words, and as a result, all that remains is this stain that indicates your presence, this stain of voice, which I cannot assimilate into myself in order to establish *meaning*".

"I See The Words But Hear No Voice": Contiguity Disorder

A contiguity disorder is much more difficult to illustrate in the phenomenological terms that we have used above for the precise and significant reason that the language of

the aphasic who suffers from this disorder reveals nothing—or, more accurately, reveals that s/he is, at the level of subject, *nothing*: s/he does not *ex*-sist. It is in this way that we have decided to describe it in terms of *hearing no voice*, because there is no subject that would allow for such recognition to take place. In contrast to the similarity aphasic's experience of the voice *qua* voice as an external, meaningless presence, the contiguity aphasic's experience is characterized by there being nothing but a gap, an empty place where a voice ought to be heard. Whereas the similarity aphasic described above can conform his or her words to a minimal context, should that context be provided by someone else, or, at its most profound, his or her utterances can refer to the very lack of context in order to establish a context, a contiguity disorder is characterized by Jakobson as a fundamental lack of context. More specifically,the contiguity aphasic lacks the ability to bring him- or herself into signifying relation with the context, which is a function of metonymy. In this way, a contiguity disorder is described by Jakobson as

> [t]he impairment of the ability to propositionize, or generally speaking, to combine simpler linguistic entities into more complex units, is actually confined to [this] type of aphasia, the opposite of [a similarity disorder]. There is no wordlessness, since the entity preserved in most of such cases is the word, which can be defined as the highest among the linguistic units compulsorily coded, i.e., we compose our own sentences and utterances out of the word stock supplied by the code. (71)

We can illustrate the difference between the similarity and the contiguity aphasic most clearly in terms of the Lacanian distinction between subject of the enunciation and subject of the enunciated. This is, moreover, precisely in keeping with the method by which Jakobson describes the contiguity disorder, which no doubt motivated his choice to describe it *after* the similarity disorder, insofar as it is almost impossible to describe without contrasting it to the similarity disorder. The fact that the contiguity aphasic is best

described in relation to what it is *not* has a profound significance: persons suffering from this type of aphasia seem to occupy the place of the pure void of the subject of the unconscious, the *position* of enunciation, without content. We should understand the subject of the unconscious/enunciated in terms of the sense Freud gives to the unconscious in his metapsychological papers, as we have seen in chapter one: the unconscious as thing-presentations lacking any connection to word-presentations.

Thus, if the similarity aphasic's experience can be described as that of a 'pure' *subject of the enunciation*—that is, his position as subject is *displaced* (the Freudian word for metonymy) entirely onto the chain of signifiers—then the contiguity aphasic is precisely a 'pure' embodiment of *the subject of the enunciated*. Every one of his or her utterances is a profound *condensation* of the aphasic's thought, described by Jakobson as a "contexture-deficien[cy]", characterized by a diminution of "the extent and variety of sentences":

> [t]he less a word depends grammatically on the context, the stronger its tenacity in the speech of aphasics with a contiguity disorder and the sooner it is dropped by patients with a similarity disorder. Thus the '*kernel subject word*' is the first to fall out of the sentence in cases of similarity disorder and, conversely, it is the least destructible in the opposite type of aphasia. (71-2; my emphasis)

The contiguity aphasic, then, lacks the ability to establish (*metonymically*) a relation, as subject (of the enunciation), to context, the words allowing him or her to register symbolically such a relation between subject and context being unavailable because they are a function of metonymy. Interestingly, these words are those that are, according to Jakobson, "endowed with purely grammatical functions, like conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns, and articles disappear first"—the same words, we might add, that the dream-work, by Freud's description, must resort to all manners of 'montage' in order to represent in the visual medium of dream, thus inscribing the subject into the dream-text—

"giving rise to the so-called 'telegraphic style'" (72). At the level of the subject of the enunciation, that is, the subject represented for others through words, the contiguity aphasic is only represented by non-sense utterances, a "word heap" (71).

In fact, Jakobson goes on to describe an advanced progression of the disease, wherein a single phoneme eventually comes to stand in for an entire sentence, which he describes—in a way that significantly recalls Freud's theory of regression—as 'relapse' into infantile linguistic development: "If this twofold…disablement progresses further, the last residues of speech are one-phoneme—one-world—one-sentence utterances: the patient relapses into the initial phases of infants' linguistic development or even to their pre-lingual stage: he faces…the total loss of the power to use or apprehend speech" (74). If we compare this process to Freud's concept of regression, it is only the sense, as noted by Lacan in *Seminar II*, that regression is a "symbol", or rather, as Jakobson's study lends itself to describing, a symbolic process: "[t]here is regression on the plane of signification and not on the plane of reality" (103). The contiguity aphasic indeed provides an illuminating model of neurotic regression insofar as regression is resorted to in neurotic speech when he or she tries to put the psychic trauma into words. In the attempt to signify this 'kernel' of the neurotic's lived experience, he or she can only resort to archaic associative pathways so that the 'description' manifests itself as symptomatic behavior: thus, "it is a symptom which must be interpreted as" regression, not the person as somehow 'regressing' (103). On the other hand, owing to physical damage of the brain, the only pathways available to aphasic speech are also these archaic pathways. In both cases, a single significant word or phoneme stands in for an entire constellation of

thoughts. They become, as it were, 'pure' signifiers marking distinction but carrying no meaning that would be intelligible to another:

