Transcritical Encounters in Lacanian Psychoanalysis

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This investigation, which properly speaking should be called only a **transcendental critique** but not a doctrine, is all we are dealing with at present. It is not meant to expand our knowledge but only to correct it, and to become the touchstone of the value, or lack of value, of all *a priori* knowledge. Such a critique is therefore the preparation, as far as possible, for a new organon, or, if this should turn out not to be possible, for a canon at least, according to which, thereafter, the complete system of a philosophy of pure reason, whether it serve as an expansion or merely as a limitation of its knowledge, may be carried out both analytically and synthetically.

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INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS TRANSCENDENTAL CRITICISM?

Eighteenth-century Königsberg was a curious place for a philosopher to have spent his life. Obviously, it was neither the city nor even the century in which the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (the subject of this thesis) lived. Rather, it was home to Immanuel Kant, the founder of transcendental philosophy and arguably the city's most famous inhabitant. As the story goes, despite the immense fame he eventually garnered and the numerous invitations he received to lecture at prestigious state academies across Prussia, Kant never traveled more than a hundred miles from his hometown during his entire life—why?

Although it was geographically remote, being situated at the eastern corner of the Baltic, Königsberg was far from a provincial town. During Kant's life it was the capital of East Prussia with its own university and representative National Assembly. It was also connected to the rest of the world through its access to the sea, favored by its location for maritime commerce.[1] In that sense it was much closer to London, the capital of the British Empire, than Berlin. As a major commercial center, it was also a place where different languages and customs intersected: the cosmopoli-

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1   Allen W. Wood, "Kant's Life and Works," *A Companion to Kant*, ed. Graham Bird (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 11.

tan milieu of Königsberg meant that one could expand one's knowledge and learn about the world even without travel.[2]

Kant first encountered the philosophy of Leibniz and Wolff while attending the University of Königsberg. Leibnizian/Wolffian rationalism, which espoused the primacy of the intellectual faculty over the senses, held undisputed sway in Prussia at the time. Yet Königsberg, being in uniquely close proximity to Britain through the North Atlantic trade routes, also fell under the purview of David Hume's empiricist philosophy, which held that rational knowledge, in fact, was only an abstraction from a more fundamental sensory experience. Following the dominant line of Leibniz/Wolff, the only other choice was to accept Hume's empiricist skepticism, neither of which Kant was satisfied with. So he confined himself to a decade of silence—and it was out of this silence that *transcendental criticism* emerged. Reflecting back on this period in *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* [1783], Kant wrote:

> I openly confess [that] the suggestion of David Hume was the very thing which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber, and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy quite a new direction.[3]

After awakening from his "dogmatic slumber," Kant could no longer simply accept either the empiricist critique of rationalism or the rationalist critique of empiricism. For him, these were not simply two competing schools of thought. Rather, in Kant's philosophy they came to stand for two radically split faculties—understanding and sensibility—which condition our experience of the world. It was therefore not enough to see things from one's own viewpoint (rationalism) or from the viewpoint of another (empiricism). Instead one had to face *the reality that is exposed through*

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2   Kojin Karatani, *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx* (London: The MIT Press, 2005), p. 135.

3   Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* [1783], trans. Paul Carus (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1912), p. 7.

difference.[4] Thus in his *Critique of Pure Reason* [1781/1871], published after his emergence from a decade of silence, Kant sought to establish, on the basis of this difference, the limits of reason by means of reason's own self-scrutiny: in other words, it was *a critique of reason by reason*—or a transcendental critique (*transcritique*).[5]

So what does Kant, a sober Enlightenment thinker, have to do with Jacques Lacan, a wild French theorist? In his formidable *Transcritique*, Japanese philosopher and literary critic Kojin Karatani performs a "symptomatic" reading of Kant in order to unearth the obscured transcritical dimension of his texts, offering a radical interpretation of Kant's entire philosophical corpus. Using the resulting framework provided by Karatani, I have attempted to turn the Kantian "gaze" back upon Lacan. My contention is that Lacanian psychoanalysis is not a doctrine or a system, but a rigorous critique in the Kantian sense. Similar to Kant's self-imposed exile, each break in Lacan's work (understanding) corresponds to a moment of institutional crisis within the French psychoanalytic community (sensibility). And by way of this incessant transposition (crisis), Lacan encountered numerous oppositions in various topos (Melanie Klein vs. Anna Freud, structuralism vs. post-structuralism) that could not simply be ignored or synthesized: instead, like Kant, one could only assert the irreducible difference inherent to each opposition (parallax). It was through these transcritical encounters, I argue, that Lacanian psychoanalysis was born.

To begin, Part I asks the question: "How did Freud enter France?" In other words, what were the (historical) preconditions upon which Lacanian psychoanalysis was founded? Following Elisabeth Roudinesco I argue that, at least prior to

4   Karatani, *Transcritique*, p. 3.

5   *Ibid.*, p. 47.

1926, there was no monolithic channel or nexus through which Freud came to be received. Rather, the French reception of psychoanalysis was from the very beginning marred by fission, splits, and contradiction—particularly between the medical and intellectual channels. Thus, as both a psychiatrist and a "fellow traveler" amongst the Surrealists, Lacan's heterodox reading of Freud came to be mediated by a wide variety of unlikely sources, including Clérambault's dynamic psychology, Dalí's paranoia-criticism, and Kojève's reading of Hegel. More precisely, out of the chance encounter between orthodox Freudianism and German phenomenology, Lacan came to formulate what has become his most widely recognized (though mostly overemphasized) contribution to the psychoanalytic field, namely "the mirror stage" theory. Yet, as I argue in the conclusion to Part I, the Imaginary functions of identification and misrecognition elaborated in the mirror stage presuppose the Symbolic fields of speech and language—a fact that is evident in Lacan's writing at the time, but which is often overlooked.

Part II begins by demonstrating that Freud's and Lacan's respective corpuses have often been misinterpreted and misrepresented as coherent systems. Instead, I argue, Lacanian psychoanalytic theory is marked by incessant breaks, or more precisely what Louis Althusser called "epistemological breaks": an unconscious shift from one "problematic" to an entirely different theoretical framework (in Kantian terms, a rupture in the faculty of understanding). Thus in 1953 Lacan broke with his earlier work, which focused on the phenomenology of ego-formation (i.e., the mirror stage), by way of an elaboration of his structuralist theory of the unconscious. Regarding this, Slavoj Žižek writes:

> Lacan started his "return to Freud" with the linguistic reading of the entire psychoanalytic edifice, encapsulated by what is perhaps his

single best known formula: "the unconscious is structured as a lan-
guage." The predominant perception of the unconscious is that it is
the domain of irrational drives, something opposed to the rational
conscious self. For Lacan, this notion of the unconscious belongs to
the Romantic *Lebensphilosophie* and has nothing to do with Freud. The
Freudian unconscious caused such a scandal not because of the claim
that the rational self is subordinated to the much vaster domain of
blind irrational instincts, but because it demonstrated how the uncon-
scious itself obeys its own grammar and logic – the unconscious talks
and thinks. The unconscious is not the reservoir of wild drives that
has to be conquered by the ego, but the site where a traumatic truth
speaks.[6]

But why did Lacan suddenly initiate a "return to Freud" in 1953? In other words,

what prompted the "epistemological break" with his previous phenomenological

framework? My argument is that such breaks in the understanding are inevitably ac-

companied by what Karatani refers to as "transposition," a simultaneous rupture in

the faculty of sensibility—understood concretely, for example, as geographic migra-

tion, dislocation, exile, self-imposed isolation, etc. Lacan's structuralist turn could

not, therefore, have occurred without the accompanying crisis in the Société Psych-

analytique de Paris that same year, as a result of which Lacan lost his membership in

the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA).

By way of transposition, Lacan came to encounter the opposing analytic

techniques of Melanie Klein and Anna Freud, whose bitter feuds during the late-

1940s had left a lasting mark upon the international psychoanalytic community. But

rather than treating their techniques as two opposing schools of thought, as did the

IPA, Lacan—in a similar way to Kant—concluded that they in fact stood for the two

dominant tendencies inherent to the structure of transference itself. Through this

transcendental turn, Lacan came to extract the triadic topology of the Real, Sym-

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6   Slavoj Žižek, *How to Read Lacan* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), pp. 1-2.

bolic, and Imaginary—the famous "Borromean knot."

Part III, the final chapter, focuses on the accompanying shift in Lacan's thought apropos subjectivity following his "excommunication" from the IPA in 1963. Prior to this second transposition, Lacan had conceived the subject as entirely "subjected" to the totality of the structure. This is evident in his reading of Edgar Allen Poe's short detective story "The Purloined Letter," in which Lacan interprets the letter as a signifier without a signified that determines the various positions of the subjects within the signifying chain. After 1963, however, Lacan broke with his earlier formulation of the subject as totally alienated by the signifer: in the "pronounced parallax" between structuralism and post-structuralism, Lacan came to reject the structural determinism of the former, while simultaneously he affirmed it against the latter. He thereby initiated a "return to Descartes," arguing that the subject of the unconscious is none other than the Cartesian *cogito*—the void that exists in between structures, in the *transcendental topos.* To conclude Part III, then, I examine a concrete instance of the "*cogito* as void" in the transition from modernity to postmodernity in the city of Baltimore, chosen due to its unique status as the location of the birth of post-structuralism during the 1966 Johns Hopkins Humanities Center symposium.

IN CRAFTING THIS THESIS, each of the three chapters was designed to correspond to one of the three interlocking rings of the Lacanian Borromean knot. Thus Part I focuses on Lacan's explication of *the Imaginary* order through his theory of the mirror stage and, accordingly, the function of misrecognition inherent to the ego (Kantian transcendental illusion); Part II begins with Lacan's structuralist/lin-

guistic turn towards an elaboration of *the Symbolic* order through his encounter with the works of Lévi-Strauss, Ferdinand de Saussure, and Roman Jakobson (Kantian form); and Part III examines the role of transcendental subjectivity in Lacan's work and its relationship to *the Real* (Kantian thing-in-itself). Ands in Lacan's topology, if any of the corresponding (and overlapping) rings are removed, the entire structure disintegrates.
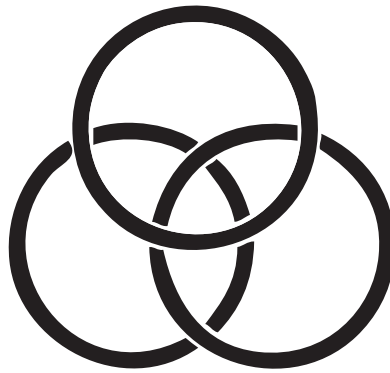
THE BORROMEAN KNOT

Finally, I consider this thesis to be neither purely *historical* nor purely *theoretical.* Rather, each of the subsections was written to reflect the oscillation between history and theory, or, in Kantian terms, between pure and empirical knowledge: in other words, it is a "theory of the history of theoretical formations."[7] My goal in doing this was to self-reflexively situate the production of this thesis—which happened to take place in the corresponding oscillation between the History and German departments—within the transcritical space. To the degree that I have succeeded (or failed) at this task should be judged, of course, not on the basis of what *I* have to say on the matter in this introduction, but rather on the merits of the contribution itself.

7   Louis Althusser, *For Marx,* trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 2005), p. 32.

I

PRECONDITIONS: THE FRENCH RECEPTION OF FREUD

A SPLIT RECEPTION

In the early history of psychoanalysis, France was something of a geographic lacuna: unlike most other countries, it had proven uniquely inhospitable to Freud's theories—a fact that even Freud himself seems to have been aware of. On June 14, 1907, in a letter addressed to Carl Jung, Freud wrote of their "difficulties with the French," noting that they were "probably due chiefly to the national character; it has always been hard to import things into France."[1] In 1914 he concluded that "[a] mong European countries France has hitherto shown itself the least disposed to welcome psychoanalysis."

> In Paris itself, a conviction still seems to reign (to which Janet himself gave eloquent expression at the Congress in London in 1913) that everything good in psychoanalysis is a repetition of Janet's views with insignificant modifications and that everything else in it is bad.[2]

Pierre Janet, who was a pioneer in the field of psychiatry and one of Freud's chief rivals, gave voice to a number of the criticisms that fostered French resistance to Freud.

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1   Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, *The Freud/Jung Letters*, trans. R. F. C. Hull and Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 24.

2   Freud, *On the History of the Psycho-analytic Movement*, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), p. 36.

At the 1913 International Conference on Medicine, for example, Janet claimed that the origins of psychoanalysis were to be found in the work of Jean-Martin Charcot—under whom both he and Freud had studied—and that Freud's contributions to the field were either meaningless, arbitrary, or both. Accordingly, Janet concluded that "psychoanalysis" was simply another term for his "psychological analysis."[3]

Others found Freud's views even more objectionable than did Janet.[4] Freud recounts in his *Autobiographical Study* that a "number of papers and newspaper articles… from France… gave a violent objection to the acceptance of psychoanalysis," an objection that made the "most inaccurate assertions" regarding his relationship to the "French school."[5] In the same memoir, Freud recalls the utterances of an unnamed professor of psychology at the Sorbonne who went so far as to declare that psychoanalysis—at least of the Freudian kind—was "inconsistent with the *génie latin.*"[6] These remarks, however, appear less surprising when situated within the context of pervasive anti-German sentiment and reactionary nationalism, which colored the milieu of the *Belle Époque* and early interwar years in France (and anti-semitism, to be sure, was always just beneath the surface). During this period, psychoanalysis and phenomenology came to be seen as Teutonic inventions aimed primarily at cultural domination. One article in the French newspaper *La Patrie,* for example, referred to psychoanalysis "infiltrating" France and spreading "obscenity and demoralization,"[7]

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3   Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), pp. 817-818.

