

thy, as it is manifested in the context of an analytic experience. This is the coincidence between the subject's remarks and facts he cannot have known about, but which are still at work in the connections to another analysis in which the analyst is an interlocutor—a coincidence which is, moreover, most often constituted by an entirely verbal, even homonymic, convergence, or which, if it includes an act, involves an "acting out"* by one of the analyst's other patients or by the patient's child who is also in analysis. It is a case of resonance in the communicating networks of discourse, an exhaustive study of which would shed light on similar facts of everyday life.

The omnipresence of human discourse will perhaps one day be embraced under the open sky of an omniconmunication of its text. This is not to say that human discourse will be any more in tune with it than it is now. But this is the field that our experience polarizes in a relation that is only apparently a two-person relation, for any positioning of its structure in merely dyadic terms is as inadequate to it in theory as it is damaging to its technique.

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II. *Symbol and Language as Structure and Limit of the Psychoanalytic Field*

Τὴν ἀρχὴν ὅτι καὶ λαλῶ ὑμῖν
—Gospel according to Saint John, 8.25

Do crossword puzzles.
—Advice to a young psychoanalyst

To take up the thread of my argument again, let me repeat that it is by a reduction of a particular subject's history that psychoanalysis touches on relational gestalts, which analysis extrapolates into regular development; but that neither genetic psychology nor differential psychology, on both of which analysis may shed light, is within its scope, because both require experimental and observational conditions that are related to those of analysis in name alone.

To go even further: What separates out from common experience (which is confused with sense experience only by professional thinkers) as psychology in its crudest form—namely, the wonder that wells up, during some momentary suspension of daily cares, at what pairs off human beings in a disparity that goes beyond that of the grotesques of Leonardo or Goya, or surprise at the resistance of the thickness characteristic of a person's skin to the caress of a hand still moved by the thrill of discovery without yet being blunted by desire—this, one might say, is abolished in an experience that is averse to such caprices and recalcitrant to such mysteries.

A psychoanalysis normally proceeds to its end without revealing to us very much of what is particular to our patient as regards his sensitivity to blows or

colors, how quickly he groups things with his hands or which parts of his body are sensitive, or his ability to retain things or invent, not to mention the vivacity of his tastes.

This paradox is only an apparent one and is not due to any personal failing; if it can be justified by the negative conditions of analytic experience, it simply presses us a little harder to examine that experience in terms of what is positive in it.

For this paradox is not resolved by the efforts of certain people who—like the philosophers Plato mocked for being so driven by their appetite for reality [*réel*] that they went about embracing trees—go so far as to take every episode in which this reality, that slips away, rears its head for the lived reaction of which they prove so fond. For these are the very people who, making their objective what lies beyond language, react to analysis' "Don't touch" rule by a sort of obsession. If they keep going in that direction, I dare say the last word in transference reaction will be sniffing each other. I am not exaggerating in the least: nowadays, a young analyst-in-training, after two or three years of fruitless analysis, can actually hail the long-awaited advent of the object-relation in being smelled by his subject, and can reap as a result of it the *dignus est intrare* of our votes, the guarantors of his abilities.

If psychoanalysis can become a science (for it is not yet one) and if it is not to degenerate in its technique (and perhaps this has already happened), we must rediscover the meaning of its experience.

To this end, we can do no better than return to Freud's work. Claiming to be an expert practitioner does not give an analyst the right to challenge Freud III, because he does not understand him, in the name of a Freud II whom he thinks he understands. And his very ignorance of Freud I is no excuse for considering the five great psychoanalyses as a series of case studies as badly chosen as they are written up, however marvelous he thinks it that the grain of truth hidden within them managed to escape.¹⁵

We must thus take up Freud's work again starting with the *Traumdeutung* [*The Interpretation of Dreams*] to remind ourselves that a dream has the structure of a sentence or, rather, to keep to the letter of the work, of a rebus—that is, of a form of writing, of which children's dreams are supposed to represent the primordial ideography, and which reproduces, in adults' dreams, the simultaneously phonetic and symbolic use of signifying elements found in the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt and in the characters still used in China.

But even this is no more than the deciphering of the instrument. What is important is the version of the text, and that, Freud tells us, is given in the telling of the dream—that is, in its rhetoric. Ellipsis and pleonasm, hyperbaton or syllepsis, regression, repetition, apposition—these are the syntactical

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displacements; metaphor, catachresis, antonomasia, **allegory, metonymy**, and synecdoche—these are the semantic condensations; Freud teaches us to read in them the intentions—whether ostentatious or demonstrative, dissimulating or persuasive, retaliatory or seductive—with which the subject modulates his oneiric discourse.

We know that he laid it down as a rule that the expression of a desire must always be sought in a dream. But let us be sure we understand what he meant by this. If Freud accepts, as the reason for a dream that seems to run counter to his thesis, the very desire to contradict him on the part of a subject whom he had tried to convince of his theory,¹⁶ how could he fail to accept the same reason for himself when the law he arrived at is supposed to have come to him from other people?

In short, nowhere does it appear more clearly that man's desire finds its meaning in the other's desire, not so much because the other holds the keys to the desired object, as because his first object(ive) is to be recognized by the other.