> [t]he last level to remain is either a class of significative values, the word, as in the cases touched upon, or a class of distinctive values, the phoneme. In the latter case the patient is still able to identify, distinguish and reproduce phonemes, but loses the capacity to do the same with words. In an intermediate case, words themselves are identified, distinguished and reproduced; according to Goldstein's acute formulation, they 'may be grasped as known but not understood' (p. 90). *Here the word loses its normal significative function and assumes the purely distinctive function which normally pertains to the phoneme*. (Jakobson 75; my emphasis)

Alienation and Separation: From Aphasia to Neurosis

In 1964, during his seminar titled *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan introduced the notions of *alienation* and *separation*, which constituted a break from and a re-articulation of the linguistic operations of metaphor and metonymy, respectively (Laurent 21), insofar as they shifted the emphasis away from speech and language—as metaphor and metonymy imply a fundamental relationship of signifier and signified, even if at the same time they ineluctably defer the realization of the signified—and toward a logic of the subject and its relationship to Other.

Insofar as the concepts of alienation and separation are derived from Lacan's previous elaboration of the operations of metaphor and metonymy, Jakobson's work on aphasia, such as we have outlined above, also illustrates what is at stake at the furthest possible limit of each pole. In our first example, above, that of the similarity aphasic, we see a manifestation of a kind of 'pure' *separation*. Lacking the operation of metaphor, which makes possible the subject's *seeing* himself in the Other's discourse, of situating himself in relation to the Other, the similarity aphasic is literally 'caused'—brought into being—by the Other's desire. We see this most profoundly in the aphasic's response to the radical

enigma Other's desire qua meaningless voice, who is moved to utter, "I hear your voice but not the words" which indicates, as we have suggested, that the very lack of context becomes the context itself—that is, the 'cause' of the statement—through which the aphasic realizes himself in the Other's discourse. This desire of the Other that motivates the production of the similarity aphasic's chain of signifiers is evident at very turn in Jakobson's description of the context as the "decisive factor" in inducing the similarity aphasic to speak and is most recognizable in the way the similarity aphasic "readily complies" with the tasks laid out for him by the Other *qua* experimenter, etcetera.

On the opposite end, the contiguity aphasic's subjectivity is radically and profoundly *alienated* in the signifier, through which he or she is reduced to non-sense, produced, if not by the sheer inability of the contiguity aphasic to produce grammatical utterances, then in its most advanced form of reducing utterances to a single phoneme. In this way, the necessity of metonymy/separation is shown to be essential for the realization of subject: that is, for the assumption of a subject position with respect to the Other. We see, of course, a similar use of phonemes in Freud's description of the *fort/da* game from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in which Freud's nephew's utterances do not correspond exactly to the German words 'fort' and 'da' but to the phonemes 'oooo' and 'ahhh', which Freud, rightly, interprets as 'fort' and 'da'. The difference here, of course, is that without metonymy/separation, the aphasic's 'discourse' cannot even achieve the status of a discourse properly speaking—it cannot and does not, like Freud's nephew's significations, circulate around the *objet petit a*, the "small bobbin" in the child's game (*Four Fundamental* 239). There is just a hole, a lack, in place of the Other. The Lacanian

name for a 'discourse' that has not (yet) achieved the status of a discourse is the 'call', which he introduces in *Seminar I.*

Here is where we will return to the experience of the neurotic, who, because s/he suffers from a psychosomatic aphasia, has the ability to constitute him- or herself as subject and thus to enter into a relation with the Other that is never characterized by his or her being situated purely on the side of either alienation or separation. The neurotic's discourse *is*, in this way, a discourse proper, and it is in and through this discourse—in contrast to the aphasic—that he or she takes a position vis-à-vis the Other. Really, we cannot on this account think of the aphasic's 'discourse' in terms of having an unconscious or conscious dimension because he or she does not have a 'choice' in the matter—the aphasic's discourse follows its own path regardless of any conscious or unconscious mechanism at work. By contrast, Lacan characterizes the neurotic's coming into being as a subject in/of discourse as a 'forced choice' owing to the fact that the unconscious is the Other's discourse. The fact that there is this unconscious dimension to discourse, or, to put it another way, that the neurotic's discourse is the discourse of the Other, is precisely what differentiates neurosis from aphasia.

With this in mind, let us return to the notion of the 'call'. Lacan introduces it in the context of a discussion about one of Melanie Klein's early papers entitled, "The importance of symbol-formation in the development of the ego". Here, Klein presents the case-history of a child, about four years of age, whom she calls (not without irony) "Little Dick", whose initial state is uncannily similar to that of the contiguity aphasic in the sense that his world is also an extremely closed, autistic one. In her initial description, Klein describes him as being

> largely devoid of affects, and…indifferent to the presence or absence of mother or nurse. From the very beginning he had only rarely displayed anxiety, and that in an abnormally small degree. With the exception of one particular interest [which will be come apparent in a moment]…he had almost no interests, did not play, and had no contact with his environment. For the most part he simply strung sounds together in a meaningless way, and constantly repeated certain noises. When he did speak he generally used his meagre vocabulary incorrectly. But it was not that he was unable to make himself intelligible: he had no wish to do so. (221)

Crucially, we see Klein take note of a desire: it was not that Dick could not speak, but that he had no *desire* to speak. His attitude was one of "apathy, indifference" (Lacan, *Seminar I* 81). Lacan, moreover, highlights the "uniform character of [his] reality", the fact that for Dick, everything was "equally real for him, equally indifferent" (81). This word, "equally" that Lacan uses tips us off: we are in a domain constituted almost entirely by metaphor, a near total alienation, except that Dick *can* speak, he just has no desire to. This distinguishes him from the contiguity aphasic. Everything, for Dick, equals everything else; precisely because it is a state of utter fullness—as Lacan puts it, Dick is "eyeball to eyeball with reality….there is neither ego nor other for him" (69)—it cannot but be a kind of void in which Dick is subsumed because there is no space for him to constitute himself *qua* subject.