4   It is worth noting that Janet, in fact, had defended Freud against unwarranted criticism during a meeting of the Paris Psychotherapy Society in June 1914. Cf. Ellenberger, p. 821.

5   Freud, *An Autobiographical Study,* trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), p. 11.

6   *Ibid.*, p. 70.

7   Elisabeth Roudinesco, *La Bataille de cent ans. Histoire de la psychoanalyse en France, vol. 1: 1885-1939* (Paris: Ramsay, 1982), pp. 283-284.

while a 1928 article in the conservative *Le Temps* cited the Minister of Education, for whom the distinction between Germany and Austria was of little importance, as having said: "I am assured that German youth is being poisoned by Freud. Freudianism is a northern phenomenon. It cannot succeed in France. Beyond the Rhine, Freudianism will complete the work of dissolution begun by the war."[8]

The few sympathizers Freud had found in the French psychiatric community were not anymore encouraging, expressing a similar desire to defend the national genius of France against the "invasion" of Germanic *Kultur*, even if such a desire was articulated in more moderate terms. In his 1922 preface to the second edition of *La Psychoanalyse des névroses et des psychoses*, co-written with Emmanuel Régis, Angélo Hesnard wrote:

> And the doctrine of Freud, which springs, not as it has sometimes been said from the French genius of Charcot, but rather from Germanic philosophy, could not meet a more useful ally in its search for the truth than the sense of moderation which is the inspiration behind the French genius.[9]

For Hesnard and Régis, as well as others, "moderation" seems to have meant de-emphasizing or ignoring wholesale certain aspects of Freud's thought that were inexplicably seen as being too "Germanic," that is, as either "pansexual" (the libido theory) or characterized by an irrepressible penchant for system-building. Coming to Freud's defense against charges of pansexualism, René Allendy, who along with Hesnard would become one of the founding members of the Société Psychanalytique de Paris (SPP), argued that "libido" was nothing more than a variant of

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8   *Ibid.*, p. 284.

9   Angélo Hesnard and Emmanuel Régis, *La Psychoanalyse des névroses et des psychoses* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1914), preface to the second edition.

Henri Bergson's *élan vital*—the vital force.[10] It was clear, then, that even those who might have considered themselves sympathetic to Freud's views chose to reconcile his theories with more well-known French analogues in order to conform to prevailing ideological norms and, in particular, the chauvinist medical establishment. So while the position of Freud's allies, articulated most clearly in the statement of principle published in the first issue (April 1925) of *Evolution Psychiatrique*, aimed at centralizing the information on research carried out in France that used Freudian methods, they also sought to adapt psychoanalytic theory "as well as possible to the spirit of [their] race."[11]

If the medical field in France diluted Freud's theories by identifying them with Janet's psychology and Bergson's philosophy—making it difficult, at times, to distinguish the claims of Freud's proponents from those of his detractors—the intellectual field, composed of artists, writers, and so on, brought a very different view of Freudianism to the Parisian scene.[12] The Surrealists, such as André Breton, Salvador Dalí, and René Crevel, saw the unconscious as a genuinely new modality for expressing creative thought, one that could be used to subvert the codified social norms. Breton expressed this view quite elegantly, and in all of its bourgeois charm, when he described hysteria as "the greatest poetic discovery of the latter part of the [nineteenth] century," adding that it "may be considered in every respect a

10 David Macey, *Lacan in Contexts* (London: Verso, 1988), p. 28.

11 "Avant Propos," *Evolution Psychiatrique*, 1, no. 1 (1925).

12 Although Freud had initially come to the conclusion that his ideas had been largely rejected in France, in a footnote added to *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement* in 1923 he remarked that his translated works had now aroused keen interest, "even in France," but adds that "this is more active in literary circles than in scientific ones," Freud, *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement*, p. 37.

supreme means of expression."[13] Rather than seeing the neuroses as pathological conditions in need of treatment—as was the predominant view within the medical field—the Surrealists celebrated hysteria for shattering the psychic bond that linked the individual with external reality. Consequently, the Surrealists sought to establish a radical break between psychoanalysis, particularly the "lay" character of Freudian doctrine to which they adhered, and the ideals of the French medical community, which they regarded with suspicion as a reactionary ideology that was fundamentally at odds with their revolutionary aspirations.

There thus emerged two coexisting but contradictory modes in which Freud had entered into French thought. On the one hand, there was the medical channel, represented by the *Evolution Psychiatrique* group, which included Hesnard, Régis, Allendy, and Edouard Pichon, and then, in 1926, the orthodox Freudians, who coalesced around the Société Psychanalytique de Paris, the first Freudian psychoanalytic group in France to be sanctioned by the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA).[14] On the other hand, there was the intellectual channel, which included the Surrealists, political radicals, and other members of the French intelligentsia. While the former (at least those in the *Evolution Psychiatrique* group) were less interested in a genuine theory of the unconscious, preferring instead the established norms of the medical field, the latter posed itself in direct opposition, postulating a radical discontinuity between two integrated elements—the biological and the cultural—in Freud's thought.[15]

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13 André Breton, *Oeuvres Complètes,* vol. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, "La Pléiade," 1988), p. 949.

14 Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan & Co.: A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925-1985*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), p. 116.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 8-10.

LACAN

Jacques-Marie-Émile Lacan, born on April 13, 1901 in Paris to a Catholic family of vinegar merchants, was one of few doctors of the time—perhaps even the only one—who oscillated between the divided medical and intellectual fields. Although a number of the Surrealists, such as Louis Aragon, André Breton, Théodore Fraenkel, and Philippe Soupault, had undertaken medical studies, their entrance into intellectual life meant abandoning their medical careers.[16] Lacan, on the other hand, began to work out of a unique space between the two fields while still maintaining his ties to the medical establishment, which he joined in 1926 after specializing in psychiatry at the Hôpital Sainte-Anne in Paris. This happened to be the same year that the Société Psychanalytique de Paris was founded, although it would take Lacan another eight years to become a member. But while at the Hôpital Sainte-Anne, he became fascinated by cases involving paranoia. Influenced by the work of Gaëtan Gatian de Clérambault, Lacan published an important theoretical text in 1931, titled "Structures of Paranoid Psychoses," in which he made use of Clérambault's "dynamic" view of psychosis based on the study of underlying psychodynamic processes (a position that happened to be much closer to Freud's), as opposed to the prevailing "constitutional" view based on organicism, heredity, and degeneration.[17]

Although Lacan had adopted much of the conventional terminology used by the medical field, one of the major inspirations for his 1932 doctoral thesis, titled "Paranoid Psychosis and Its Relation to Personality," had been an article written by

16   *Ibid.*, p. 5.

17   Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 23-24.

Salvador Dalí featured in the July 1930 issue of *Surréalisme au Service de la Révolution.* The paper, titled "L'Ane pourri," focused primarily on Dalí's notion of "paranoia-criticism," which saw paranoia as much as an interpretation of reality as a creative activity rooted in the mind's logic. Combining Dalí's surrealist vision with Clérambault's dynamic psychiatry, Lacan broke with the theory of constitutionalism by formulating a dynamic theory of self-punishment paranoia.[18] Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, Lacan's thesis received a fair share of praise from a number of prominent figures in the Surrealist movement, as well as the French intelligentsia (although it was almost completely ignored by the first generation of French psychoanalysts who belonged to the Société Psychanalytique de Paris, as well as the medical establishment). In the February 1933 issue of *L'Humanité*, for example, Marxist philosopher Paul Nizan hailed the thesis for reflecting the "definite and conscious influence of dialectical materialism,"[19] and in May of that year, René Crevel praised Lacan for having made it possible to link together Marxism and psychoanalysis.[20] Thus, despite his close connections to the world of psychiatry, Lacan had become something of a heroic figure amongst the Surrealists. As Dalí himself had put it, "Because of [Lacan's thesis] we can for the first time arrive at a complete and homogenous idea of the subject, quite free of the mechanistic mire in which present-day psychiatry is stuck."[21]

However, Lacan's oscillation between the medical and intellectual fields amounted to little more than a "synthesis" of the various ideas he had encountered

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18 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

19 Paul Nizan, *L'Humanité*, February 10, 1933.

20 René Crevel, *Le Clavecin de Diderot* (Paris: Pauvert, 1966), pp. 163-164.

21 Salvador Dalí, *Le Minotaure,* vol. 1 (Paris: Skira, 1933).

and in that sense amounts to what I am calling his "pre-critical" period. Yet, perhaps by dint of this very oscillation, he opted against both fields in favor of what was perhaps both their greatest point of commonality and their greatest point of difference: Freud. So, in 1934, Lacan enlisted as a training analyst candidate in the SPP.

Although he had encountered Freud's work as early as 1923,[22] it was not until his time spent at Hôpital Sainte-Anne, particularly during the years in which he came under the influence of the Surrealist movement, that Lacan made any serious use of Freud's theories. In 1932, he had translated an article by Freud entitled "Some Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia, and Homosexuality" for the *Revue Française de Psychanalyse.*[23] This was also the year that Lacan entered into analysis with Rudolph Loewenstein, who, along with Marie Bonaparte and Raymond de Saussure, was one of the original founders of the SPP, under which the *Revue* was an official organ. Not surprisingly, both Lacan's translation and his doctoral thesis made use of Freudian terminology that conformed to the prevailing orthodoxy propagated by the IPA, to which both Loewenstein and Bonaparte, as members of the SPP, owed their allegiance.[24] Picking up on the "adaptational" current in psychoanalysis (the notion that the agency of the ego functions as the representative of "reality" in the psyche) that was being espoused by Loewenstein and which foreshadowed Anna Freud's ego psychology, Lacan argued that "[t]he therapeutic problem regarding psychosis seems to me to make a psychoanalysis of the ego more necessary than a

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22 Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 13.

23 Lacan, "De quelques mécanismes névrotiques dans la jalousie, le paranoia et l'homosexualité," *RFP* 5 (1932): pp. 391-401.

24 As Roudinesco points out, Lacan translated *Trieb* as "instinct," *Trauer* as "sorrow," and *Regung* as "tendency." See Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 32.

psychology of the unconscious…"[25]

<p style="text-align:center">PHENOMENOLOGY AND THE MIRROR STAGE</p>

At the same time as Lacan was becoming increasingly engaged with the orthodox Freudian establishment in France, a new intellectual current was sweeping across Paris. From 1933 to 1939, Alexandre Kojève delivered spellbinding lectures on Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* that much of the French intelligentsia, including Jacques Lacan, Raymond Queneau, Georges Bataille, André Breton, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, enthusiastically attended. Kojève's highly idiosyncratic reading of Hegel's master-slave dialectic, which focused on the relationship between self-consciousness and desire, drew heavily upon the wider intellectual and philosophical developments that were just beginning to reach France. These included György Lukács's attempt to reunite Marx and Hegel in *History and Class Consciousness,* as well as Alexandre Koyré's lectures on Husserl and the philosophy of science. But perhaps the most influential philosophical work at the time was Martin Heidegger's seminal text *Being and Time,* which marked a departure from the predominant orientation of phenomenology within continental philosophy, calling instead for a return to ontology through his reading of pre-Socratic thought.

These developments would have been unimaginable to the generation of French people who lived prior to the interwar years, when Germanophobia and French nationalism was pervasive. Freudian psychoanalysis, phenomenology, and Hegelian philosophy had all come to be most forcefully associated with the notion of "pan-Germanism" in the wake of the 1870 Franco-Prussian war and the First

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25 Lacan, *De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personalité* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), p.280.

World War, both of which did little to assuage nationalistic tensions between the two countries. But now, ironically, such potently "Teutonic" thought had suddenly become the most widely flourishing intellectual orientation, if not in France as a whole, then at the very least amongst the Parisian avant-garde.

The renewed French intellectual fascination with German thought, and in particular Hegel and Hegelian dialectics, made an especially important impact on the field of psychology. One psychologist in particular who helped carry out this intellectual turn was Henri Wallon, a French psychologist and Marxist familiar with the works of Freud and Hegel. His dialectical theory of psychical development contended that the human mind only comes into being as such through a series of stages, each of which is subject to periods of crisis and discontinuity. Wallon's theory proved to be a tremendous influence on Lacan's early phenomenological model of ego-formation, which drew as much on the orthodox reading of Freud that had been transmitted to him through the SPP as it did on Kojève's reading of Hegel.[26] Lacan's concept of the "mirror stage," first elaborated around the mid-1930s using a term he had borrowed from Wallon, describes the genesis of self-consciousness in the mental development of the child via the process of narcissistic identification with its bodily image. This specular double, the inchoate ego, supplies an Imaginary "wholeness," a misrepresentation of unity, to the child's experience of fragmentary reality, insofar as the child's lack of bodily coordination is perceived by the child as a fragmentation or disjointedness.