Indeed, we all know from experience that from the moment an analysis becomes engaged in the path of transference—and this is what indicates to us that it has become so engaged—each of the patient's dreams is to be interpreted as a provocation, a latent avowal or diversion, by its relation to the analytic discourse, and that as the analysis progresses, his dreams become ever more reduced to the function of elements in the dialogue taking place in the analysis.

In the case of the psychopathology of everyday life, another field consecrated by another text by Freud, it is clear that every bungled action is a successful, even "well phrased," discourse, and that in slips of the tongue it is the gag that turns against speech, and from just the right quadrant for its word to the wise to be sufficient.

But let us go straight to the part of the book where Freud deals with chance and the beliefs it gives rise to, and especially to the facts regarding which he applies himself to showing the subjective efficacy of associations to numbers that are left to the fate of an unmotivated choice, or even of a random selection. Nowhere do the dominant structures of the psychoanalytic field reveal themselves better than in such a success. Freud's appeal, in passing, to unknown thought processes is nothing more in this case than his last-ditch excuse for the total confidence he placed in symbols, a confidence that wavers as the result of being fulfilled beyond his wildest dreams.

If, for a symptom, whether neurotic or not, to be considered to come under psychoanalytic psychopathology, Freud insists on the minimum of overdetermination constituted by a double meaning—symbol of a defunct conflict beyond its function in a *no less symbolic* present conflict—and if he teaches us

to follow the ascending ramification of the symbolic lineage in the text of the patient's free associations, in order to detect the nodal points [*noeuds*] of its structure at the places where its verbal forms intersect, then it is already quite clear that symptoms can be entirely resolved in an analysis of language, because a symptom is itself structured like a language: a symptom is language from which speech must be delivered.

To those who have not studied the nature of language in any depth, the experience of numerical association will immediately show what must be grasped here—namely, the combinatory power that orders its equivocations—and they will recognize in this the very mainspring of the unconscious.

Indeed, if—from the numbers obtained by breaking up the series of digits [*chiffres*] in the chosen number, from their combination by all the operations of arithmetic, and even from the repeated division of the original number by one of the numbers split off from it—the resulting numbers¹⁷ prove symbolic among all the numbers in the subject's own history, it is because they were already latent in the initial choice. And thus if the idea that these very numbers [*chiffres*] determined the subject's fate is refuted as superstitious, we must nevertheless admit that everything analysis reveals to the subject as his unconscious lies in the existing order of their combinations—that is, in the concrete language they represent.

We shall see that philologists and ethnographers reveal enough to us about the combinatory sureness found in the completely unconscious systems with which they deal for them to find nothing surprising in the proposition I am putting forward here.

But should anyone still have reservations about what I am saying, I would appeal once more to the testimony of the man who, having discovered the unconscious, warrants credence when he designates its place; he will not fail us.

For, however little interest has been taken in it—and for good reason—*Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* remains the most unchallengeable of his works because it is the most transparent; in it, the effect of the unconscious is demonstrated in all its subtlety. And the visage it reveals to us is that of wit [*l'esprit*] in the ambiguity conferred on it by language, where the other face of its regal power is the witticism [*pointe*], by which the whole of its order is annihilated in an instant—the witticism, indeed, in which language's creative activity unveils its absolute gratuitousness, in which its domination of reality [*réel*] is expressed in the challenge of nonmeaning, and in which the humor, in the malicious grace of the free spirit [*esprit libre*], symbolizes a truth that does not say its last word.

We must follow Freud, along the book's admirably compelling detours, on the walk on which he leads us in this chosen garden of bitterest love.

Here everything is substantial, everything is a real gem. The mind [*esprit*] that lives as an exile in the creation whose invisible support he is, knows that he is at every instant the master capable of annihilating it. No matter how disdained the forms of this hidden royalty—haughty or perfidious, dandy-like or debonair—Freud can make their secret luster shine. Stories of the marriage-broker on his rounds in the ghettos of Moravia—that derided Eros figure, like him born of penury and pain—discreetly guiding the avidity of his ill-mannered client, and suddenly ridiculing him with the illuminating nonsense of his reply. “He who lets the truth escape like that,” comments Freud, “is in reality happy to throw off the mask.”

It is truth, in fact, that throws off the mask in coming out of his mouth, but only so that the joke might take on another and more deceptive mask: the sophistry that is merely a stratagem, the logic that is merely a lure, even comedy that tends merely to dazzle. The joke is always about something else. “A joke [*esprit*] in fact entails such a subjective conditionality [. . .]: a joke is only what I accept as such,” continues Freud, who knows what he is talking about.

Nowhere is the individual’s intent more evidently surpassed by the subject’s find—nowhere is the distinction I make between the individual and the subject so palpable—since not only must there have been something foreign to me in my find for me to take pleasure in it, but some of it must remain foreign for this find to hit home. This takes on its importance due to the necessity, so clearly indicated by Freud, of a joke’s third person, who is always presupposed, and to the fact that a joke does not lose its power when told in the form of indirect speech. In short, this points, in the Other’s locus, to the amboceptor that is illuminated by the artifice of the joke [*mot*] erupting in its supreme alacrity.

There is only one reason for a joke to fall flat: the platitude of any explanation given of its truth.