Dick's world is, thus, effectively void of any symbolic relation. We see in our elaboration of the case so far that there are only *things* for Dick, literally only presentations of things, thing-presentations. Even words are merely things for him, objects with which he plays, by, for example, repeating noises, "string[ing] sounds together in a meaningless way". Klein tells us that Dick's mother notices what she calls a "negative attitude" in Dick apropos of language: "if she succeeded in getting him to say different words after her, he often entirely altered them, though at other times he could pronounce the words perfectly" (222). The dimension of the voice *qua* voice does not

enter into Dick's experience in the slightest. He hears no voice—not because he cannot hear it, but because he blocks it out, he has no *desire* to hear it—and as a result he has no voice, or rather, cannot situate himself, as subject, in relation to it.

In chapter one it was mentioned, following Mladen Dolar's succinct explanation of differentiality, that a signifier could never be counted as one, precisely because if it could, it would mean that it could represent itself, which would amount to what Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen called a (direct) *representation of the lack*. In the most extreme case, Saussure's definition of the signifier as pure difference means that even a signifier differs from itself insofar as the place of its absence also counts. This absence that also counts is a necessary dimension of the call. Dick's system of language is there but it is limited; it is not insignificant in this regard that all of his expressions of play revolve around an attempt to come to terms with a relation not of presence and absence *per se*, but, more specifically, *a relation of presence and not-presence*. The two are not equivalent: it is the difference between an empty container and a container filled to the brim with nothingness itself. Insofar as Dick has not entered into any relation with the symbolic and is thus not constituted as subject, his expressions continually slam up against the wall of this not-presence, a void *qua* void. Lacan describes this as "real, imaginary and symbolic" being "flush with one another" (74). So it is not as if the symbolic is not there, which is a key point—Dick is not a psychotic, for whom the symbolic is, quite literally, *missing*, inaccessible as such. On the contrary, there is a signifier, only one, marking a presence—what Klein acknowledges as the mother's body. The entire trajectory of Dick's play consists in trying to symbolize this void *qua* the trace of the mother's absence, with only one signifier at his disposal, one signifier that comprises the entirety of his symbolic. This

being the case, Dick cannot constitute himself as subject, he can only wallow in this in-between space, waiting, as it were, for Godot.

This is precisely why the 'call' is a significant moment. Lacan distinguishes it on the basis of the difference between speech and language (as he always does, but here the distinction is made quite concrete), highlighting the fact that Dick "already has his own system of language, quite sufficient. The proof is that he plays with it. He even makes use of it to play a game of opposition against the adults' attempts to intrude" (*Seminar I* 83). Klein elicits the call, which signifies Dick's entry into language, by treating his play as if it were a knowledge. She has very little to work with since Dick does not 'play' spontaneously, in the way that, as she points out, 'normal' neurotic children do. His play is a kind of 'discourse in/to the void' as opposed to a discourse of the Other: so Klein found herself "obliged to make…interpretations on the basis of [her] general knowledge" (229). The 'call' brings the voice into play *qua* voice for the first time as an exteriority, situating Dick *qua* subject in relation to the symbolic.

Lacan describes the call as the "[c]rucial moment, when the sticking of language to the subject's imaginary begins to sketch itself" (85). What is at stake here is a signifier that comes to *take the place of the void*, so that instead of just one signifier in play, as we said above, which is best described as marking presence and not-presence as the void of its absence, another signifier enters: the void itself becomes registered as a signifier. In this sense, we can say that before the moment of the call, when Dick appeared to be stuck at the level of the imaginary, he was subsumed under a series of imaginary equivalents. With the call, language itself "stick[s]" to his imaginary, it becomes itself an object in play in this realm of (inner) objects that Lacan calls the imaginary. It is, to be sure, a

special object through which Dick is able to gain access to an 'outside' that allows his relation to external reality to develop.

Dick calls for his nurse, but it would be a mistake to ascribe too much meaning to the event, in the sense of taking this signifier 'nurse' as an inherently meaningful sign. One must 'tarry with the negative' (to refer to the one of the titles of Žižek's books), which is to say, one must consider the signifier in its *signifierness*, and not in what it may or may not reveal vis-à-vis the signified, which would put into play *our* own imaginary, and not Dick's. On the contrary, we must not lose sight of the little piece of being, the *objet petit a*, that that is caught up in this primary symbolization, the moment, again, at which "the sticking of language to the subject's imaginary" begins (Lacan, *Seminar I* 85).

Prior to the call, there is no unconscious to speak of for Dick. Klein describes this world that Dick inhabits as an "unreal reality" but this formulation takes for granted that there is a "true relation to reality" (a phrase Klein introduces in the same sentence, as part of the ego's function) to be had, somewhere—where? We do not know. Klein's so-called "true reality" is the everyday ego reality that most 'normal' (that is, functionally neurotic) adults inhabit, a reality that is as much fantasy as it is reality, which is to say that it is a *meaningful* reality, the fiction structuring our relationship to reality functioning more or less transparently. On the contrary, it is Dick that lives in a "true reality", a reality whose relation, having at its disposal only one signifier to articulate it, is closer to the (Lacanian) Real. It is his proximity to the Real that condemns Dick to silence.