By 1936 Lacan had drafted an early version of the essay on the mirror stage

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26 Lacan and Kojève had made plans to compile a comparative interpretation of Hegel and Freud that was to focus on the "genesis of self-consciousness," the "origin of madness," and "the essence of the family," yet it never panned out. However, these three concepts went on to become recurring themes throughout Lacan's early work. Cf. Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, pp. 104-105.

theory that he was scheduled to deliver at the first IPA Congress in which he was to be in attendance. Held that same year, the congress convened on July 31 in Marienbad, Czechoslovakia. The location of the fourteenth IPA congress was chosen for its geographic proximity to Vienna, where Freud was sequestered as a result of his rapidly declining health. The congress was held at a time when Freud's theoretical revisions, which included the introduction of the second topography (ego, superego, and id), were stirring controversy within the psychoanalytic movement, particularly between his daughter, Anna Freud, and Melanie Klein, one of the leading figures of the British Psychoanalytical Society (BPS). Lacan, however, was largely unaware of the schism developing on the "international stage," so to speak, of psychoanalysis at the time. His focus was still limited to the intellectual developments in Paris, where the Freudian psychoanalytic community had formed a decade later than elsewhere.

CRITIQUE OF ASSOCIATIONISM

On August 3 of that year Lacan rose to deliver his speech, but ten minutes later Ernest Jones, the president of the IPA and one of Freud's most loyal acolytes and (later) official biographer, interrupted Lacan, preventing the full speech from being delivered.[27] But despite the personal setback for Lacan at Marienbad, the principle outcome of the trip, a short article titled "Beyond the 'Reality Principle'," proved to be an intellectually important one, marking the beginning of the early period of Lacan's work. In addition to providing a clue to his later theoretical trajectory, with regard to Lacan's focus on language, the article reflects a cross-section of his early influences. These include his clinical work at Hôpital Sainte-Anne, the

27 *Ibid.*, p. 113.

importance placed on free association by the Surrealists and their suspicion of the psychological notion of "reality," as well as the need for developing a scientific theory of ego-formation.

The focus of this short piece, according to Lacan, is to determine the core of what distinguishes Freud's meta-psychology from the psychology that preceded it. He points first of all to the need for a "critique of associationism,"[28] referring to one of the main principles of Hume's empirical psychology which Freud had a tendency to make use of when referring to the mnemic system's formation of "associative links," which carry out, for example, unconscious displacement.[29] According to Lacan, these associative links—mental phenomena based on the "experience of the living being's reactions"—smuggle in the metaphysical notion of "similarity" as *pregiven* through a conceptual sleight of hand.[30] Furthermore, in associationism psychical phenomena are categorized by intentionality, reducing all phenomena outside the operations of "rational knowledge"—including the psychical image—to epiphenomena. Against the associative reduction, Lacan contends that Freud's "revolutionary method" consisted in assigning *meaning* to seemingly *meaningless* phenomena, such as dreams, slips of the tongue, and bungled actions, in contrast with the "reality principle" which posits that the ego is capable of selectively assigning meaning to psychical phenomena by determining which of these phenomena is

28 Lacan, "Beyond the 'Reality Principle'" [1936], in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), p. 59.

29 References to associationism and "associative links" can be found throughout Freud's work. Cf. *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), p. 45: Freud writes that childhood memories "owe their retention in the mind not to their own content but to its *associative connection* with another, repressed subject, they have a good claim to be described, in the term I have adopted for them, as 'screen memories'" [my emphasis].

30 Lacan, "Beyond the 'Reality Principle'," in *Écrits*, p. 60.

closer to "reality."[31]

Following his critique of associationism and the reality principle, Lacan concludes with a "phenomenological description of psychoanalytic experience,"[32] in which he points to the unique role of language in transference:

> …[L]anguage, prior to signifying something, signifies to someone. It is simply because the analyst is there listening that the man who speaks addresses him, and since he forces his discourse not to want to say anything, he becomes what this man wants to tell him. What the man says may, in fact, "have no meaning," but what he says to the analyst conceals one anyway.[33]

For the Lacan of "Beyond the 'Reality Principle'," analysis can only take place if, first and foremost, there is an analyst who is situated as the analysand's interlocutor and that, as a result of the transferential bond that is formed between the analyst and the analysand, the analysand's discourse conceals an unconscious meaning that is drawn out through free association during analysis. According to Lacan, this is because "in [the analysand's] very reaction to the listener's refusal [to assume the role of interlocutor], the subject reveals the *image* he has replaced him with."[34] These images, formed through the process of identification, compose the "imaginary" order of the psyche which, like the ego for Lacan, undergo a process of formation and development, rather than being pregiven. Consequently, the goal of Lacan's early work—conceived as a meta-psychology and heavily influenced by phenomenology—was to understand how both the ego and external reality, as constituted by images, are formed.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 66.

33 *Ibid.*

34 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

THE FRENCH RECEPTION OF FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS was a peculiar one: not, of course, to be attributed to any ridiculous conception of "French exceptionalism," but rather due to the unlikely constellation of historical, political, and ideological factors which conditioned Freud's French reception. In particular, the split in the channels by means of which psychoanalysis entered France played a decisive role: on the one hand, there was the medical community, which haphazardly co-opted Freudian terminology and integrated it into a quite conservative and chauvinistic establishment. On the other hand, there was the intellectual community, composed of Surrealists, writers, and the emerging Parisian avant-garde as a whole, which sought to use Freudian psychoanalysis as a means of criticizing bourgeois society and furthering their revolutionary goals. It was within this milieu that Lacan, as both a psychiatrist and a prominent "fellow traveler" amongst the Surrealists, first encountered Freud.

Another unique circumstance surrounding the initial French resistance to psychoanalysis was that the emergence of "legitimate" Freudianism took place there (in the form of the SPP—the first IPA-sanctioned psychoanalytic association in France—founded in 1926) nearly a decade later than elsewhere. Because of this temporal gap, the orthodox establishment of psychoanalysis came to emerge concurrently with the introduction of German phenomenology into France, which became exceedingly popular amongst French intellectuals, many of whom, including Lacan himself, packed the lecture halls of the École Pratique des Hautes Études to listen to Kojève and Koyré speak about the philosophies of Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger—an otherwise unimaginable development given the pervasive Germanophobia in France during the interwar years.

All of these various avenues—psychiatry, orthodox Freudianism, Surrealism, Hegelianism, and phenomenology—came to play a crucial role in the early development of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Their influence can be seen in Lacan's formulation of the mirror stage theory, which presents a phenomenological model of ego-formation and the genesis of self-consciousness through the interplay between alienation and identification, as well as in his critique of associationism and Freud's "reality principle," both of which represent Lacan's attempts at distancing Freudian theory from its narrow-minded predecessor, empirical psychology. Furthermore, these two theoretical tendencies in Lacan's early work—between ego-formation and language—ought to be understood, not as distinct realms, but rather as inherently intertwined. As Fredric Jameson notes, "[T]o speak of the Imaginary independently of the Symbolic is to perpetuate the illusion that we could have a relatively pure experience of either."[35] In order for identification to function, language—recognition—must already be operative at some level, and yet without an ego, a sense of Imaginary "wholeness," one cannot designate oneself as "I," making speech as such impossible.

Although Lacan had provided a fairly complete account of his theory of the mirror stage by 1949, his thoughts on language amounted to little more than a prolegomena in desperate need of elaboration, especially given the importance Freud himself had placed on the intersubjective and phylogenetic dimensions of the unconscious. Yet this step—the step towards an elaboration of a theory of the Symbolic order of speech and language—would have been impossible for Lacan had it not been for the development of structuralism.

35 Fredric Jameson, "Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan: Marxism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, and the Problem of the Subject," *Yale French Studies* No. 55/56 (1977): p. 348.

II

THE LACANIAN TURN: TRANSPOSITION AND CRITIQUE

CONTROVERSIAL DISCUSSIONS

One of the peculiar features of Freud (and, for that matter, Lacan) was that he never stopped revising his theories. This is because Freudian theory operated primarily as a *critique* of previously existing thought—indeed, much of the content of Freud's work is dedicated to criticizing the opinions of his contemporaries.[1] This meant that, at least during his lifetime, Freud was able situate his work within a certain critical space in which the theoretical framework was constantly shifting in order to remain within the locus of criticism—often to the displeasure of his colleagues. Thus when Freud died on September 23, 1939 he left behind a huge corpus that, due to the constant revision of his theories, appeared inconsistent, even contradictory, when viewed as a coherent doctrine. This led to two interconnected dilemmas: on the one hand, a centralized bureaucracy in the form of the IPA was charged with overseeing the impossible task of translating Freud's work into a consistent body of knowledge called "Freudianism." On the other hand, these attempts led to irresolvable antinomies that divided his followers and pitted them against each other in a

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1   One could say the same of Kant's critique of metaphysics and Marx's critique of the political economy as well. And while the various thinkers they criticized have lost much of their contemporary relevance, the critiques themselves have not.

series of bitter feuds over who would become the rightful heir to Freud's legacy. In both cases, the critical space in which Freud had situated his thought was lost.

In the early 1920s, Freud carried out a controversial revision of his theories by introducing both the "death drive" and the second topography. Although these changes were met with resistance—one might say in the Freudian sense—even by Freud's most loyal followers, who attempted to play down his revisions by attributing them to personal and historical circumstances, most psychoanalysts eventually adopted them. The problem was that no one seemed to agree on their meaning, as Freud had provided a number of contradictory accounts of these concepts.[2] Starting in the mid- to late-1920s, two antithetical currents of thought began to emerge within the psychoanalytic community: one view posited the ego as the fully autonomous product of a differentiation from the id, acting as the representative of "reality" and charged with containing the drives; the other view rejected the notion of an autonomous ego and instead looked to find its genesis in identification. Consequently, while the first option meant extracting the ego from the id and making it the instrument of the individual's adaptation to "reality," the second option moved the ego closer to the id and sought to show how it developed from the unconscious.[3]

The first public eruption of these internal debates occurred in 1936 at the Marienbad congress between the supporters of Melanie Klein and those of Anna

2   As Bruce Fink points out, there are at least four accounts of the ego found in Freud's corpus: (1) the ego as a projection of the surface of the body; (2) the ego as a precipitate of former object-cathexes; (3) the ego as the representative of reality in the psyche; and (4) the ego as a part of the id that has been specially modified. Cf. Fink, *Lacan to the Letter* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), p. 41.

3   While the first view emphasizes *consciousness*, the second view emphasizes *the unconscious*. This formulation, however, is problematic in that the first topography (unconscious, consciousness, preconscious) is not directly identical to the second topography. For example, the ego overlaps with both the conscious and unconscious systems, demonstrating the necessity of viewing *both* topographies as consubstantial, rather than as one system displacing the other. Consequently, the aforementioned point serves as more of a heuristic value rather than as a precise theoretical one.

Freud. Whereas Klein appeared to emphasize the role of the unconscious, Anna Freud emphasized the role of the ego and "reality adaptation." Klein drew on Karl Abraham's work on the psychoses, particularly melancholia, where he located their origin in early infancy, as well as on Freud's new theory of the death drive. Using the revision of Freudianism that had come about in the 1920s, Klein began to study the first years of life in a child's psychological development and, as a result of her research, described the very first "object relations"—objects as images endowed with the status of fantasy—as they occurred in infancy.[4] On the other hand, Anna Freud and her "ego psychology" school (Heinz Hartman, Ernst Kris, Rudolph Loewenstein, et al.) were unwilling to accept the notion that the id could be in charge of action, perception, and thought at the outset. Instead, they argued that there exists an "undifferentiated phase during which both the id and the ego gradually are formed,"[5] that is, that the ego exists alongside the id from the outset.

No conclusion was reached at Marienbad and the disputes subsided as soon as the fourteenth congress came to an end, with Klein and her supporters returning to London and Anna Freud and her supporters to Vienna. Yet with the rise of fascism across continental Europe, many of the Viennese analysts, including Freud himself, began to leave Austria *en masse* with the intention of settling abroad in England. So after the Anschluss in 1938 and the outbreak of war in Europe the split between the British Psychoanalytical Society (BPS; allied with Klein) and the Viennese school (allied with Anna Freud) became an internal one to the BPS.[6] As a result, the ten-

4 Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 109.

5 Heinz Hartmann, Ernst Kris, and Rudolph Loewenstein, "Comments on the Formation of Psychic Structure," in *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, vol. 2 (New York: International Universities Press, 1946), p. 19.