Now this relates directly to our problem. The current disdain for studies on the language of symbols—which can be seen simply by glancing at the table of contents of our publications before and after the 1920s—corresponds in our discipline to nothing less than a change of object, whose tendency to align itself with the most undifferentiated level of communication, in order to accommodate the new objectives proposed for psychoanalytic technique, is perhaps responsible for the rather gloomy balance sheet that the most lucid analysts have drawn up of its results.¹⁸

How, indeed, could speech exhaust the meaning of speech or—to put it better with the Oxford logical positivists, the meaning of meaning*—if not in the act that engenders it? Thus Goethe’s reversal of its presence at the ori-

gin, “In the beginning was the act,” is itself reversed in its turn: it was certainly the Word that was [*ditait*] in the beginning, and we live in its creation, but it is our mental [*esprit*] action that continues this creation by constantly renewing it. And we can only think back to this action by allowing ourselves to be driven ever further ahead by it.

I shall try it myself only in the knowledge that this is its pathway . . .

No one is supposed to be ignorant of the law; this formulation, provided by the humor in our Code of Laws, nevertheless expresses the truth in which our experience is grounded, and which our experience confirms. No man is actually ignorant of it, because the law of man has been the law of language since the first words of recognition presided over the first gifts—it having taken the detestable Danaï, who came and fled by sea, for men to learn to fear deceptive words accompanying faithless gifts. Up until then, these gifts, the act of giving them and the objects given, their transmutation into signs, and even their fabrication, were so closely intertwined with speech for the pacific Argonauts—uniting the islets of their community with the bonds [*noeuds*] of a symbolic commerce—that they were designated by its name.¹⁹

Is it with these gifts, or with the passwords that give them their salutary nonmeaning, that language begins along with law? For these gifts are already symbols, in the sense that symbol means pact, and they are first and foremost signifiers of the pact they constitute as the signified; this is plainly seen in the fact that the objects of symbolic exchange—vases made to remain empty, shields too heavy to be carried, sheaves that will dry out, lances that are thrust into the ground—are all destined to be useless, if not superfluous by their very abundance.

Is this neutralization by means of the signifier the whole of the nature of language? Were this the case, one would find a first approximation of language among sea swallows, for instance, during display, materialized in the fish they pass each other from beak to beak; ethologists—if we must agree with them in seeing in this the instrument of a stirring into action of the group that is tantamount to a party—would then be altogether justified in recognizing a symbol in this activity.

It can be seen that I do not shrink from seeking the origins of symbolic behavior outside the human sphere. But it is certainly not by the pathway of an elaboration of signs, the pathway Jules H. Masserman,²⁰ following in the footsteps of so many others, has taken. I shall dwell on it for an instant here, not only because of the savvy tone with which he outlines his approach, but also because his work has been well received by the editors of our official

journal, who—following a tradition borrowed from employment agencies—never neglect anything that might provide our discipline with “good references.”

Think of it—we have here a man who has reproduced neurosis experimentally in a dog tied down on a table, and by what ingenious methods: a bell, the plate of meat that it announces, and the plate of apples that arrives instead; I’ll spare you the rest. He will certainly not be one, at least so he assures us, to let himself be taken in by the “extensive ruminations,” as he puts it, that philosophers have devoted to the problem of language. Not him, he’s going to grab it by the throat.

Can you imagine?—a raccoon can be taught, by a judicious conditioning of his reflexes, to go to his food box when he is presented with a card on which the meal he is to be served is printed. We are not told whether it lists the various prices, but the convincing detail is added that if the service disappoints him, he comes back and tears up the card that promised too much, just as a furious woman might do with the letters of a faithless lover (*sic*).

This is one of the arches supporting the road by which the author leads us from the signal to the symbol. It is a two-way street, and the way back is illustrated by no less imposing structures.

For if, in a human subject, you associate the ringing of a bell with the projection of a bright light into his eyes and then the ringing alone to the order, “contract,”* you will succeed in getting the subject to make his pupils contract just by pronouncing the order himself, then by whispering it, and eventually just by thinking it—in other words, you will obtain a reaction of the nervous system that is called autonomic because it is usually inaccessible to intentional effects. Thus, if we are to believe Masserman, a certain Hudgkins “had created in a group of people a highly individualized configuration of cognate and visceral reactions to the idea-symbol ‘contract’—a response which could be traced through their special experiences to an apparently remote but actually basic physiologic source: in this instance, simply the protection of the retina from excessive light.” And Masserman concludes: “The significance of such experiments for psycho-somatic and linguistic research hardly needs further elaboration.”

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For my part, I would have been curious to know whether subjects trained in this way also react to the enunciation of the same term in the expressions “marriage contract,”* “contract bridge,”* and “breach of contract,”* and even when the term is progressively shortened to the articulation of its first syllable alone: contract, contrac, contra, contr . . . The control test required by strict scientific method would then be supplied all by itself as the French reader muttered this syllable under his breath, even though he would have been subjected

to no other conditioning than that of the bright light projected on the problem by Masserman himself. I would then ask this author whether the effects thus observed among conditioned subjects still appeared to so easily do without further elaboration. For either the effects would no longer be produced, thus revealing that they do not even conditionally depend on the semanteme, or they would continue to be produced, raising the question of the semanteme’s limits.