We can explain this further: Lacan, as is known, defines the signifier as that which "represents the subject for another signifier". By this he means that there is a minimum of two signifiers necessary for meaning to be produced: meaning is a kind of 'short circuit'

that occurs between two signifiers, which we will call S_1 and S_2, following Lacan. The subject is to be found in the meaning that is produced. To be sure, it is not *reducible* to this meaning, but where there is meaning, there is a subject. However, because this meaning is not reducible to the subject, does not *represent* the subject utterly, the fact that there is meaning also functions as a trace of the unconscious in the fact that meaning does not possess the subject utterly, nor does the subject possess meaning utterly.

For the sake of illustration, let us replace for a moment these signifiers with the following simple schema: + - +. The first plus is a signifier, the presence of a signifier, the second plus is "another signifier", and the minus is the subject. What does this mean? The subject cannot be 'pinned down' by meaning. It is in this sense that the subject is the meaning produced between two signifiers: as soon as that meaning is recognized, this recognition confers onto meaning a signifier, the minus becomes a plus, which does not mean that the subject has finally found a representation, but rather, that the subject has moved, is to be found elsewhere, between two other signifiers, the other signifier that is brought into play through the act of recognizing the meaning, of giving it a signifier. In this way, the subject always slips between the cracks.

Thus, before the call, it is not that Dick has no relation with *reality*, it is that, on the contrary, *he articulates this relation to reality with the entirety of his being*. There is only one signifier in play, and thus his entire symbolic universe consists not of + - + but of 0 and -1. This is another way of thinking about what I have said above about the difference between presence and absence and presence and not-presence. The difference between presence and not-presence is the difference between 0 and -1. There is a signifier that

signifies nothing, and then there is the void. It is for this reason that the -1 will become, for Lacan, a signifier of castration: the mark of the subject, a signifier with no signified.

What is castration? We ought not to be afraid of this word that seems to provoke a kind of anxiety, not only in the sense of a literal fear of castration. The very word, now, is wrapped up in a part of Freudian theory that we would rather forget or pretend does not exist. Significantly, and in an uncanny confirmation of the repetition compulsion, we are exhibiting in this reaction to castration (as an element in Freudian theory), the sort of thing that Freud describes the neurotic as doing in relation to his own castration. I am tempted here to suggest that an adequate modification of the old truism, 'wherever you go, there you are' might be, 'whatever we think, there *it is*'. In any case, if I say that 'we' should not be afraid of it, that is, of castration, it is precisely because I am in this moment speaking most fundamentally from my position as a man, and am in this way addressing in my discourse other men. If the much maligned 'penis envy' that crops up in Freud's discourse every now and again means anything at all—and, significantly, more so in discussions *about* Freud's discourse, with, one might add, all the tenacity of a fixation—then it is that Woman is precisely she who has nothing to fear from castration. In this way, we could very well turn 'penis envy' around and say that the fundamental problem for Man is 'castration envy', in the sense that Man sees in Woman evidence of castration (i.e. *sexual difference*) and thinks to himself, "She is already castrated! How nice it must be not to have to fear it like I do!" Castration is basically a fundamental structure by which man tries to account for the fact that there exist other bodies who do not conform to his image, who are not like him—*there exists, in other words, a difference that is*

fundamentally irreducible. And so we have, quite literally, a little piece of flesh, of being, at the heart of the whole human drama.

This is not an exaggeration, although it may seem like one. Sexual difference cannot but be at the heart of any ontology for the simple reason that, if we do not locate our being in some metaphysical idea of God, being is not one, it is two: male and female, and thus, every attempt to define Being as either one or the other is necessarily doomed to fail, or, perhaps more accurately, doomed to repeat.

We ought not, then, to be afraid of castration, for at its most elementary, castration is this: +/-. No more, no less, but that makes all the *différance*.

"To Speak, Then, of a Letter"

It is the *objet petit a* that enters 'difference', as *a*—the proof is in the effect of non-sense that the resulting conglomeration, '*différance*' produces, as neither word nor concept, according to Derrida—and which, according to the logic of *différance*, is missed at the level of speech: this *a* is unpronounceable, silent, visible only in writing. If it is only visible in writing, we might add, it is only to the extent that we draw attention to it: I mark it in italics, for example, in order for it not to be confused with a spelling mistake, Derrida must verbalize the difference (with an 'e') between difference and *différance*, as he tells us, by always indicating which one he is talking about. It is around the *a* that psychoanalysis and philosophy meet, and around the *a* that they converge, two ships passing in the night. Or perhaps it would be more in keeping with the silence of the *objet petit a* to compare philosophy and psychoanalysis with two magnets of the same polarity

pointed at each other: the *objet petit a* is the force of resistance between them, keeping them from touching.