6 Phyllis Grosskurth, *Melanie Klein: Her World and Her Work* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 133.

sions that had appeared at Marienbad quickly resurfaced in London. The disputes reached a boiling point in October 1942—three years after Freud's death—when the series of "Controversial Discussions" erupted. For four years, in the midst of war, the disputes once again pitted the Kleinians against the Anna-Freudians, threatening the unity of the international psychoanalytic movement, which now found itself confined to the BPS.[7]

At first the arguments that took place during the Controversial Discussions centered on the appraisal of Klein's theories, which Anna Freud and her followers contended had strayed too far from Freud's teaching. Yet this view was difficult to reconcile with the fact that, during his lifetime, Freud had never repudiated Klein's theories and, in fact, had hinted at his support for them on a number of occasions. However, he had stopped short of directly praising her work, perhaps feeling obliged not to upset his daughter. And now that he had died it was clearly impossible to have him clarify his opinions on the matter. Soon enough, however, the debates shifted to the training of analysts. Anna Freud's party saw the object of analysis as the "undoing of the effects of repression" and the "reduction of defense mechanisms, in order to give the ego better control over the id," writes Lacanian historian Elisabeth Roudinesco.

> Transference should not be analyzed until the defenses have been reduced. The training technique corresponded to the intersection of the second topography put forward by ego psychology, whose main contributions were linked to Anna Freud. She, Kris, Hartmann, Loewenstein, and the Viennese in general shared the same adaptative [*sic*] view of psychoanalysis…[8]

On the other hand, the Kleinians argued that treatment began with "recognition

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7   Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 191.

8   *Ibid.*, p. 193.

of the primacy of the transferential bond" and the necessity of analyzing it from the outset, "regardless of any control the ego might have over the id."[9] Because Melanie Klein and Anna Freud's interpretations of Freudian doctrine proved to be so incompatible, the only solution that the BPS could come up with was to establish two different systems of training. In June 1946 the Controversial Discussions came to an end when the BPS officially divided into three groups: group A taught the theories of Melanie Klein, group B taught those of Anna Freud, and the third group consisted of independents.

During the era of the Controversial Discussions, Lacan began to familiarize himself with the works of both Melanie Klein and Anna Freud, no doubt as a result of the importance and scale of the debates themselves. Yet his references to their work were, for the most part, sporadic and uncritical. For example, in his 1949 revision of his mirror stage theory, Lacan wrote of Anna Freud that her work has, "against a frequently expressed prejudice," situated "hysterical repression and its returns at a more archaic stage than obsessive inversion and its isolating processes,"[10] as well as "[forcefully articulated] *the function of misrecognition* that characterizes the ego in all the defensive structures."[11] A year earlier, in his paper, "Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis," Lacan makes a positive reference to Melanie Klein's theory of "bad internal objects"[12] writing that

> Through Klein we have become aware of the function of the imaginary primordial enclosure formed by the imago of the mother's body…[T]hrough her we have the mapping, drawn by children's own hands,

9   *Ibid.*

10   Lacan, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" [1949], in *Écrits*, p. 79.

11   *Ibid.*, p. 80.

12   Lacan, "Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis" [1948], in *Écrits*, p. 89.

of the mother's inner empire, and the historical atlas of the internal divisions in which the imagos of the father and siblings—whether real or virtual—and the subject's own voracious aggression dispute their deleterious hold over her sacred regions.[13]

In both instances, Lacan praises various aspects of Klein's and Anna Freud's work, particularly that which he found useful to his own project, which for now was still limited to the construction of a theory of the Imaginary order, with the mirror stage as its paradigm. Accordingly, Lacan made only limited use of their work by integrating various aspects of each into his pre-existing theoretical framework.

Nevertheless, Lacan's familiarization with the works of Klein and Anna Freud during this period signals the beginning of an important shift in his work, a shift that anticipates his "epistemological break" in 1952: the shift towards structuralism. But despite his increasing focus on the psychoanalytic theories and techniques being discussed and practiced in the IPA, Lacan never renounced the importance of the French thinkers who inspired his work. Instead, he oscillated between the "international" debates within the psychoanalytic community and the French intellectual currents, neither of which he was ever wholly a part of (to the extent that he was looked on with suspicion by both groups). This is why it would be impossible to conceive of Lacan's critiques of Melanie Klein and Anna Freud apart from the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss.

THE LINGUISTIC TURN

Born in Brussels in 1908, Lévi-Strauss grew up in Paris and later attended the Sorbonne, where he studied law and philosophy. After receiving his degree, he

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.

chose to go abroad instead of continuing his studies in France, but, curiously, not in the official capacity of an anthropologist. From 1935 to 1939 Lévi-Strauss lived in Brazil, where his informal ethnographic fieldwork took the shape of a genuine "philosophical inquiry" not unlike that of Descartes's, a philosopher whose travels also played a decisive role in the development of his work. Through his studies of the various Brazilian tribes he lived with, Lévi-Strauss came to deduce the principle of "structure" by acknowledging the existence of universal "reason" within the various myths and marriage systems he encountered.[14] By starting from the formal operation of "transcendentally reducing"[15] the empirical consciousness of both the observer and the observed, Lévi-Strauss's methodology contributed to an intellectual revolution—the advent of structuralism—which, like mathematics, is achieved only when the formal sets of elements and relations can be extracted by excluding all positive content.[16]

Before the publication in 1949 of Lévi-Strauss's *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, which sought to definitively answer the question of incest-prohibition through the structuralist approach, the cultural anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski had travelled to the South Pacific to live amongst the Trobriand Islanders. After four years of study, Malinowski returned from the South Seas and set out to overhaul Freud's work, focusing in particular on the role of the Oedipus complex in psychoanalytic theory. Freud had argued that the Oedipus complex and its triangular structure were a "natural" universal, deriving their effectiveness from the incest taboo as

14 Karatani, *Transcritique*, pp. 84-85.

15 *See* Husserl notion of "eidetic reduction," in which the determinations of empirical self-evidence are "bracketed" through the process of doubt that problematizes those given beings, with the transcendental ego of self-reflection implied as a result.

16 Karatani, *Transcritique*, p. 86.

the necessary condition of all culture. In order to substantiate this view, Freud drew upon the Darwinian myth of the primordial horde, arguing in *Totem and Taboo* that the origin of culture was founded on an act of patricide. However, based on his research of the Trobriand Islanders, whose social structure, he had observed, was of a matrilineal type in which the role of the father in procreation came to be ignored, Malinowski questioned the universality of the Oedipus complex and the validity of Freud's "totemic myth," arguing instead that the formation of the Oedipus complex was dependent on the family structure typical of the society in question.[17] His findings led to a controversial debate within the psychoanalytic community regarding the status of anthropological research, although the debate never reached France or the SPP. While the orthodox Freudians continued to assert the validity of a universal Oedipus complex using new fieldwork conducted by Geza Roheim, which contradicted Malinowski's reports, the culturalists argued that the incest taboo did not arise from a universally recognized principle due to the diversity of social structures in which the elementary matrix of the Oedipus complex did not exist.[18]

But in 1949 Lévi-Strauss's work shed new light on the question of incest prohibition in a way that completely shifted the terms of the debate. Instead of arguing that there is a "natural" or *a priori* fear of incest or pointing to the nominalist reduction of the incest taboo as a product of cultural diversity, Lévi-Strauss claimed that the prohibition of incest provided the very *transition* from nature to culture. "The prohibition of incest is in origin neither purely cultural nor purely natural," he wrote.

Nor is it a composite mixture of elements from both nature and cul-

17 Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 207.

18 *Ibid.*

ture. It is the fundamental step because of which, by which, but above all in which, the transition from nature to culture is accomplished. In one sense, it belongs to nature, for it is a general condition of culture. Consequently, we should not be surprised that its formal characteristic, universality, has been taken from nature.[19]

If the prohibition of incest is neither purely cultural nor purely natural for Lévi-Strauss, this is because it is located in the (transcendental) gap between both "orders," the limit point at which they become irreducible to one another. Consequently, by "bracketing" nature and treating the systems of marriage exchange and kinship as "reasonable," Lévi-Strauss uncovered the formal structure of social organization independent of empirical consciousness. In doing so, he seemingly validated Freud's claim regarding the universal status of the Oedipus complex, to the extent that it was derived, not from a phylogenetic origin as in orthodox Freudianism, but instead from the existence of a symbolic function understood as the Law governing the (unconscious) organization of the social structure, such as in marriage exchange and kinship ties.

But Lévi-Strauss was also highly critical of Freudian psychoanalysis. He compared psychoanalytic treatment to shamanism and argued that its function was primarily mythological, acting as a system of collective interpretation in Western societies:

> A considerable danger thus arises: the treatment (unbeknown to the therapist, naturally), far from leading to the resolution of a specific disturbance within its own context, is reduced to the reorganization of the patient's universe in terms of psychoanalytic interpretations.[20]

If a cure is arrived at through psychoanalysis, then its efficacy is predominantly *sym-*

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19 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James H. Bell (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), p. 24.

20 Lévi-Strauss, "The Sorcerer and His Magic," in *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 183.

bolic because of the structural reorganization brought about by the collective adoption of the myth. Hence, in his *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss,* Lévi-Strauss defends Mauss's characterization of the unconscious as "collective," in contrast to its mythical Jungian association, by conceiving of it as a purely formal (empty) place in which the symbolic function achieves autonomy.[21] "Like language," he wrote, "the social *is* an autonomous reality (the same one, moreover); symbols are more real than what they symbolize, the signifier precedes and determines the signified."[22]

Since "Beyond the 'Reality Principle'," Lacan had taken an interest in speech and language, but, prior to the work of Lévi-Strauss, lacked an adequate theory to understand its relationship to psychoanalysis. Thus he came to view language principally through the lens of phenomenology and intersubjectivity. Describing the influence that Lévi-Strauss's work had on his own, Lacan wrote:

> If I wanted to describe how I've been helped and supported by Lévi-Strauss's thinking, I'd say it resides in the stress he has laid…on what I shall call the function of the signifier (in the sense that the word has in linguistics), inasmuch as this signifier, I'd say, not only is distinguishable by its own laws but also prevails over the signified on which it imposes them.[23]

Although he had been introduced to Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* years earlier, it was through Lévi-Strauss that Lacan was initiated into Saussure's system, the principles of structural linguistics, and, perhaps most importantly, the dichotomy between the signifier and the signified. Thus, in order to understand Lacan's linguistic turn, one must first grasp the basics of Saussurean linguistics.

For Saussure, language is a social system governed by difference. "In lan-

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21 Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan,* p. 211.

22 Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* (New York: Routledge, 1987), p. 37.

23 Lacan, "Sur Les Rapports entre le mythologie et le rituel," in *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* 3 (1956): p. 114.

guage," he wrote, "there are only differences, and *without positive terms*."[24] Saussure's emphasis on "differences" was made not only in reference to *within* a single relational system, but also *without*—to the existence of "the other," that is, different systems of languages.[25] It may be said, then, that Saussure's structural linguistics functioned as a (Kantian) critique of two opposing tendencies in the field: on the one hand, Wilhelm von Humboldt's theory of language considered as a self-contained and internally coherent *Volksgeist*, and, on the other hand, historical linguistics, which observed the transformation of language over time as a natural and scientific development independent of consciousness. Accordingly, Saussure's unique approach was to *reject* the internal consistency of language against the former, while simultaneously to *affirm* it as an enclosed synchronic system against the latter.[26] In doing so, Saussure came to extract a theory of language *qua* relational structure broken down into its constituent differential elements—the sign—as the product of the "synthesis" between the signifier (the sensible) and the signified (the suprasensible).

TRANSPOSITION

When Louis Althusser argued that Marx had been fundamentally misunderstood, his contention was that the errors of the various interpretations resulted from the mistaken view that Marx's body of work could be understood as a coherent whole. Instead, Althusser, drawing on Gaston Bachelard, held that it contains a radical "break"—a shift to a fundamentally different problematic, i.e., a different

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24 Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), p. 120.

25 Karatani, *Transcritique*, p. 79.

26 *Ibid.*

theoretical framework, set of questions posed, and central propositions.[27] The same happens to be true for Lacan (and, as I affirmed earlier, for Freud as well), whose works are marked by not just *one*, but by a *multitude*, of incessant shifts in theoretical perspective.[28] With respect to this fundamental thesis, Jacques-Alain Miller writes:

> In the *Écrits*, Lacan provides a clue as to his intellectual trajectory in saying that he considers that his work, the work associated with his name, began in 1952: what came before counted in his mind as his "antecedents." He doesn't thereby cancel out what came before, but stresses a cut in his own intellectual development that occurred around 1952-1953. The starting point of his teaching was "Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," a paper written for a 1953 conference in Rome.[29]

From roughly 1936 to 1949 Lacan's theoretical focus had been chiefly oriented around the Imaginary order (the mirror stage) and phenomenology. But starting in 1952/53 with the publication of "Function and Field," Lacan—not unlike Marx in 1848—began to pose an entirely new set of questions. After his encounter with the works of Lévi-Strauss and, through him, those of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson, Lacan broke with his earlier work by shifting his focus from the Imaginary to the Symbolic order—that is, towards an elaboration of a theory of the signifier and its determining role in the unconscious *qua* symbolic structure.

But Lacan's "epistemological break" (his transcendental turn) cannot simply be attributed to his oscillation between the competing versions of psychoanalytic theory practiced in the IPA and French social theory. This would not have provoked

27 Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: Verso, 1998), pp. 25-28.