In other words, they would cause the distinction between the signifier and the signified, so blithely confounded by the author in the English term “idea-symbol,”* to appear in the very word as instrument. And without needing to examine the reactions of subjects conditioned to react to the command “don’t contract,” or even to the complete conjugation of the verb “to contract,” I could remark to the author that what defines any element whatsoever of a language [*langue*] as belonging to language is that, for all the users of the language [*langue*], this element is distinguished as such in the supposedly constituted set of homologous elements.

Thus, the particular effects of this element of language are linked to the existence of this set, prior to any possible link with any of the subject’s particular experiences. And to consider this last link independently of any reference to the first is simply to deny the characteristic function of language to this element.

This reminder of first principles might perhaps save our author from discovering, with an unequalled naïveté, the verbatim correspondence of the grammatical categories of his childhood to relations found in reality.

This monument of naïveté—of a kind which is, moreover, common enough in these matters—would not be worth so much attention if it had not been erected by a psychoanalyst, or rather by someone who, as if by chance, relates everything to it which is produced by a certain tendency in psychoanalysis—under the heading of the theory of the ego or technique of the analysis of defenses—that is diametrically opposed to Freudian experience; he thereby manifests *a contrario* that a sound conception of language is coherent with the preservation of Freudian experience. For Freud’s discovery was that of the field of the effects, in man’s nature, of his relations to the symbolic order and the fact that their meaning goes all the way back to the most radical instances of symbolization in being. To ignore the symbolic order is to condemn Freud’s discovery to forgetting and analytic experience to ruin.

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I declare—and this is a declaration that cannot be divorced from the serious intent of my present remarks—that I would prefer to have the raccoon I mentioned earlier sitting in the armchair to which, according to our author, Freud’s shyness confined the analyst by placing him behind the couch, rather than a scientist who discourses on language and speech as Masserman does.

For—thanks to Jacques Prévert (“A stone, two houses, three ruins, four ditch diggers, a garden, some flowers, a raccoon”)—the raccoon, at least, has definitively entered the poetic bestiary and partakes as such, in its essence, of the symbol’s eminent function. But that being resembling us who professes, as Masserman does, a systematic misrecognition of that function, forever banishes himself from everything that can be called into existence by it. Thus, the question of the place to be assigned the said semblable in the classification of natural beings would seem to me to smack of a misplaced humanism, if his discourse, crossed with a technique of speech of which we are the guardians, were not in fact too fertile, even in producing sterile monsters within it. Let it be known therefore, since he also credits himself with braving the reproach of anthropomorphism, that this is the last term I would employ in saying that he makes his own being the measure of all things.

Let us return to our symbolic object, which is itself extremely substantial [*consistant*] in its matter, even if it has lost the weight of use, but whose imponderable meaning will produce displacements of some weight. Is that, then, law and language? Perhaps not yet.

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For even if there appeared among the sea swallows some kaid of the colony who, by gulping down the symbolic fish from the others’ gaping beaks, were to inaugurate the exploitation of swallow by swallow—a fanciful notion I enjoyed developing one day—this would not in any way suffice to reproduce among them that fabulous history, the image of our own, whose winged epic kept us captive on *Penguin Island*; something else would still be needed to create a “swallowized” universe.

This “something else” completes the symbol, making language of it. In order for the symbolic object freed from its usage to become the word freed from the *hic et nunc*, the difference resides not in the sonorous quality of its matter, but in its vanishing being in which the symbol finds the permanence of the concept.

Through the word—which is already a presence made of absence—absence itself comes to be named in an original moment whose perpetual recreation Freud’s genius detected in a child’s game. And from this articulated couple of presence and absence—also sufficiently constituted by the drawing in the sand of a simple line and a broken line of the *koua* mantics of China—a language’s [*langue*] world of meaning is born, in which the world of things will situate itself.

Through what becomes embodied only by being the trace of a nothingness and whose medium thus cannot be altered, concepts, in preserving the duration of what passes away, engender things.

For it is still not saying enough to say that the concept is the thing itself,

which a child can demonstrate against the Scholastics. It is the world of words that creates the world of things—things which at first run together in the *hic et nunc* of the all in the process of becoming—by giving its concrete being to their essence, and its ubiquity to what has always been: κτῆμα ἐς ἀεί.

Man thus speaks, but it is because the symbol has made him man. Even if, in fact, overabundant gifts welcome a stranger who has made himself known to a group, the life of natural groups that constitute a community is subject to the rules of matrimonial alliance—determining the direction in which the exchange of women takes place—and to the mutual services determined by marriage: as the ŠiRonga proverb says, “A relative by marriage is an elephant’s hip.” Marriage ties are governed by an order of preference whose law concerning kinship names is, like language, imperative for the group in its forms, but unconscious in its structure. Now, in this structure, whose harmony or conflicts govern the restricted or generalized exchange discerned in it by ethnologists, the startled theoretician refinds the whole logic of combinations; thus the laws of number—that is, of the most highly purified of all symbols—prove to be immanent in the original symbolism. At least, it is the richness of the forms—in which what are known as the elementary structures of kinship develop—that makes those laws legible in the original symbolism. And this suggests that it is perhaps only our unawareness of their permanence that allows us to believe in freedom of choice in the so-called complex structures of marriage ties under whose law we live. If statistics has already allowed us to glimpse that this freedom is not exercised randomly, it is because a subjective logic seems to orient its effects.