Derrida's description of the *a* as silent, can be taken as more proof that the *a* in *différance* is the *objet petit a*. The *objet petit a*, too, is nothing if not silent. Its older sibling, the (Freudian) drive, was also described by Freud as silent. Drives are a silent force, emanating from a strange place vis-à-vis the human organism, from who-knows-where, the place that Lacan calls 'extimate', the inside that is outside, which is the part of the human organism that is as much a part of the real as anything else one might consider properly (which is to say, symbolically) outside. We have seen this, moreover, in the case of Dick: the *objet petit a* is not the call, nor is it *represented* in or by the call; it is, rather, the background of silence which is *revealed* at the moment of the call, that which *drove* Dick to cry out—only a voice can break the silence, for without the voice, there is no silence, only the way things are as neither silent nor not-silent in the same way that silent movies, for example, are only considered to be 'silent' after the technology emerges that can inscribe sound into film.

The *a* enters *différance* and from that point on 'difference' is never the same. But was it ever the same? Do we need this silent *a* to alert us to the fact that difference is and always was "differ[ent] from itself", that it never has and never will, as signifier, *represent* itself (Derrida 129)? Another proof that this *a* is the *objet petit a*: does not Derrida's entire elaboration of *différance* betray a desire to show us that every representation leaves something out, that the representation itself cannot be included in the representation, which is to say that what is left out is precisely the desire upon which it is founded? And does he not, further, betray his desire in the very act of putting the *a* in

différance, the very signifier (a signifier is precisely that which is neither a word nor a concept) that is supposed to illustrate this?

One is tempted to risk the suggestion that the logic at work here is precisely that of the child who triumphantly announces that the emperor is naked, the child who utters the signifier upon which a collective delusion is founded, that of seeing in the emperor's nakedness his new clothes. The child who utters this signifier dissolves the delusion. Derrida utters the signifier, *a*, but does anything dissolve? What is the delusion? The delusion is philosophy: or, perhaps more specifically, *phallusophy*, philosophy *qua* (a) discourse on/of being. Derrida takes aim in this presentation-turned-essay specifically at phenomenology.

I would not go so far as to say that philosophy itself is a delusion, or that it is somehow more or less a delusion than any other discourse. There is, in the first place, no such thing as philosophy as such. This is, no doubt, one of the consequences of *différance*. In any case, if I have suggested (which I have) that the particular philosophy at which Derrida takes aim has a delusional quality to it, it is not, for all that, to accuse it of anything. There is nothing inherently wrong with delusion. With all fairness and respect due to the psychotic, a delusion is not morally reprehensible. The major difference, according to Freud, between the psychotic and the neurotic is that the psychotic loves their delusion as they love themselves. The neurotic, on the other hand, finds something else to love.

The desire that sustains Derrida's discourse—for it is, in the end *Derrida's discourse*, there being nothing in the definition of discourse to suggest to us that in order for it to belong to somebody, it must be reducible to one's being, or represent one utterly—is

nothing less than a love of metonymy. *Différance* is a discourse for the sake of love, the love of metonymy, like Anna O., Breuer's hysterical patient, who produced so many memories for the sake of love, the love, ultimately, of Breuer.

What is it, then, that Derrida sees in metonymy to love? The answer: separation. This is not a shocking revelation, to be sure, but the entirety of "Différance" can be read as nothing less than a love letter to metonymy, to the endless deferral of signifiers, the work of metonymy. We must risk here another incredibly naïve question: why does Derrida choose to put his *a* in the word 'difference'? Why must difference be shown to be wrapped up in this endless deferral of signifiers like all the rest? Should this not be obvious?

Derrida, brilliantly, zeros in on difference as nothing less than a symptom, a symptom of philosophy (which he unfortunately lumps Freud in with, but we will forgive him for that):

> *Différance* is neither a *word* nor a *concept*. In it, however, we shall see the juncture—rather than the summation—*of what has been decisively inscribed in the thought of what is conveniently called our "epoch"*: the difference of forces in Nietzsche, Saussure's principle of semiological difference, differing as the possibility of [neurone] facilitation, impression and delayed effect in Freud, difference as the irreducibility of the trance of the other in Levinas, and the ontic-ontological difference in Heidegger. (130; my emphasis)

Difference is nothing less than the symptom of "our 'epoch'". It is the very thing through which philosophy seeks to 'capture' being, to effect a "closure of presence, together with the closure of the conceptual order" (131). 'Difference' is the very thing through which philosophy seeks the representation—the metaphor—of the subject, where the representation of the subject will finally coincide with itself, represent itself utterly. In difference, according to Derrida, philosophy hopes it has found the metaphor of metaphor

itself—for the subject, in the end, is found, or more accurately, is *lost*, in metaphor. The subject is 'found' only in the loss that constitutes its representation in metaphor, in the surplus that cannot be contained by the metaphor: *objet petit a*.

The subject is lost in metaphor. There is no better way of describing what Lacan calls *aphanisis*, the 'fading' of the subject in alienation. Metaphor encompasses, *implicates*, the subject and the Other in a relation that necessitates loss, namely, the loss of the subject—in other words, its fading or eclipse. This is the precise meaning of Lacan's *vel* of alienation: if you choose Other, you lose the subject; if you choose the subject, you lose everything, for the unconscious is the discourse of the Other. This is not the mere rote repetition of a Lacanian axiom: the unconscious is the discourse of the Other means that if you choose to speak or write, if you choose, in other words, to *use* language, you must go through the Other, you must enter into the field of the Other. On the other side, the 'choice' of subject, the choice that precludes everything, you become Little Dick, silently manipulating imaginary objects, repeatedly bumping your head against the void, or like the contiguity aphasic, whose every utterance is a repetition of non-sense vocables, a silence that tries to encompass the Other. Both Dick's silent manipulation of his imaginary objects and the contiguity aphasic's repetition of vocables are, to be sure, filled to the brim with meaning but no one can make heads or tails of them. The price they pay for being pure subjects (we must recognize that, of course, the contiguity aphasic has no choice in the matter, but that does not make him any less a pure subject) is non-sense.