28 Jacques-Alain Miller periodicizes Lacan in the following manner: there is the Lacan of the Imaginary (1930s—1940s), of the Symbolic (1950s—mid-1960s), and of the Real (mid-1960s—late-1970s). These three "epistemological breaks" coincide with each of the three rings of the "Borromean Knot," meaning that each moment is mutually reinforcing, as opposed to a series of *Aufhebung*s.

29 Miller, "An Introduction to Seminars I and II: Lacan's Orientation Prior to 1953 (I)," in *Reading Seminars I and II: Lacan's Return to Freud*, ed. Bruce Fink, et al. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996), p. 4.

a radical break with his earlier work, which was already defined by such a split. To understand how such a break could occur, one should look again at Marx, whose critical work is defined by his constant "transposition." Take for example his critique of "German ideology" after his migration to France, his critique of French "utopian socialism" after his migration to England, and finally his critique of English political economy after his exile from Germany in 1848. And while Lacan remained in France throughout most of his life,[30] each new stage in his career was marked by a moment of institutional crisis. Such a crisis occurred on June 16, 1953 when Lacan, along with a number of other French psychoanalysts, resigned from the SPP over the increasingly authoritarian rules governing the training of analysts. Consequently, the exiled group of former SPP analysts decided to form the Société Française de Psychanalyse (SFP), but in abandoning the SPP they unknowingly ceased to remain members of the IPA.[31]

On July 8, Lacan inaugurated the new society with a lecture, "The Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real," which began a new phase of his thought marked by the influence of structuralism. And it was in "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," originally delivered as a speech at the Rome Congress in September 1953, that Lacan for the first time drew on Saussure's distinction between the signifier and the signified when he proposed that "the subject's unconscious is the other's discourse,"[32] by which he meant the linguistic or symbolic

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30 From 1953 until 1964 (another year of institutional crisis), Lacan's seminars took place at the Hôpital Sainte-Anne, where his psychiatric career had begun in 1926. This refusal to move is strikingly similar to Kant's self-imposed exile in Königsberg, which can be read as its own kind of transposition.

31 Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, pp. 201-202.

32 Lacan, "Function and the Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis" [1953], in *Écrits*, p. 219.

"other." This distinction allowed Lacan a radical reinterpretation of Freud's theory of the unconscious:

> 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 rebus—that is, of a form of writing... 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.[33]

From Lacan's perspective, Freud's work provided, in great detail, an analysis of the various ways in which the unconscious is "structured like a language," yet Freud himself was unaware of this as he had lacked a coherent theory of language and, as a result, his discovery remained inchoate. Accordingly, Lacan remarks that "[t]o ignore the symbolic order is to condemn Freud's discovery to forgetting and analytic experience to ruin."[34] This is because, according to Lacan, unconscious meaning, or "signification," is a function of signifiers.[35] Thus, in "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud" [1957], Lacan, borrowing from Roman Jakobson's phonemic theory, reinterprets Freud's concepts of "condensation" and "displacement" as two fundamental combinations of signifiers: metaphor and metonymy.

With the introduction of the Symbolic order into his architectonic,[36] Lacan came to formulate for the first time the triadic structure of the Real, the Symbolic,

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33 *Ibid.*, p. 221.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 227.

35 For Lacan, signifiers, which compose the symbolic order and which are discernable in the analysis of dreams, jokes, and slips of the tongue, are not limited to just words, since any object in the human sphere is marked by language and thus functions as a signifying element.

36 Following Lorenzo Chiesa, I have tried to show how the Symbolic order is composed of three distinct components: (1) language as a structure (as in structural linguistics); (2) the symbolic order as the legal fabric of human culture (as in Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology); and (3) the Freudian unconscious as reformulated by Lacan. Cf. Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), p. 35.

and the Imaginary.[37] If there is any meaning to Lacan's repeated exhortation for a "return to Freud" beyond simply the return to reading Freud, it lies in the fact that Lacan sought to recover the transcendental core of Freud's discovery: his attempt to grasp *through language* what exists in the gap between the unconscious and consciousness. As Freud himself had argued in *Moses and Monotheism* [1939]:

> Thought-processes, and what may be analogous to them in the Id, are unconscious *per se* and obtain their entry into consciousness by their connection, via the function of speech, with memory traces of perceptions through touch and ear.[38]

Thus Lacan, like Freud, came to extract a theory of the unconscious *qua* transcendental structure: transcendental because the Lacanian categories of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary—like Freud's ego, superego, and id—are not things that exist in empirical reality, but are figures about which we can only say that they exist. They are a nothing that exists only as a certain *function*.[39] But Lacan's transcendental stance could not have appeared if it had not been for his encounter with the "pronounced parallax" between the theories of Melanie Klein and Anna Freud. In Lacan's work, this parallax came to take the form of an "antinomy," the device to reveal both thesis and antithesis as an illusion.

CRITIQUE

Although "Function and Field" contains no direct references to either Anna

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37 Lacan, "Function and Field," in *Écrits*, p. 204.

38 Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Vintage Books, 1967) p. 124.

39 Karatani argues that Lacan's R.S.I. schema and Kant's architectonic of the cognitive faculties are isomorphic: the Lacanian Imaginary/Kantian illusion, the Symbolic/the Kantian form, and the Real/the thing-in-itself. Karatani performs a similar operation with respect to Freud's second topography, reading it as id/sensibility, ego/understanding, and superego/reason. Cf. Karatani, *Transcritique*, pp. 32-33.

Freud or Melanie Klein, the same is not true for Seminar I, *Freud's Papers on Technique.*[40] "The seminar could be said to be an application of 'Function and Field' to psychoanalytic technique or practice," writes Miller. "In some sense it answers the question, 'what psychoanalytic technique can be deduced from the thesis: the unconscious is structured like a language?' If we admit that the unconscious is so structured, how can we practice psychoanalysis?"[41] But while it is true that the seminar and the écrits ought to be read together, Lacan provided another clue as to how to read Seminars I and II in his introduction to Seminar I—a clue that Miller overlooks:

> Those who find themselves in a position to follow Freud are confront-
> ed with the question as to how the paths we inherit were adopted,
> reapprehended, and rethought through. So, we cannot do anything
> else but gather together what we will contribute to it under the head-
> ing of a *critique*, a critique of analytic technique.[42]

As Lacan argues, Seminar I ought to be read above all as a critique: more specifically, as a critique of Melanie Klein and Anna Freud and their respective analytic techniques. Thus, in the chapter "Discourse Analysis and Ego Analysis: Anna Freud or Melanie Klein," Lacan poses the two against each other through a restatement of the basic antinomy: that the ego is, on the one hand, conceived as an autonomous function (Anna Freud), while, on the other hand, it is also understood as the seat of illusion and error (Klein). Before going further in the analysis, however, Klein's and Anna Freud's opposing techniques require further explication.

First, Anna Freud's technique is based on the analysis of the ego's resistance

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40 A peculiar feature of Lacan's work is that, like the Lacanian subject itself, it is divided between speech (the seminars) on the one hand and language (the écrits) on the other.

41 Miller, *Reading Seminars I and II*, p. 4.

42 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-1954*, trans. John Forrester (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), pp. 15-16.

and defenses during transference. Accordingly, ego psychology starts from the standpoint of the analysand's empirical consciousness by bracketing the unconscious, insofar as it is unobservable outside of the Imaginary dual relation (the analyst's and analysand's egos). Describing Anna Freud's technique in greater detail, Lacan remarks:

> Anna Freud's point of view is intellectualist, and leads her into putting forward the view that everything in analysis must be conducted from a median, moderate position, which would be that of the ego. For her everything starts with the education or the persuasion of the ego, and everything must come back to that.[43]

For Anna Freud analysis begins and ends with the ego: its resistances, its defenses, and its effects. Ego psychology therefore seeks to dispel the ego of its illusions by forcing it to adapt to the "reality" of the analyst's ego. Lacan later criticizes this position by disparagingly referring to it as the "servicing of goods," since it substitutes one good (the analyst's) for the analysand's. But his overarching critique of Anna Freud in Seminar I, derived in part from his theory of the mirror stage, is that she and the ego psychologists overlook the fact that, by its very nature and function, *the ego is nothing other than misrecognition: its basic function is to misrecognize.*[44]

On the other hand, Melanie Klein's technique begins from the "diametrically opposite starting point."[45] By bracketing the ego (something that she, as Lacan points out, does not even bother to theorize) Klein begins with an *a priori* analysis of the unconscious: she "accepts [the unconscious] from the start, out of habit."[46] In other words, Kleinian analysis, in bypassing the ego's defenses and resistances, im-

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43 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

44 *Ibid.*, p. 194.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

46 *Ibid.*, pp. 82-85.

mediately begins with a "deep" analysis of the analysand's unconscious, as in the case of her analysis of a four-year-old schizophrenic boy named Dick in "The Importance of Symbol-Formation in the Formation of the Ego."[47] As a result, Klein overlooks the structural necessity (and therefore the necessary analysis) of resistance during transference, which Lacan argues (in Seminar II) is "linked to the register of the ego" and is "an effect of the ego," yet irreducibly expresses an unconscious desire.[48] Furthermore, Klein—no doubt as a result of her overlooking the very *structure* of the transference—is led to theorize the unconscious (for her, the realm of phantasy constituted through identification) entirely within the register of the Imaginary.

What Lacan's critique reveals is that the seemingly irreconcilable opposition between Melanie Klein and Anna Freud serves instead to obfuscate their disavowed proximity, insofar as both of their techniques, whether they emphasize the unconscious (Klein) or of the ego (Anna Freud), are limited to the Imaginary order. Hence the significance Lacan attributes to the Symbolic in analytic technique. Lacan's position is that, if nothing else, our thought is always bound by language. In Kantian terms, this is the "transcendental standpoint" towards language,[49] which Fredric Jameson elucidates in his analysis of the Lacanian categories of the Imaginary and the Symbolic:

> What is so often problematical about psychoanalytic criticism is therefore not its insistence on the subterranean relationships between the literary text on the one hand and the "obsessive metaphor" or the distant and inaccessible childhood or unconscious fascination on the other: it is rather the absence of any reflection on the transformational process whereby such private materials become public—a transfor-

47   *Ibid.*

48   Lacan, *The Seminar, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-55*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991) p. 228.

49   Karatani, *Transcritique*, p. 82.

mation which is often, to be sure, so undramatic and inconspicuous as the very act of speech itself.[50]

The transcendental position, overlooked by both Melanie Klein and Anna Freud, is that the structure of the unconscious can only be grasped in the *gap* between our unconscious thoughts (Klein) and our everyday consciousness (Anna Freud): in other words, the fields of speech and language, the locus of the signifier. And it is only through language that desire, according to Lacan, is constituted (one of his most oft-repeated dictums is, "man's desire is the desire of the Other,"[51] by which he refers to the field of language).

In that sense, just as Kant, by way of his critique of pure reason, came to extract symbolic-form through transcendental reflection (and, for that matter, *mutatis mutandis* for Marx and the concept of value-form),[52] Lacan—following Freud's focus on the unconscious *Wunsch*—came to extract *the form of desire* as the basis upon which psychoanalytic technique is premised. But what is crucial about this is that the transcendental standpoint inevitably accompanies a certain kind of subjectivity, one that goes beyond the illusion of a substantial ego. However, in order to grasp why this is the case, one must proceed by way of a detour back through linguistics.

APPERCEPTION AND ETHICS

As put forward earlier, for Saussure a word is the product of the "synthesis"

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50 Jameson, "Imaginary and Symbolic," *Yale French Studies* No. 55/56 (1977): p. 339.

51 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), p. 235.

52 Karatani, *Transcritique*, p. 195. One interesting point of comparison between Marx and Lacan here is the isomorphism between transference and the process of exchange: in the latter, the confrontation between buyer and seller generates value; in the former, the Other's desire is established in the confrontation between analyst and analysand.

between the signifier and the signified. But this presupposes a subject who is capable of such a synthesis—in Lacanian terms, the opposition between the subject of the statement (analytic judgment) and the subject of the enunciation (synthetic judgment). In this way, both Saussurean linguistics and structuralism take as their premise what Kant called "transcendental apperception X," i.e., the spontaneous "I think" that must accompany all of one's representations through the "synthesis" of the structure.[53] Like the Cartesian *cogito*, it is a nothingness that constitutes the structure of the system. Thus, when Roman Jakobson expanded upon Saussure's structural linguistics through his elaboration of phoneme theory, he was forced to introduce the "zero phoneme," derived from the mathematical unit *e*, as a restatement of transcendental subjectivity in order to complete his phonemic system.[54] And the same is true for Lacan who, like Husserl, begins with a clear distinction between two egos: on the one hand, the Imaginary ego as empirical consciousness; on the other hand, the Symbolic (phenomenological) "I" of the subject's discourse, which "transcendentally reduces" the Imaginary ego through the unveiling of the unconscious *qua* symbolic structure. But crucial here is the (third) subject that emerges as a result of the transcendental reduction—the barred subject [$\cancel{S}$]—the subject of enunciation *qua* synthetic judgment. As Bruce Fink argues in *The Lacanian Subject*:

> The subject is split between ego and unconscious, between conscious and unconscious… [But *t*]*he subject is nothing but this very split*… [The barred subject] consists entirely in the fact that a speaking being's two "parts" or avatars share no common ground: they are radically separated.[55]

53 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

54 *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

55 Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 45. It is worth noting a peculiar fact that both Freud and Husserl use the term "Splitting of the Ego" (*Ich-Spaltung*). But only in Lacanian theory does the connection between their two

But importantly, Lacan does not start out from the position of a "split" or "barred" subject. As Lorenzo Chiesa points out, there is a shift in Lacan's thought between "The Freudian Thing, or the Return to Freud in Psychoanalysis" [1955] and Seminar VII [1959-1960], *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis.*[56] While Lacan had previously identified the unconscious as fully reducible to the signifier, by the time of Seminar VII, Lacan reconceives the subject as an empty place identical to transcendental apperception (subjectivity), which "bundles" together the functions of the transcendental structure (Lacan's R.S.I. schema).