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This is precisely where the Oedipus complex—insofar as we still acknowledge that it covers the whole field of our experience with its signification—will be said, in my remarks here, to mark the limits our discipline assigns to subjectivity: namely, what the subject can know of his unconscious participation in the movement of the complex structures of marriage ties, by verifying the symbolic effects in his individual existence of the tangential movement toward incest that has manifested itself ever since the advent of a universal community.

The primordial Law is therefore the Law which, in regulating marriage ties, superimposes the reign of culture over the reign of nature, the latter being subject to the law of mating. The prohibition of incest is merely the subjective pivot of that Law, laid bare by the modern tendency to reduce the objects the subject is forbidden to choose to the mother and sisters, full license, moreover, not yet being entirely granted beyond them.

This law, then, reveals itself clearly enough as identical to a language order. For without names for kinship relations, no power can institute the

order of preferences and taboos that knot and braid the thread of lineage through the generations. And it is the confusion of generations which, in the Bible as in all traditional laws, is cursed as being the abomination of the Word and the desolation of the sinner.

Indeed, we know the damage a falsified filiation can do, going as far as dissociation of the subject's personality, when those around him conspire to sustain the lie. It may be no less when, as a result of a man marrying the mother of the woman with whom he has had a son, the son's brother will be his biological mother's half-brother. But if the son is later adopted—and I have not invented this example—by the sympathizing couple formed by a daughter of his father's previous marriage and her husband, he will find himself once again a half-brother, this time of his foster mother; and one can imagine the complex feelings he will have while awaiting the birth of a child who, in this recurring situation, will be his brother and nephew simultaneously.

So too, the mere time-lag produced in the order of generations by a late-born child of a second marriage, where a young mother finds herself the same age as an older brother from the first marriage, can produce similar effects; as we know, this was true in Freud's own family.

This same function of symbolic identification—allowing primitive man to believe he is the reincarnation of an ancestor with the same name, and even determining an alternating recurrence of characteristics in modern man—thus brings about a dissociation of the Oedipus complex in subjects exposed to such discordances in the paternal relation, in which the constant source of its pathogenic effects must be seen. Indeed, even when it is represented by a single person, the paternal function concentrates in itself both imaginary and real relations that always more or less fail to correspond to the symbolic relation that essentially constitutes it.

It is in the *name of the father* that we must recognize the basis of the symbolic function which, since the dawn of historical time, has identified his person with the figure of the law. This conception allows us to clearly distinguish, in the analysis of a case, the unconscious effects of this function from the narcissistic relations, or even real relations, that the subject has with the image and actions of the person who embodies this function; this results in a mode of comprehension that has repercussions on the very way in which interventions are made by the analyst. Practice has confirmed the fecundity of this conception to me, as well as to the students whom I have introduced to this method. And, both in supervision and case discussions, I have often had occasion to stress the harmful confusion produced by neglecting it.

Thus it is the virtue of the Word that perpetuates the movement of the Great Debt whose economy Rabelais, in a famous metaphor, extended to the stars

themselves. And we shall not be surprised that the chapter in which he anticipates ethnographic discoveries with the macaronic inversion of kinship names, reveals in the Word the substantific divination of the human mystery that I am trying to elucidate here.

Identified with sacred *hau* or omnipresent *mana*, the inviolable Debt is the guarantee that the voyage on which women and goods are sent will bring back to their point of departure, in a never-failing cycle, other women and other goods, all bearing an identical entity: what Lévi-Strauss calls a "zero-symbol," thus reducing the power of Speech to the form of an algebraic sign.

Symbols in fact envelop the life of man with a network so total that they join together those who are going to engender him "by bone and flesh" before he comes into the world; so total that they bring to his birth, along with the gifts of the stars, if not with the gifts of the fairies, the shape of his destiny; so total that they provide the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him right to the very place where he is not yet and beyond his very death; and so total that through them his end finds its meaning in the last judgment, where the Word absolves his being or condemns it—unless he reaches the subjective realization of being-toward-death.

Servitude and grandeur in which the living being would be annihilated, if desire did not preserve his part in the interferences and pulsations that the cycles of language cause to converge on him, when the confusion of tongues intervenes and the orders thwart each other in the tearing asunder of the universal undertaking.

But for this desire itself to be satisfied in man requires that it be recognized, through the accord of speech or the struggle for prestige, in the symbol or the imaginary.

What is at stake in an analysis is the advent in the subject of the scant reality that this desire sustains in him, with respect to symbolic conflicts and imaginary fixations, as the means of their accord, and our path is the intersubjective experience by which this desire gains recognition.

Thus we see that the problem is that of the relations between speech and language in the subject.

Three paradoxes in these relations present themselves in our domain.

In madness, of whatever nature, we must recognize on the one hand the negative freedom of a kind of speech that has given up trying to gain recognition, which is what we call an obstacle to transference; and, on the other, the singular formation of a delusion which—whether fabular, fantastical, or cosmological, or rather interpretative, demanding, or idealist—objectifies the subject in a language devoid of dialectic.²¹

The absence of speech is manifested in madness by the stereotypes of a dis-

course in which the subject, one might say, is spoken instead of speaking; we recognize here the symbols of the unconscious in petrified forms that find their place in a natural history of these symbols alongside the embalmed forms in which myths are presented in our collections of them. But it would be wrong to say that the subject assumes these symbols: the resistance to their recognition is no less strong in psychosis than in the neuroses, when the subject is led to recognize them by an attempt at treatment.