Herein we locate the very gesture of separation, Derrida's gesture, with which "Différance" (the essay) begins. We catch a little glimpse of the subject in the initial non-sense of the *a* that Derrida inserts in difference. The subject is *différance*. The subject is

not, to be sure, reducible to the conglomeration of letters that Derrida puts before us, nor is it reducible to the logic of *différance*. It is, rather, to be found, however briefly, in the non-sense that strikes us when we first see it there on the page. The proof, if we need more proof, is that, upon introducing this non-sense, Derrida will spend the next thirty pages at the mercy of the discourse of the Other, the Other of philosophy, explaining its *meaning*, giving it sense. In a word, no matter how hard he tries, no matter how true his love for metonymy, Derrida, in the end, cannot avoid metaphor. Non-sense only takes us so far. At a certain point, we must choose the Other. If we wish to be heard, we must choose, in short, to alienate ourselves.

Différance culminates in the ineffable, that is, in a question concerning the ineffable; Psychoanalysis starts from the ineffable. That is how we ought to conceive the difference between philosophy and psychoanalysis. In a way, Derrida gets it backwards:

> if we accepted the form of the question in its own sense and syntax ("What?", "What is?," "Who is?"), we would have to admit that difference is derived, supervenient, controlled and ordered from the starting point of a being-present, one capable of being something, a force, a state, or a power in the world, to which we would give all kinds of names: a *what*, or being-present as a *subject*, a *who*. In the latter as, notably, we would implicitly admit that the being-present (for example, as a self-present being or consciousness) would eventually result in differing: in delaying or in diverting the fulfillment of a "need" or a "desire," or in differing from itself. But in none of these cases would such a being-present be "constituted by this difference." ("Difference" 145)

Every being-present, for Derrida, appears to need to be self-present. But what about that experience of being-present that is anything but a self-presence, the experience of the ineffable that psychoanalysis begins with, the being-present that "does not deceive" (Lacan), *anxiety*?

In the *a* of *objet petit a*, Derrida's *a*, we should also hear *angoisse*, anxiety. Anxiety, in psychoanalysis is closely linked to castration, which is not irrelevant to the discussion at

hand. And if upon hearing or reading Derrida's word, *différance*, one is suddenly a little anxious—not to mention a little perplexed—and has the feeling that he or she might not measure up to this non-sense word, and either wants to dismiss the whole thing as frivolous mental masturbation or intently listen in hopes of finding the secret of the meaning of this word from the divine mouth of its creator, then one has found oneself in the midst of an experience of castration. The key feature not to missed here is that central to both of these 'experiences' of castration, is a retreat into an image of the Other, as either all-knowing, full of knowledge, or full of shit. Both of these experiences amount to the same: they are predicated upon an encounter with the Other's desire—Derrida's desire, in this case—which makes of it an object that is either worthy of thought or reducible to excrement. This is precisely what is at stake in alienation: the feeling that the Other is a little too close, because the operation of metaphor at work in alienation that attempts to *represent* the subject, to metaphorize the subject, cannot, in the end, metaphorize his or her desire, insofar as at the very core of this metaphorization there is the desire of a subject that produced the metaphor, an enigmatic subject *qua* Other. The closer the Other's metaphor gets to us, the more it tries to encompass us, to speak for us, the more it provokes *resistance*, a resistance that makes itself felt in the guise of transference. Transference, in the end, is revealed in the image we impute to the Other in order to maintain our distance from his or her desire—as either full of wisdom or full of shit. No wonder, then, that Freud's encounter with the transference, his first attempt to properly theorize it in the *Papers on Technique*, led him to a distinction between positive

and negative transference, depending on the (initial) attitude the patient adopts toward the analyst[42].

So Derrida's gesture of separation, paradoxically, has a very alienating effect, an alienation that makes one a little anxious. Alienation tips over into separation at place where I cannot recognize myself in the metaphor that is made of me. This is why there is no better way to describe alienation than by describing it as the subject lost in metaphor. Everywhere I (ego) look, I (subject) cannot find myself. Why, in the end, can I not find myself? Why does being, for psychoanalysis, *resist every representation*? Why ought we to have an experience of anxiety at all?

The psychoanalytic answer is castration. In order for there to be any kind of self-representation, we have to ignore the real(ity) of sexual difference. I do not mean, at an imaginary level, the representations of male and female which proliferate. I mean that the Real of sexual difference *cannot be named*. There is an irreparable hole in the symbolic order which is the bar that separates + from –. + and – are not different names for male and female. + and – means that Being is not One, it is two, a two that can never become One. Lacan sums this up by saying, *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*, usually translated as *there is no sexual relationship*, which does not quite capture, in particular, the connotations in French of ratio or report, the former suggesting the possibility of some kind of balance to be established (if not equality) and the latter suggesting a symbolic registering of sexual difference: 'reporting' suggesting the possibility of unearthing signifiers that might somehow account for sexual difference. Ultimately, at the very core

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[42] See "Observations on Transference-Love" and "The Dynamics of the Transference" in Volume 12 of *The Standard Edititon of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud.*

of the human experience, is a fundamental piece of non-sense that cannot be integrated into the symbolic order, into the *text* of sexual difference.