A similar "split" can be discerned at the level of analytic technique. Psychoanalysis is premised on the analyst/analysand relationship. But this relationship is not a hierarchical one: although the analyst occupies the "teaching" position, it is subordinated to the analysand's demand for understanding.[57] Accordingly, there is no "harmonious" relationship, no rapport, between the two: in transference, rather, there is a certain "drive" towards misrecognition. The analyst/analysand relationship—like all communication—is therefore constitutively asymmetrical. The problematic "synthesis" between the radically split "sensibility" and "understanding" in analytic technique (between analysand/analyst) thus entails what Kant called "*a priori* synthetic judgment." For Lacan, analysis ends when the analysand carries out an "act"—a *salto mortale*—that "traverses the fantasy,"[58] the moment when the analy-

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uses become clear. Cf. Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology,* trans. Dorion Cairns (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1960), p. 35 and Sigmund Freud, "Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defense," S.E. XXIII (1938).

56 Lorenzo Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness,* p. 5.

57 Karatani, *Transcritique,* p. 72.

58 The model that Lacan uses to depict "traversing the fantasy," introduced in Seminar XII [1964-1965], is the Möbius strip. This model provides both a *spatial* and *temporal* structure of analysis: in it oppositions (such as analyst/analysand) are seen as part of a continuous movement.

sand understands that fantasy functions to screen the inconsistency or lack in "the Other."[59] But the question of how one, in general, *ought to act* is above all an ethical question—and it is a question that Lacan never stopped thinking about.

In Seminar XI Lacan argued that "[t]he status of the unconscious…is ethical."[60] But his interest in ethics can arguably be seen as early as 1955, as seen in "The Freudian Thing" where Lacan interprets Freud's enigmatic statement, "*Wo es war, soll ich werden,*" as an ethical injunction: not "the ego should conquer the id," as the ego psychologists had translated it, but "Where it was itself, it is my *duty* that I come into being."[61] According to Lacan, the ethics of psychoanalysis lie neither in the "service of goods" (eudemonism/utilitarianism) nor in pronouncing judgment on the "Sovereign Good" (metaphysics). So whereas Anna Freud's ego psychology espouses a normative ethics of "reality adaptation" (the former) and Melanie Klein's technique aims at elevating the mother's body to the sublime status of "the Thing" (the latter),[62] Lacanian technique forces the analysand to approach the site of an unbearable, unconscious truth that is "beyond the pleasure principle" by confronting them with the elementary deadlocks of their desire. Thus, "[i]nsofar as Freud's position constitutes progress here, the question of ethics is to be articulated from the point of view of the location of man in relation to the Real."[63]

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59 Cf. Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989).

60 Lacan, *Seminar XI*, p. 33.

61 Lacan, "The Freudian Thing, or the Meaning of the Return to Freud in Psychoanalysis" [1955], in *Écrits*, pp. 347-348.

62 This is a reversal of Julia Kristeva's claim that the Lacanian signifier, read as the *eidos*, belongs to the field of metaphysics. Rather, the signifier belongs to the transcendental field, whereas Kleinian phantasy, insofar as it relies on the central presupposition of the Good/Bad dichotomy vis-à-vis the primordial lost object, is metaphysical. Cf. Kristeva, *Melanie Klein*, trans. Ross Guberman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), p. 140.

63 Lacan, *Seminar VII*, p. 11.

For Lacan, then, ethics necessarily entails an encounter with the problematic of "the other": in other words, the Real, the Kantian "thing-in-itself." For both Kant and Lacan, there is a certain "non-ethical" kernel within ethics itself that appears as a "rupture" or discontinuity—one that is experienced *as impossible.*[64] Ethics only comes into play when the encounter with the Real forces upon us the question: "Have you acted in conformity with the desire which inhabits you?,"[65] in a clear affinity to Kant's proposition, "act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a universal law of nature."[66] This is because, for Lacan, desire aims at what is impossible, what he refers to in Seminar VII as *das Ding.*[67] And, as Alenka Zupančič notes, analysis unfolds in the register of desire, which gives support to the "fundamental fantasy" that the subject must "traverse" *in order to become a subject as such.*[68] Accordingly, the transcendental position, which began with the "pronounced parallax" between the position of the subject and the position of the Other, inexorably entails the problematic of alterity: the alterity of the Other—the Lacanian Real. In this sense, the transcendental attitude is always already ethical.

Both Freud and Lacan have been traditionally misunderstood as having proposed a set of positive doctrines, methodologies, and clinical practices situ-

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64 Alenka Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real: Kant and Lacan* (London: Verso, 2000), pp. 234-235.

65 Lacan, *Seminar VII*, p. 314.

66 Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals,* trans. and ed. Mary Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 31, 4:421.

67 By 1963, Lacan reformulated his notion of the Real by replacing "das Ding" with the notion of the *objet petit a,* which can be read as homologous to Kant's "transcendental object = X." Cf. Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993).

68 Zupančič, *Ethics of the Real,* p. 239.

ated within a coherent school of thought.[69] This view, however, overlooks the fact that, as I have argued above, their work exists primarily as a *critique* of previously existing thought. As critiques, both are marked, if only "latently" in the Freudian sense, by what Louis Althusser called "epistemological break": a shift to a fundamentally different theoretical framework and central set of questions posed. Thus the various attempts at "synthesizing" the totality of their work into systems have only resulted in dogmatism—and thus the loss of the critical space proper in which they had situated themselves.

Arguably the most famous (non-"heretical") split within Freudian psychoanalysis was that between Melanie Klein and Anna Freud during the era of the Controversial Discussions. Both thinkers claimed legitimacy to Freud's work, yet, in placing contrasting emphasis on two of Freud's topographies (Klein relied more heavily on the first topography, while Anna Freud relied on the second), were radically opposed and ultimately irreconcilable. It was amidst this crisis that Lacanian psychoanalysis, as a critique of these two dominant positions, came into existence. At the level of form, the same happens to be true for Kant as well: the *transcendental* position only emerged out of what Kant referred to as the "pronounced parallax" between, on the one hand, Leibnizian/Wolffian rationalism, and on the other hand, Humean skepticism.[70] Thus in "Dreams of a Visionary Explained by Dreams of Metaphysics" [1766], written more than a decade before the *Critique of Pure Rea-*

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69 In Freud's case, the disparate paths travelled by his followers were united by their mutual aim of constructing an edifice known as "Freudianism" out of his work: for example, a theory of self (ego psychology), a theory of objects (object relations), a theory of collectivity (mass psychology), and even a theory of aesthetics (applied psychoanalysis).

70 As Karatani demonstrates in *Transcritique*, the same holds true for Marx's critique of the political economy, which functioned as a critique of both the Ricardian and neoclassical schools by way of demonstrating how their opposition was inherent to the process of circulation itself.

son, Kant wrote:

> Formerly I viewed human common sense only from the standpoint of my own; now I put myself into the position of another's reason outside myself, and observe my judgments, together with their most secret causes, from the point of view of others. It is true that the comparison of both observations results in pronounced parallax, but it is the only means of preventing the optical delusion, and of putting the concept of the power of knowledge in human nature into its true place.[71]

As Kojin Karatani argues, Kant is not simply reiterating the commonplace regarding seeing oneself from another's perspective. The "parallax gap," rather, undermines the internal consistency both of one's own subjective position *as well as another's.* It thus involves an encounter with the radical alterity of "the other." This can be grasped by way of Kant's first critique: out of the parallax between empiricism and rationalism, Kant realized that he was not dealing merely with two opposed schools of thought, but rather with two fundamental faculties of human reason itself.[72] Thus with Kant "parallax" came to take the form of antinomy, the inscription of the "alterity of the other" by means of which the *limits* of human reason come to be established *through reason's self-scrutiny.*

A similar gesture is inherent to both Freud and Lacan. Just as Freudian psychoanalysis is as different from empirical psychology as it is from Jung's "collective unconscious," Lacanian psychoanalysis is just as much a critique of Anna Freud's ego psychology as it is a critique of Kleinian psychoanalysis. Against the former, Lacan rejected the notion that the unconscious is limited to the domain of the ego's Imaginary resistances and defenses, while simultaneously he affirmed the importance of the ego's resistances in analysis against the latter. Both positions, however,

71 Kant, "Dreams of a Visionary Explained by Dreams of Metaphysics," in *The Philosophy of Kant* (New York: Modern Library, 1994), p. 15.

72 Karatani, *Transcritique,* p. 47.

were united in that they overlooked the constitutive dimension of the unconscious: the domain of language. Thus by means of his (trans)critique, as well as his introduction to structuralism (Saussure, Jakobson, and Lévi-Strauss), Lacan rediscovered the radical core of Freudian psychoanalysis: not the notion that the unconscious determines much of human behavior, but rather Freud's attempt to grasp the gap between the unconscious and consciousness through the form of language.[73] In doing so, Lacan came to extract the form of desire as the transcendental basis upon which psychoanalysis is founded.

At the same time, Lacan's transcritical position, like that of Kant's, necessarily led him towards the question of ethics. This is because the domain of ethics is intimately bound up with the universality of analytic technique, the subject of his critique in Seminars I and II. Yet Lacan's 1953 structuralist turn, brought about by his transposition in the form of an institutional crisis within the SPP, led him to conclude—like a number of other structuralists—that the problematic of subjectivity had been resolved through the elaboration of the structure as wholly determinative. It was not until a decade later that Lacan, after being "excommunicated" from the SFP, began a return to the subject of the unconscious: in other words, the Cartesian subject.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

III

TRANSCRITICAL ENCOUNTERS IN THE HUMAN SCIENCES

A LETTER ALWAYS ARRIVES AT ITS DESTINATION

In 1955, around the same time that he began his structuralist turn, Lacan gave a brief presentation on Edgar Allen Poe's famous short story "The Purloined Letter," the third of three detective stories featuring the fictional C. Auguste Dupin, an amateur Parisian detective and something of a Sherlock Holmes *avant la lettre*. In Poe's story, Dupin is contracted by the Prefect of the Police to track down a stolen letter, which is being used for political blackmail. The police launch a series of investigations using logical methods based on both past experience and established systems of thought, but are in the end unsuccessful at finding the letter because, as Dupin discovers by means of self-reflection ("It is merely," says the unnamed narrator to Dupin, "an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent"[1]), the culprit was an especially clever man who, taking into account the elaborate techniques used by the police, knew to hide the letter in plain sight.

Lacan's exegesis of Poe's text can (and should) be read as an application of his early structuralist theory of the unconscious, principally expounded in his écrits

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[1] Edgar Allen Poe, "The Purloined Letter," in *The Purloined Poe*, edited by John P. Muller and William J. Richardson (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 15.

"On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis" [1957]. Accordingly, Lacan came to interpret the purloined letter as a "pure signifier," a signifier without a signified, that symbolically overdetermines the various subjects (of the story) who are situated within the signifying chain (i.e., those who receive and are intended to receive the letter). But more importantly, "The Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" was one of Lacan's first forays into the field of literary criticism, using fiction as a means of demonstrating his thesis that "the unconscious is structured like a language."

Yet Lacan's interpretation of "The Purloined Letter" was not without its critics, perhaps the most famous of whom was Jacques Derrida. In "The Purveyor of Truth" [1975] Derrida argued that Lacan had systematically misread Poe's text and simultaneously accused him of "phallogocentrism." According to Derrida, Lacan elevates the "lack" of the purloined letter's "meaning" (its signification) into the meaning itself—into the letter's truth. Lacan thereby privileges the "presence" of the phallus as that which anchors this lack vis-à-vis the "truth of castration," over the play of signifiers. This is taken to be evident in Lacan's aphoristic and seemingly teleological conclusion to his seminar: that "a letter always arrives at its destination."[2] For Derrida, on the other hand, a letter can also *not* arrive at its destination. As he explains:

> Its "materiality" and "topology" are due to its divisibility, its always possible partition. It can always be fragmented without return, and the system of the symbolic, of castration, of the signifier, of the truth, of the contrast, etc., always attempt to protect the letter from this fragmentation… Not that the letter never arrives at its destination, but that it belongs to the structure of the letter to be capable, always, of

2   Lacan, "The Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" [1956], in *Écrits*, p. 30.

not arriving.[3]

To paraphrase Barbara Johnson's analysis, Derrida seems to pose himself against Lacan as the unsystemizable to the systemized, the accidental to the determined, and the "undecidable" to the "destination."[4] In other words, the opposition Lacan and Derrida in this instance functions as a restatement of Kant's third antinomy: either the subject is free from universal causality (Derrida), or universal causality wholly determines the subject (Lacan).