Let it be said in passing that it would be worthwhile noting the places in social space that our culture has assigned these subjects, especially as regards their relegation to the social services relating to language, for it is not unlikely that we find here one of the factors that consign such subjects to the effects of the breakdown produced by the symbolic discordances characteristic of the complex structures of civilization.

The second case is represented by the privileged field of psychoanalytic discovery—namely, symptoms, inhibition, and anxiety in the constitutive economy of the different neuroses.

Here speech is driven out of the concrete discourse that orders consciousness, but it finds its medium either in the subject's natural functions—provided a painful organic sensation wedges open the gap between his individual being and his essence, which makes illness what institutes the existence of the subject in the living being²²—or in the images that, at the border between the *Umwelt* and the *Innenwelt*, organize their relational structuring.

A symptom here is the signifier of a signified that has been repressed from the subject's consciousness. A symbol written in the sand of the flesh and on the veil of Maia, it partakes of language by the semantic ambiguity that I have already highlighted in its constitution.

But it is fully functioning speech, for it includes the other's discourse in the secret of its cipher [*chiffre*].

It was by deciphering this speech that Freud rediscovered the first language of symbols,²³ still alive in the sufferings of civilized man (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* [*Civilization and Its Discontents*]).

Hieroglyphics of hysteria, blazons of phobia, and labyrinths of *Zwangsneurose* [obsessive neurosis]; charms of impotence, enigmas of inhibition, and oracles of anxiety; talking arms of character,²⁴ seals of self-punishment, and disguises of perversion: these are the hermetic elements that our exegesis resolves, the equivocations that our invocation dissolves, and the artifices that our dialectic absolves, by delivering the imprisoned meaning in ways that run the gamut from revealing the palimpsest to providing the solution [*moi*] of the mystery and to pardoning speech.

The third paradox of the relation of language to speech is that of the sub-

ject who loses his meaning in the objectifications of discourse. However metaphysical its definition may seem, we cannot ignore its presence in the foreground of our experience. For this is the most profound alienation of the subject in our scientific civilization, and it is this alienation that we encounter first when the subject begins to talk to us about himself. In order to eliminate it entirely, analysis should thus be conducted until it has reached the endpoint of wisdom.

To provide an exemplary formulation of this, I can find no more relevant terrain than the usage of everyday speech, pointing out that the expression "*ce suis-je*" ["it is I"] of Villon's era has become inverted in the expression "*c'est moi*" ["it's me"] of modern man.

The me [*moi*] of modern man, as I have indicated elsewhere, has taken on its form in the dialectical impasse of the beautiful soul who does not recognize his very reason for being in the disorder he denounces in the world.

But a way out of this impasse is offered to the subject where his discourse rants and raves. Communication can be validly established for him in science's collective undertaking and in the tasks science ordains in our universal civilization; this communication will be effective within the enormous objectification constituted by this science, and it will allow him to forget his subjectivity. He will make an effective contribution to the collective undertaking in his daily work and will be able to occupy his leisure time with all the pleasures of a profuse culture which—providing everything from detective novels to historical memoirs and from educational lectures to the orthopedics of group relations—will give him the wherewithal to forget his own existence and his death, as well as to misrecognize the particular meaning of his life in false communication.

If the subject did not rediscover through regression—often taken as far back as the mirror stage [*stade*]—the inside of a stadium [*stade*] in which his ego contains his imaginary exploits, there would hardly be any assignable limits to the credulity to which he would have to succumb in this situation. Which is what makes our responsibility so formidable when, with the mythical manipulations of our doctrine, we bring him yet another opportunity to become alienated, in the decomposed trinity of the ego,* the superego,* and the id,* for example.

Here it is a wall of language that blocks speech, and the precautions against verbalism that are a theme of the discourse of "normal" men in our culture merely serve to increase its thickness.

There might be some point in measuring its thickness by the statistically determined total pounds of printed paper, miles of record grooves, and hours of radio broadcasts that the said culture produces per capita in sectors A, B, and C of its domain. This would be a fine research topic for our cultural organizations, and

it would be seen that the question of language does not remain entirely within the region of the brain in which its use is reflected in the individual.

*We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
(and so on.)*

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The resemblance between this situation and the alienation of madness—insofar as the formulation given above is authentic, namely, that the mad subject is spoken rather than speaking—is obviously related to the requirement, presupposed by psychoanalysis, of true speech. If this consequence, which takes the paradoxes that are constitutive of what I am saying here as far as they can go, were to be turned against the common sense of the psychoanalytic perspective, I would readily grant the pertinence of this objection, but only to find my own position confirmed in it—by a dialectical reversal for which there would be no shortage of authorized patrons, beginning with Hegel's critique of "the philosophy of the skull," and stopping only at Pascal's resounding warning, at the dawn of the historical era of the "me" [*moi*], formulated in the following terms: "Men are so necessarily mad that it would be another twist of madness not to be mad."