Sexual difference is not about literal males and females, it is about a primordial experience of a difference that cannot but make no sense, an experience that my body cannot be counted as one, is incommensurate to all other bodies. In this way, the unconscious is not a "metaphysical name" for alterity ("Différance" 151); it is alterity itself, not alterity as impossible self-identity, but alterity as constitutive antagonism:

> Perhaps therein resides the abyss that forever separates the Real of an antagonism from Derrida's *différance* [sic]: *différance* points toward the constant and constitutive deferral of impossible self-identity; whereas in Lacan, what the movement of symbolic deferral-substitution forever fails to attain is not Identity but the Real of an antagonism. (Žižek, "Eclipse" 195)

As a result of missing the antagonism at the very core of being, Derrida heroically strives to maintain ontological openness, with all the power that his love of metonymy can muster. In this perpetual separation, he misses that he has no control over whether or not the other sees what he is doing as a metaphor. In the polarized reaction to Derrida during his life and after his death, in the metaphors that others used to describe his work or its value, there is found a certain truth about his praxis: that in trying to maintain an ontological openness to the Other, he unwittingly alienated others. To be sure, any discourse can have such an alienating effect. Psychoanalysis, to say nothing of Lacan's discourse specifically, can be profoundly alienating. The difference is that Derrida's is a discourse that strives to maintain an openness to the Other in discourse as such. The truth about Derrida's discourse consists in the way that his attempt to maintain this openness unwittingly closes the door. The lesson here is nothing less than the lesson of castration,

the lesson of the forced choice: one cannot have it both ways for there is no separation without alienation and *vice versa*.

Our Father, Who Ar(en')t In Heaven, Hollow is Thy Name

How, then, should we conceive of this dimension of self-identity versus antagonism? For philosophy, the Other has always been one of the names of God *qua* unity of Being; psychoanalysis turns this around: God is one of the names of the Other *qua* radical alterity. Such a unity of Being is, in the end, a response to, even a disavowal of, radical alterity *qua* originary antagonism. So it is then that Freud spoke, and founded psychoanalysis; Descartes spoke, and found God. What, we might ask, is the difference? The *a* with which Derrida inaugurates his gesture of separation is in the last instance an attempt to overcome the originary antagonism, a trace that bears the mark of the God who 'haunts' any discourse that tries to conceive of Being as One, Descartes' God, which is at the core of modern subjectivity. Derrida cannot avoid this God, even if his aim is to call God into question, to situate himself firmly in opposition to it because his gesture of separation itself is founded upon an initial alienation, an alienation inaugurated by the *cogito* as faux-full presence:

> [w]hat is unnamable here is not some ineffable being that cannot be approached by a name; like God, for example. What is unnamable is the play that brings about the nominal effects, the relatively unitary or atomic structures we call names, or chains of substitutions for names. In these, for example, the nominal effect of 'différance' is itself involved, carried off, and reinscribed, just as the false beginning or end of a game is still part of the game, a function of the system. ("Différance" 159)

God, we recall from chapter one, was not there from the first in Descartes' *cogito*: Descartes had to put him there. Another act, another *gesture* of separation, a fundamental

act of separating God and Man. God, like the *a* of *différance*, is brought into Descartes' discourse in order to account for something that does not otherwise make sense: the fact of being and of thinking, the fact of being (a) subject. Descartes desired certainty; this desire for certainty signals to us Descartes' alienation, an alienation in a proliferation of knowledges which one cannot make heads or tails of, this desire for certainty leads Descartes' into doubt—but not just any doubt, to be sure, a methodical doubt.

One cannot see Descartes' *a*, but one can hear it, if only for a brief second, in the *ergo*: *cogito ergo sum*. This *a*, which one can hear if one listens closely, is the same *a* that Derrida puts inside his non-sense word, *différance*, in order to drive a wedge between *cogito* and *sum*, in order to abolish the *ergo* that constitutes (illusory) self-presence or being-present so as to make room for the Other. Thus, it is Descartes' desire that holds this whole thing together, his desire that is expressed in his symptom, which he names God. One subject's desire, which can only express itself *in the act of separation*, is an Other's alienation. Such is the antagonism at the core of the human drama:

> the 'subject' is the *act*, the *decision* by means of which we pass from the positivity of the given multitude to the Truth-Event and/or to Hegemony. This precarious status of the subject relies on the Kantian anti-cosmological insight that reality is 'non-all', ontologically not fully constituted, so it needs the supplement of the subject's contingent gesture to obtain a semblance of ontological consistency. 'Subject' is not a name for the gap of freedom and contingency that infringes upon the positive ontological order, active in its interstices; rather, 'subject' is the contingency that grounds the very positive ontological order, that is, the 'vanishing mediator' whose self-effacing gesture transforms the pre-ontological chaotic multitude into the semblance of a positive, 'objective' order of reality. (*Ticklish*, 158).

What is the difference, then, between (Cartesian) philosophy and psychoanalysis? God is the name of Descartes' symptom, 'psychoanalysis' is the name of Freud's: in other words, Freud's desire is not alienated in some external semblance, something that he does

not have to take responsibility for, like God, it is, on the contrary, *inscribed in the very discourse of psychoanalysis itself.* In Freud's texts, there is the purest expression of the Lacanian axiom, *the unconscious is the discourse of the Other*, insofar as *our only access to the unconscious is ultimately through Freud's discourse*, the discourse that Freud quite literally dreamed up. He found(ed) it in his dreams. Rather than invent God, Freud invented a language, a language in which his symptom was allowed to speak. Freud dared to put his symptom into words, instead of confining it to the ineffable. If Freud allowed his symptom to speak, there is no relation of (self-)transparency implied by this. As was shown in chapter two, Freud did not always understand what this symptom was saying, as is most evident Dora's abrupt departure from his treatment. It was, if we can put it this way, a voice that spoke through him, but which did not belong to him, which certainly no longer belongs to him now, and which continually called his practice into question.