But, as Johnson is quick to point out, these oppositions are themselves mis-readings of the very dynamic of what is at stake in the analysis. Along these lines, the more pertinent question to ask is: why might a letter, according to Lacan, always arrive at its destination? Johnson explains that the logic is essentially one of Imaginary misrecognition, as later elaborated by Louis Althusser: the logic by means of which one misrecognizes oneself as the addressee of ideological interpellation. "[T]he letter is precisely that which subverts the polarity 'subjective/objective,' that which makes subjectivity into something whose position in a structure is situated by an object's passage through it," writes Johnson. "The letter's destination is thus *wherever it is read*: the place it assigns to its reader as his own partiality."[5] The logic of the "purloined letter" thus involves the short-circuit between *ex post facto* (determinative judgment) and *ex ante facto* (reflective judgment)[6]: if one views the process back-

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3   Jacques Derrida, "The Purveyor of Truth," in *The Purloined Poe*, p. 187 (my emphasis).

4   Barbara Johnson, "The Frame of Reference: Poe, Lacan, Derrida," in *The Purloined Poe*, p. 249.

5   *Ibid.*, p. 248.

6   Cf. Karatani, *Transcritique*, pp. 187-188: "In *Critique of Judgment* Kant distinguishes 'determinative judgments,' which categorize concrete individual facts by established laws, from 'reflective judgments,' which pursue a new universality that subsumes the exceptional facts that are not yet categorized by established laws... Here it is possible to see the distinction between reflective and determinative as analogous to that between ex ante facto and ex post facto."

wards from its *contingent* result, the fact that such a result took place must appear to the viewer as structurally *necessary*, as something which conceals some fateful meaning.[7] This logic is depicted in Lacan's quaternary topology of the unconscious found in the so-called "L schema":

> I am, of course, aware of the importance of imaginary impregnations (*Prägung*) in the partializations of the symbolic alternative that give the signifying chain its appearance. Nevertheless, I posit that it is the law specific to this chain which governs the psychoanalytic effects that are determinant for the subject.[8]

In other words, Lacan's interpretation of "The Purloined Letter," insofar as the subject is always already caught up in the process of misrecognition, places the emphasis on the signifying order as that of a closed synchronic structure, which functions as a blind "automatism" to which the subject is subjected. The diachronic order of signification is thus governed by the signifying automatism (the "purloined letter"), which is concealed by the Imaginary ego-to-ego relationship.[9] Yet the notion of the subject depicted in the "L schema" is wholly unthinkable insofar as it is radically de-subjectivized in the field of the Other: the subject becomes totally subjected to the structure, alienated without a remainder. The Symbolic order is thereby reduced to a "structure without a subject." Thus a letter always arrives at its destination, but at the cost of the radical de-subjectivization of the subject.

EXCOMMUNICATION

But Lacan did not hold this position to the end. Like Marx's work, Lacan's is

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7 Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, pp. 2-3.

8 Lacan, "The Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'," *Écrits*, p. 6.

9 Žižek, "Lacan: At What Point is he Hegelian?," in *Interrogating the Real* (London: Continuum Books, 2005), p. 30.

also characterized by numerous epistemological breaks—ruptures in his own theo-
retical edifice *qua* "the understanding"—brought about by incessant dislocation:
in other words, a transposition from one "phase" to the next. Meaning, each new
phase in Lacan's work was, in a sense, the result of a simultaneous rupture in "sen-
sibility"—read as institutional crisis. If the Cartesian *cogito* is therefore understood
as a purely *abstract* empty space—a void—but one that is nonetheless structurally
necessary, then transposition ought to be understood as its *concrete* correlate. So,
again, the year 1953 marked an important shift in Lacan's thought, as that was the
year in which he began his reinterpretation of the entire Freudian corpus through
the lens of structuralism, but only by way of his break with the Société Psychanaly-
tique de Paris that very same year: a break which led to the subsequent formation
of a new psychoanalytic institution—the Société Française de Psychanalyse—which
Lacan joined soon thereafter. The same, it will be shown, also happens to hold true
for the year 1963.

When Lacan and a number of his contemporaries, including Françoise Dolto,
Serge Leclaire, and Daniel Lagache, decided in 1953 to abandon the SPP, which
since 1926 had been the sole psychoanalytic institution in France, they wrongly as-
sumed that they would continue to remain members of the IPA. Instead, the SFP
and its members were now no longer affiliated with the international association, a
fact that had embarrassed the group's leadership from its inception. And because
they had never contemplated a break with the IPA—the center of Freudian legiti-
macy—they immediately entered into negotiations designed to bring them back
in. But for this to occur the leadership needed to prove to an IPA commission of
inquiry that all of the training analysts (analysts who are allowed to train other ana-

lysts) in the SFP obeyed the standard rules involving session length.[10]

During this period it became increasingly evident that Lacan did not obey the technical rules that had been put in place by the IPA since the 1920s and '30s. These rules stipulated that an analysis was supposed to last for at least four years and consist of four to five sessions a week, each session lasting at least fifty minutes.[11] The rule governing session length was established in order to limit an analyst's potentially unlimited power: in that regard, it had helped to maintain the unity of the IPA during the era of the Controversial Discussions, in which Melanie Klein and Anna Freud, as well as their respective followers, vied for control over the IPA through the training of analysts. Thus, in a January 1954 report to the leaders of the SFP, the IPA's commission of inquiry concluded:

> We were unanimously against the Lagache group forming an affiliated Society of the IPA for the following reasons: a) in practical terms the Lagache group cannot give appropriate training to the large number of students they have registered, since Dr. Lagache and Dr. Lacan are the only training analysts; b) more importantly, the training methods of the Lagache group have deviated too far from the procedures of the component Societies and appear unacceptable.[12]

The commission of inquiry's decision not to admit the SFP into the IPA centered largely on the issue of "deviated" training methods. This referred, for the most part, to Lacan (but also to Françoise Dolto) and his controversial use of variable-length sessions—often derogatively referred to as "short sessions" by his critics, although, as Adrian Johnston points out, this is misleading since Lacan would either shorten

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10 Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 203.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 202.

12 Alain de Mijolla, "Splits in the French Psychoanalytic Movement, Between 1953 and 1964," in *Within Time and Beyond Time: A Festschrift for Pearl King*, eds. Riccardo Steiner and Jennifer Johns (London: Karnac, 2001), p.12.

or lengthen sessions, depending on the patient.[13]

Since the early 1950s, Lacan had defended his use of variable-length sessions to the members of the SPP on a number of separate occasions,[14] but given the precarious situation faced by the SFP and its members he could no longer justify his use of them as the practice stood firmly in the way of the SFP's incorporation into the IPA. Thus, Lacan never published the lectures delivered to the SPP on the controversial subject, but he nevertheless went on conducting variable-length sessions within the SFP, while at the same time publicly declaring that he had brought his practice into conformity with the IPA's rule governing session length. In other words, he lied.[15]

Lacan justified his variance of session length as a means of combating neurosis. "Neurotics, especially obsessionals, take advantage of fixed-length sessions; they pre-script monologues so as to 'kill time' and avoid the work of free association," writes Johnston.

> In this way, the rhythm of the sessions can be pressed into the service of resistances. By truncating the sessions at his discretion (Lacan speaks of this as "punctuating" the sessions) Lacan not only thwarts the recitation of nonassociative "filler material", but creates a sense of urgency for the analysand.[16]

The variable-length session thus interferes with the analysand's attempt to maintain the self-consistency of their discourse by allowing the analyst, rather than the clock, to determine when the session ought to be brought to an end. So, although his mo-

13 Adrian Johnston, *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2005), p. 23.

14 Roudinesco cites the dates December 1951, June 1952, and February 1953 as those on which Lacan delivered lectures relating to variable-length sessions to the members of the SPP. Cf. Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 203.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 204.

16 Johnston, *Time Driven*, pp. 23-24.

tives for this practice were tinged by suspicion—by shortening session length during training analysis, Lacan was able to produce more practicing analysts than any other training analyst in his school, thus securing a greater amount of financial wealth and institutional influence for himself[17]—Lacan nevertheless always grounded their use in his theories and, in doing so, decisively demonstrated the importance of temporality in the psychoanalytic clinic.[18] Accordingly, in "Function and the Field of Speech" (September 1953), Lacan drew out the practical conclusions of his essay "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty" (March 1945), arguing that "[s]etting in advance a time limit to an analysis, the first form of active intervention, inaugurated (*pro pudor!*) by Freud himself…will invariably leave the subject alienated from his truth."[19]

At the Copenhagen congress in July 1959, the Central Executive of the IPA ordered that another committee be setup to examine the French candidates. On May 15, 1961, a board of inquiry was dispatched to Paris to begin the investigation of the members of the SFP.[20] Pierre Turquet, a personal friend of Lacan's, was appointed by the IPA, along with a number of other analysts, to conduct the interviews, which included many of Lacan's students and analysands. Turquet was encouraged by Serge Leclaire, the President of the SFP, to believe that Lacan would compromise with the Executive Committee by agreeing to limit the number of analysands

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17 Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 203.

18 The peculiar antinomy encountered by psychoanalysis in the realm of temporality has been between "the unconscious is eternal," as formulated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and elsewhere, and "the unconscious is temporal," as formulated in Freud's theory of phantasy, particularly in the logic of *Nachträglichkeit.* Cf. Johnston, *Time Driven*, for an extensive and insightful analysis of this topic.

19 Lacan, "Function and Field," *Écrits*, p. 256.

20 Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 246.

he had taken on in order to facilitate the incorporation of the SFP and its members—including Lacan himself—into the IPA. But during the two long interviews that Turquet conducted—one in May and June of 1961 and the other in January 1963—he realized that Lacan had not abandoned his former practices.[21]

As a result of Turquet's first report, the Central Executive drew up a list of recommendations consisting of twenty points, which were promulgated at the Edinburgh congress on August 2, 1961. Of the twenty points, Article 13a stipulated that Lacan should not take on any more training analyses or controls.[22] The other outcome of the Edinburgh congress was that the SFP withdrew its direct request for affiliation with the IPA and accepted the status of a Study Group.[23] The second report, however, led the Executive Committee to declare at the Stockholm congress in August 1963 that the one non-negotiable requirement for the SFP's membership was its voluntary acceptance of a ban on Lacan's training activities.[24] The IPA further stipulated that if Leclaire did not follow the measures set out by the so-called Stockholm "Directive," then the IPA's continued sponsorship of the SFP would be jeopardized. Thus, in a move which ironically followed the logic of Lacan's "*vel* of alienation," the choice offered by the Central Executive was *either* the retention of Lacan as a training analyst *or* the group's incorporation into the IPA.[25]

On October 13, 1963 Lacan was officially removed from the SFP's list of training analysts. The motion, proposed by the Executive Committee, stipulated

21 *Ibid.*, p. 248.

22 Mijolla, *Within Time and Beyond Time*, p. 15.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

24 Johnston, *Time Driven*, p. 23.

25 "The International Psycho-Analytical Association Minute. The Study Group SFP," *October* 40 (Spring, 1987), pp. 79-80.

that "[f]rom this day, Dr. Jacques Lacan will no longer appear on the list of analysts entitled to perform training analyses or supervision."[26] The motion was signed by SFP members Juliette Favez-Boutonier, Daniel Lagache, Wladimir Granoff and Georges Favez, most of whom, along with a number of Lacan's formal pupils (Jean Laplanche, Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, etc.), went on to found the Association Psychanalytique de France, which, along with the old SPP, was incorporated into the IPA after June 1964. Following the motion, the Board of the SFP—the majority of whom were in favor of retaining Lacan as a training analyst—decided on November 11, 1963 not to apply this decision. As a result, on November 19 a new board was put in place and the members of the old board—including President Serge Leclaire and Vice-President Françoise Dolto—resigned immediately,[27] solidifying around Lacan in opposition to the new leadership. By January 1965, the Study Group SFP was officially dissolved.