This is not to say, however, that our culture pursues its course in the shadows outside of creative subjectivity. On the contrary, creative subjectivity has not ceased in its struggle to renew here the never-exhausted power of symbols in the human exchange that brings them to light.

To emphasize the small number of subjects who prop up this creation would be to give in to a romantic perspective by comparing things that are not equivalent. The fact is that this subjectivity, regardless of the domain in which it appears—mathematics, politics, religion, or even advertising—continues to animate the movement of humanity as a whole. Looking at it from another, probably no less illusory, angle would lead us to emphasize the opposite trait: the fact that its symbolic character has never been more manifest. The irony of revolutions is that they engender a power that is all the more absolute in its exercise, not because it is more anonymous, as people say, but because it is reduced more completely to the words that signify it. The strength of churches lies more than ever in the language they have been able to maintain—an instance, it should be noted, that Freud left aside in the article in which he sketches out for us what I call the "collective subjectivities" of the Church and the Army.

Psychoanalysis has played a role in the direction of modern subjectivity, and it cannot sustain this role without aligning it with the movement in modern science that elucidates it.

This is the problem of the foundations that must assure our discipline its place among the sciences: a problem of formalization, which, it must be admitted, has gotten off to a very bad start.

For it seems that, possessed anew by the very shortcoming in the medical mind in opposition to which psychoanalysis had to constitute itself, we were trying to jump back on the bandwagon of science—being half a century behind the movement of the sciences—by following medicine's example.

This leads to abstract objectification of our experience on the basis of fictitious, or even simulated, principles of experimental method—in which we find the effect of biases that must first be swept from our field if we wish to cultivate it according to its authentic structure.

As practitioners of the symbolic function, it is surprising that we shy away from delving deeper into it, going so far as to neglect the fact that this function situates us at the heart of the movement that is establishing a new order of the sciences, with a rethinking of anthropology.

This new order simply signifies a return to a notion of true science whose credentials are already inscribed in a tradition that begins with Plato's *Theaetetus*. This notion has degenerated, as we know, in the positivist reversal which, by making the human sciences the crowning glory of the experimental sciences, in fact subordinates them to the latter. This conception results from an erroneous view of the history of science founded on the prestige of a specialized development of experimentation.

Today, however, the conjectural sciences are discovering once again the age-old notion of science, forcing us to revise the classification of the sciences we have inherited from the nineteenth century in a direction clearly indicated by the most lucid thinkers.

One need but follow the concrete evolution of the various disciplines in order to become aware of this.

Linguistics can serve us as a guide here, since that is the vanguard role it is given by contemporary anthropology, and we cannot remain indifferent to it.

The form of mathematicization in which the discovery of the *phoneme* is inscribed, as a function of pairs of oppositions formed by the smallest graspable discriminative semantic elements, leads us to the very foundations that Freud's final doctrine designates as the subjective sources of the symbolic function in a vocalic connotation of presence and absence.

And the reduction of any language [*langue*] to a group comprised of a very small number of such phonemic oppositions, initiating an equally rigorous

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formalization of its highest-level morphemes, puts within our reach a strict approach to our own field.

It is up to us to adopt this approach to discover how it intersects with our own field, just as ethnography, which follows a course parallel to our own, is already doing by deciphering myths according to the synchrony of mythemes.

Isn't it striking that Lévi-Strauss—in suggesting the involvement in myths of language structures and of those social laws that regulate marriage ties and kinship—is already conquering the very terrain in which Freud situates the unconscious?²⁵

It is thus impossible not to make a general theory of the symbol the axis of a new classification of the sciences where the sciences of man will reassume their central position as sciences of subjectivity. Let me indicate its core principle, which, of course, does not obviate the need for further elaboration.

The symbolic function presents itself as a twofold movement in the subject: man makes his own action into an object, but only to return its foundational place to it in due time. In this equivocation, operating at every instant, lies the whole progress of a function in which action and knowledge [*connaissance*] alternate.²⁶

Here are two examples, one borrowed from the classroom, the other from the very pulse of our time:

- The first is mathematical: in phase one, man objectifies two collections he has counted in the form of two cardinal numbers; in phase two, he manages to add the two collections using these numbers (see the example cited by Kant in the introduction to the transcendental aesthetic, section IV, in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason*);
- The second is historical: in phase one, a man who works at the level of production in our society considers himself to belong to the ranks of the proletariat; in phase two, in the name of belonging to it, he joins in a general strike.

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If these two examples come from areas which, for us, are the most highly contrasted in the domain of the concrete—the first involving the ever freer play of mathematical law, the second, the brazen face of capitalist exploitation—it is because, although they seem to come from radically different realms, their effects come to constitute our subsistence, precisely by intersecting there in a double reversal: the most subjective science having forged a new reality, and the shadow of the social divide arming itself with a symbol in action.

Here the distinction people make between the exact sciences and those for which there is no reason to refuse the appellation “conjectural” no longer seems to be acceptable—for lack of any grounds for that distinction.²⁷

For exactness must be distinguished from truth, and conjecture does not exclude rigor. If experimental science derives its exactness from mathematics, its relation to nature is nonetheless problematic.