Thus, as one begins to read the *Standard Edition* of his works, one begins to notice that Freud's discourse does not depart much from the initial line of questioning, the beginnings of which are outlined in *Studies in Hysteria*, an experience which led him through the aphasias. Every subsequent publication of Freud's is a return to this initial question, an attempt to see it in a new light, to bring something else to bear on this question, the question of desire:

> The fact that, in order to cure the hysteric of all her symptoms, the best way is to satisfy her hysteric's desire—which is for her to posit her desire in relation to us as an unsatisfied desire—leaves entirely to one side the specific question of *why* she can sustain her desire only as an unsatisfied desire. So hysteria places us, I would say, on the track of some kind of original sin in analysis. There has to be one. The truth is perhaps simply one thing, namely, the desire of Freud himself, the fact that something, in Freud, was never analysed. (Lacan, *Four Fundamental* 12)

And so, our story of the notion of resistance must end here, at the most appropriate place for it to end, in the question of Freud's desire, for it is, after all, Freud's notion. It is his desire that at the beginning of Lacan's paper on the mirror stage, which forces us to choose between the *cogito* or psychoanalysis. It is resistance, in the end, that forces us to choose, or rather, confronts us with a choice that we have already made insofar as it appears to us in the guise of transference: the presence of the Other, a presence which is represented to us only as a symbolic constellation, a fantasy that ties us to the Real, which sustains reference to the outside of language but which, as such, can only be articulated in the (imaginary) objects and (symbolic) signifiers that we have at our disposal. There is no outside of the text, except in fantasy, the fantasy that is held in place by the *sujet supposé savoir*, the only *savior*, through which a relationship to the external world is established. Ultimately, the choice of the *cogito* or psychoanalysis is a choice between being fascinated by the fantasy, thereby lending it the powers of a God lording over us, to whom we enslave ourselves in a state of transfixion, or traversing the fantasy by putting it into words. It is here, not where psychoanalysis ends, but where it begins, in the fantasy that cannot but tie us to the Other and which is written on the Other in a peculiar and foreign language insofar as it is the Other that, by definition cannot be represented directly, cannot be reduced to the singular language that each of us, as subject, embodies. It is ultimately fantasy that is the discourse of the Other. We encounter this discourse at the very limit of thought, imposing itself on us as if from outside as a gateway through which to encounter being.

Psychoanalysis shows us how such fantasies come to the fore when signification otherwise fails, when it cannot find an outlet in words. Fantasy encircles the failure,

expressing that which cannot be otherwise expressed. We have already said in the introduction to the present work that the chief difference between psychoanalysis and post-structuralism derived from Derridian deconstruction and the hermeneutical approach to meaning is the fact that, for psychoanalysis, meaning is not always-already there, from the beginning, heterogeneous to signification à la the Derridan transcendental signified. We see this most clearly in the way that the Lacanian (structural) correlate to the transcendental signified is the master-*signifier*. Everywhere Lacan emphasizes the signifier as primary as opposed to the signified precisely insofar as meaning is literally *nothing* without a representative: it does not exist without something to hold its place.

As is most evident in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, often considered to be his most direct confrontation with the *cogito* (although almost every seminar and *Écrit* is not without some reference to it), Lacan locates a shift from what we might call the (hermeneutic) philosophical discursive paradigm, which either overtly or covertly refers to God in the structural position of the *sujet supposé savoir*, to the psychoanalytic discursive paradigm in which Freud as a charismatic and enigmatic figure holds the position of *sujet supposé savoir*. In more abstract terms, Lacan articulates a shift from God's desire as a function that maintains a transcendental stance toward meaning as heterogeneous to signification to the Father's desire. The Father is to (Freudian/Lacanian) psychoanalysis what God is to (Cartesian) philosophy; the fact that in this shift in emphasis from God to the Father, the structural position or 'empty place' in the structure that is held by this signifier, God, is brought down to a worldly level changes the very meaning of the transcendental in the precise sense that it brings to light something that was otherwise obscured in the Cartesian emphasis on God *qua* God. That which is

otherwise obscured is precisely the dimension of desire, a desire that one must take responsibility for, that cannot be alienated onto a transcendental Other or entity outside of the structure of signification. Such is why Lacan ends his most well-known seminar, which was directed, for the first time, to an non-psychoanalytic audience after being thrown out of the International Psychoanalytic Association, with the question of Freud's desire and its role in constituting the discourse of psychoanalysis itself. For according to Lacan's method of reading, the meaning of Freud is not something which is buried under his signifiers, to be found by clever interpreters or to be approached gradually, over time; rather, meaning and thus interpretation is a dialectical process that arises out of a confrontation with the text by a (interpreting) subject. One must interpret one's own spontaneous inclination toward understanding as much as the signifiers that comprise the text and to be prepared and alert to those moments when understanding fails to arise and interpretations falter. Meaning is not something to be found but something to be overcome in order to produce signification.

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