Indeed, if our link to nature incites us to wonder poetically whether it is not nature's own movement that we refind in our science, in

... *cette voix*

Qui se connaît quand elle sonne

N'être plus la voix de personne

Tant que des ondes et des bois,

it is clear that our physics is but a mental fabrication in which mathematical symbols serve as instruments.

For experimental science is not so much defined by the quantity to which it is in fact applied, as by the measurement it introduces into reality [*réel*].

This can be seen in relation to the measurement of time without which experimental science would be impossible. Huyghens' clock, which alone gave experimental science its precision, is merely the organ that fulfills Galileo's hypothesis concerning the equal gravitational pull on all bodies—that is, the hypothesis of uniform acceleration that confers its law, since it is the same, on every instance of falling.

It is amusing to point out that the instrument was completed before the hypothesis could be verified by observation, and that the clock thereby rendered the hypothesis useless at the same time as it offered it the instrument it needed to be rigorous.²⁸

But mathematics can symbolize another kind of time, notably the inter-subjective time that structures human action, whose formulas are beginning to be provided by game theory, still called strategy, but which it would be better to call “stochastics.”

The author of these lines has attempted to demonstrate in the logic of a sophism the temporal mainsprings through which human action, insofar as it is coordinated with the other's action, finds in the scansion of its hesitations the advent of its certainty; and, in the decision that concludes it, gives the other's action—which it now includes—its direction [*sens*] to come, along with its sanction regarding the past.

I demonstrate there that it is the certainty anticipated by the subject in the “time for understanding” which—through the haste that precipitates the “moment of concluding”—determines the other's decision that makes the subject's own movement an error or truth.

This example indicates how the mathematical formalization that inspired

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Boolean logic, and even set theory, can bring to the **science of human action** the structure of intersubjective time that psychoanalytic **conjecture** needs to ensure its own rigor.

If, moreover, the history of the historian's technique shows that its progress is defined in the ideal of an identification of the historian's subjectivity with the constitutive subjectivity of the primal historicization in which events are humanized, it is clear that psychoanalysis finds its precise scope here: that is, in knowledge [*connaissance*], as realizing this ideal, and in efficacy, as finding its justification here. The example of history also dissipates like a mirage the recourse to the "lived reaction" that obsesses both our technique and our theory, for the fundamental historicity of the events we are concerned with suffices to conceive the possibility of a subjective reproduction of the past in the present.

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Finally, the reference to linguistics will introduce us to the method which, by distinguishing synchronic from diachronic structurings in language, will enable us to better understand the different value our language takes on in the interpretation of resistances and of transference, and to differentiate the effects characteristic of repression and the structure of the individual myth in obsessive neurosis.

The list of disciplines Freud considered important sister sciences for an ideal Department of Psychoanalysis is well known. Alongside psychiatry and sexology we find "the history of civilization, mythology, the psychology of religions, literary history, and literary criticism."

This whole group of subjects, determining the curriculum for instruction in technique, can be easily accommodated in the epistemological triangle I have described, and would provide an advanced level of instruction in analytic theory and technique with its primer.

For my part, I would be inclined to add: rhetoric, dialectic (in the technical sense this term takes on in Aristotle's *Topics*), grammar, and poetics—the supreme pinnacle of the aesthetics of language—which would include the neglected technique of witticisms.

While these subject headings may sound somewhat old-fashioned to certain people, I would not hesitate to endorse them as a return to our sources.

For psychoanalysis in its early development, intimately linked to the discovery and study of symbols, went so far as to partake in the structure of what

was called "the liberal arts" in the Middle Ages. Deprived, like them, of a true formalization, psychoanalysis became organized, like them, into a body of privileged problems, each one promoted by some felicitous relation of man to his own measure, taking on a charm and a humanity owing to this particularity that in our eyes might well make up for their somewhat recreational appearance. But let us not disdain this appearance in the early developments of psychoanalysis; indeed, it expresses nothing less than the re-creation of human meaning in an arid era of scientism. 289

These early developments should be all the less disdained since psychoanalysis has hardly raised the bar by setting off along the false pathways of a theorization that runs counter to its dialectical structure.

Psychoanalysis can provide scientific foundations for its theory and technique only by adequately formalizing the essential dimensions of its experience, which—along with the historical theory of the symbol—are intersubjective logic and the temporality of the subject. end

III. *The Resonances of Interpretation and the Time of the Subject in Psychoanalytic Technique*

Between man and love,

There is woman.

Between man and woman,

There is a world.

Between man and the world,

There is a wall.

—Antoine Tudal, *Paris in the Year 2000*

Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent: Σιβύλλα τι θέλεις, respondebat illa: ἀποθανεῖν θέλω.

—Petronius, *Satyricon*, XLVIII

Bringing psychoanalytic experience back to speech and language as its foundations is of direct concern to its technique. While it is not situated in the ineffable, we see the one-way slippage that has occurred, distancing interpretation from its core. We are thus justified in suspecting that this deviation in psychoanalytic practice explains the new aims to which psychoanalytic theory has become receptive.

If we look at the situation a little more closely, we see that the problems of symbolic interpretation began by intimidating our little group before becoming embarrassing to it. The successes obtained by Freud now astonish people because of the unseemly indoctrination they appear to involve, and the display thereof—so evident in the cases of Dora, the Rat Man, and the Wolf 290