Several months later, on January 15, 1964, Lacan delivered his first lecture since the split with the SFP—now at the prestigious École Normale Supérieure, rather than the Hôpital Sainte-Anne.[28] In it, he described the ban on his teaching as an "excommunication,"[29] comparing himself to Spinoza who, perhaps more than any philosopher, stands out as a singular *cogito* who refused to belong to any community—"an existence externalized"—living in the interstice of nowhere, having been excommunicated not only from the Christian church but also from the Judaic synagogue.[30] But perhaps of greater interest is the fact that this lecture inaugurated the

26 Mijolla, *Within Time and Beyond Time*, p. 16.

27 *Ibid.*

28 Lacan, *Seminar XI*, p. 2.

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

30 Karatani, *Transcritique*, p. 96.

beginning of Seminar XI, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, in which Lacan—in a manner homologous to his "return to Freud"—embarked on a "return to Descartes"—that is, a return to the *cogito*, the subject of doubt:

> I will now dare to define the Cartesian *I think* as participating in its striving towards certainty, in a sort of abortion. The difference of status given to the subject by the discovered dimension of the Freudian unconscious derives from desire, which must be situated at the level of the *cogito*. Whatever animates, that which any enunciation speaks of, belongs to desire.[31]

The *cogito*, in other words the Lacanian barred subject, far from being the subject of self-transparency and substantiality [*sum*], is simply another way of expressing transcendental subjectivity: it is the nothingness, the void, which is operative *between* various systems of thought. It can also be thought of as an excess, a remainder, or a "gap" (coterminous with the *objet a*—the object cause of desire) as Lacan refers to it, which is wholly irreducible to, and at the same time a product of, a given structure, in contrast to Lacan's earlier formulation of structure found in the "L schema" and illustrated through his reading of Poe's "The Purloined Letter."

Institutional crisis as transposition can therefore be seen neither as external to Lacan's theories, nor to his practice. Thus, on June 21, 1964—three days before the last lecture of Seminar XI—Lacan announced the founding of his own school of psychoanalysis: the École Freudienne de Paris.[32]

THE STRUCTURALIST CONTROVERSY

During the week of October 18-21, 1966, one of the most important develop-

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31 Lacan, *Seminar XI*, p. 141.

32 Lacan, "Founding Act," trans. Jeffrey Mehlman, *October* 40 (Spring, 1987), pp. 96-105. Worth noting is that the original name of the school was the École Française de Psychanalyse, but it was renamed the École Freudienne de Paris three months later.

ments in post-war intellectual thought took place at the international symposium entitled "The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man," convened in Baltimore under the auspices of the Johns Hopkins Humanities Center—newly instituted that year. The symposium brought together over one-hundred social theorists from across the Atlantic, including Roland Barthes, Jean Hyppolite, Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Lacan, and inaugurated a two-year program of seminars and colloquia "which sought to explore the impact of contemporary 'structuralist' thought on critical methods in humanistic and social studies."[33] More importantly, however, was that the symposium marked the first major eruption of an "anti-structuralist" tendency within the human sciences—what became known as the "structuralist controversy." Reflecting back on the event in 1971, Richard Macksey, who oversaw much of the symposium and was himself a speaker there, writes:

> Although the intellectual inheritance was clear, with its preoccupation with articulated sign-systems and the repudiation of the hermeneutic enterprises of the last century, evidence was already available in the Johns Hopkins symposium of the ensuing moment of theoretical deconstruction. The spaces had begun to open, not only between neighboring camps but in the conceptual matrix of "structures" itself.[34]

Hence, following Macksey, if one can properly speak of "origins" as such after Derrida, then the Humanities Center symposium might very well be regarded as the origin of post-structuralism.

Historically, the exegesis of Lacanian theory has never been able to clearly identify Lacan as either a structuralist or a post-structuralist. In fact, Lacan has always been looked upon with suspicion by both camps: to post-structuralists, he is viewed as still retaining at least a modicum of "phallogocentrism" and a theo-

33 Richard Macksey, "Preface," in *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, ed. Richard Macksey (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. xv.

34 Macksey, "The Space Between—1971," in *The Structuralist Controversy*, p. ix.

retical attachment to centrality and presence, citing in particular his references to castration, the phallus, and the *point de capiton*; to structuralists, Lacan—especially later Lacan of the gaze, *jouissance,* and Joycean language-games—is seen as having abandoned the scientific foundation that structuralism was premised on in favor of quasi-metaphysical gnomic propositions. To most others—and certainly there is a grain of truth to this commonplace—Lacan has been viewed as being in between, and influenced by, both movements, insofar as they constitute a binary opposition. In a strangely similar way, the same has historically been said of Kant as well, being viewed as a philosopher "in between" two antithetical orientations (empiricism and rationalism) or, in less precise readings, simply an apologist for metaphysics (in the same way that Lacan has been described as an apologist for psychoanalysis, seen by its critics as no less metaphysical). However, in stark contrast to the imprecise logic of "in between" stands that of "parallax": the critique of introspection by means of which one inscribes within self-scrutiny other's viewpoints, thus revealing the antinomy of their opposition as an illusion, as well as the radical alterity (the thing-in-itself) upon which transcendental reflection is premised.[35] This is the transcendental standpoint adopted by Lacan after 1963: the standpoint of "pronounced parallax" vis-à-vis structuralism and post-structuralism.

Structuralism began with Saussurean linguistics, in which a word is the product of the "synthesis" between the signifier and the signified. But, as put forward earlier, this presupposes a certain kind of subjectivity which is capable of such a synthesis. It was Roman Jakobson who later elaborated this point by introducing into structural linguistics the element known as the "zero phoneme" in order to

35 Karatani, *Transcritique,* pp. 44-53.

complete the phonemic system.[36] For Jakobson, the zero phoneme is opposed to the absence of any phoneme whatsoever, while simultaneously devoid of any and all content.[37] As Kojin Karatani argues, it is the void, the placeholder which, although nonexistent substantially, makes a system a system: in other words, the zero sign functions as a restatement of Kantian transcendental subjectivity—the nothingness that constitutes the structure of the system.[38] Thus, structuralism began with transcendental subjectivity as its premise in the form of the zero sign.

Yet this did not prevent later generations of structuralist thinkers from abandoning the transcendental standpoint, believing that their elaboration of the structure (linguistic or otherwise) had successfully eliminated from modern thought the "problematic" of the subject, which consequently came to be reconceived as the substantial *ego cogito* of Western metaphysics.[39] Structuralism therefore became an attractive intellectual orientation for those seeking to escape subjectivity and responsibility.[40] It also led some structuralists, such as Louis Althusser, to return to Spinoza's substance monism, thus resulting in structural determinism,[41] e.g., Althusser's notion of "overdetermination." The same may also be said of Lacan who, at least prior to 1963, held a similar view to Althusser's apropos the relationship

36 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

37 Roman Jakobson and J. Lotz, "Notes on the French Phonemic Pattern," in Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings*, vol. 1: *Phonological Studies* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), p. 872.

38 Karatani, *Transcritique*, pp. 77-78.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 78.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 319 (cf. footnote 60).

41 *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121. Additionally, one might point out the isomorphism between Spinoza's and Althusser's "ethics of alienation": for Althusser, there is no consciousness outside of ideology, just as for Spinoza there is no substance beyond the immanent One. To that extent, both reside purely within the alienated topos of the *cogito, but never oscillate outside of it*: hence their thought remains monist. Instead one must learn to "bracket" and "unbracket": without this Will-to-Bracket there would be no transcendental subjectivity as such (the "bracketing" subject).

between the structure and the subject, as seen in his application of the "L schema" to his reading of Poe's "The Purloined Letter."

Post-structuralism, it may be said, emerged then as a critique of the rigid determinism of the closed synchrony of the structure, the result of structuralist thinkers' abandonment of structuralism's (latent) transcendental premise. This is Jacques Derrida's stance in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," first delivered at the Humanities Center conference in 1966. By putting into question the notional legitimacy of the structure's "center," Derrida effectively destabilizes—"deconstructs"—the apparent fixity of the elements within the structure. "[T]he center…closes off the freeplay it opens up and makes possible. *Qua* center, it is the point at which the substitution of contents, elements, or terms is no longer possible," Derrida wrote.

> At the center, the permutation or the transformation of elements… is forbidden…Thus it has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which governs the structure, while escaping structurality. This is why classical thought concerning structure could say that the center is, paradoxically, *within* the structure and *outside* it. The center is at the center of the totality, and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality…the totality *has its center elsewhere.* The center is not the center.[42]

In other words, for a structure to properly constitute itself as a stable, coherent, and closed system of differential elements, it must be a *centered* structure. But for Derrida this is a contradiction because the center, as the organizing principle of the structure, escapes structurality: it is simultaneously inside and outside, within and without. The presence of center becomes the point of fixity and stability which anchors and limits the spontaneous freeplay of differential elements. Thus the history of the

42 Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in *The Structuralist Controversy*, p. 248.

concept of structure, with its "series of substitutions of center for center," is simply an inheritance of Western metaphysics, the "determination of being as *presence.*"[43]

The ethics of deconstruction, or what Karatani refers to as "the will-to-deconstruct,"[44] is based on the systematic unveiling of the absence of center, the absence of origin, and the absence of subject in order to suspend the metaphysics of presence and language as a determining system.[45] Yet this also points to the limits of deconstruction: freeplay, as the disruption of presence,[46] inevitably entails a certain kind of "loss of the world" in skeptical relativism, language games, empiricist historicism, and aesthetic affirmation of non-presence. Citing Nietzsche, Derrida describes the deconstructionist attitude as "the joyous affirmation of the freeplay of the world and without truth, without origin, offered to an active interpretation… *This affirmation then determines the non-center otherwise than as a loss of the center.*"[47] Thus deconstruction inevitably turns to morality in the form of Nietzschean affirmation as a means of overcoming the potentially melancholic loss of ground from which to base any truth.

This, however, is not Lacan's position. In Seminar XI, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis,* Lacan struggles to delineate the contours of the logic of alienation and that of separation, conceived as two fundamental and interconnect-

43 *Ibid.*, p. 249. Two examples that come to mind are the presence of the voice, in contrast to the written word (cf. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri C. Spivak [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998]), and the presence of self. A notable example in political economy, cited by Karatani, is the presence of value *qua* quantity of labor, in contrast to money as the (always tainted) empirical medium of exchange in the circulation process.

44 Cf. Karatani, *Architecture as Metaphor: Language, Number, Money*, trans. Sabu Kohso (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995).

45 Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play," in *The Structuralist Controversy*, p. 258.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 263.

47 *Ibid.*, p. 264.

ed functions which govern the relationship between the structure and the subject of the signifier. According to Lacan, while *alienation* describes the "fading," the *aphanisis,* of the subject insofar as the subject disappears underneath the determinism of the structure, *separation* denotes the reverse process by which structural determination produces an excess or remainder in the form of the barred subject [$\cancel{S}$] and its phantasmatic correlate, the lost object [*a*].

> By separation, the subject finds, one might say, the weak point of the primal dyad of the signifying articulation, in so far as it is alienating in essence. It is in the interval between these two signifiers that resides the desire offered to the mapping of the subject in the experience of the discourse of the Other…[48]

In other words, alienation in the Other leads to separation from the Other the moment when the *lack* in the Other is fully recognized by the subject.[49] Thus, just as Saussure rejected the internal consistency of language against von Humboldt's romantic linguistics, while he simultaneously affirmed its enclosed structure against historical linguistics, Lacan rejected the notion of a totalizing structure without remainder against the structuralists (the *ex ante facto* stance), while he affirmed its alienating totality against the post-structuralists (the *ex post facto* stance), for whom the Humean legacy of skepticism eventually became the dominant yet largely unspoken reference point.

To summarize in an alternative way what has thus been argued, Lacanian psychoanalysis, as a transcendental standpoint that only fully emerged out of the "pronounced parallax" between structuralism and post-structuralism, salvaged the

48 Lacan, *Seminar XI,* p. 218.

49 Cf. Lacan, "Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever," in *The Structuralist Controversy,* p. 194: "[T]he relation between the barred subject with this object (*a*) is the structure which is always found in the phantasm which supports desire…" In other words, Lacan restates the above point, which is that fantasy functions to screen the abyss or lack in the Other by means of "filling it out" with the *objet a.*

radical, disavowed core of structuralism—premised, as it originally was, on the zero sign—as well as modern philosophy in general: the Cartesian *cogito* (or the transcendental subject/Lacanian barred subject)—in other words, the subject of doubt, the subject for whom only doubt can be certain. The *cogito*, as the void which structures the system, makes it a system even, may be described as an inversion of the Derridean thesis regarding freeplay: rather than being the absence of subject, the transcendental subject is *the subject as absence*. Nevertheless, deconstruction is not wholly opposed to the transcendental standpoint: hence the Derridean "anti-notion" of *différance* as (spatial) difference and (temporal) deferment. *Différance*, as neither a word nor a concept, can be read as an inscription of the alterity of the other (the Lacanian Real) as the minimal ontological difference in which transcendental subjectivity resides.[50]

THE POSTMODERN AESTHETIC

In his lecture delivered at the John Hopkins Humanities Center symposium, Lacan curiously remarked that, "The best image to sum up the unconscious is Baltimore in the early morning,"[51] which he prefaced with a brief description of his experience in the city earlier that week:

> When I prepared this little talk for you, it was early in the morning. I could see Baltimore through the window and it was a very interesting moment because it was not quite daylight and a neon sign indicated to me every minute the change of time, and naturally there was heavy

50 Cf. Derrida, "*Cogito* and the History of Madness," in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978). Here Derrida first introduced the term *différance* in his response to Foucault, arguing that the *cogito*, rather than being in external opposition to madness, involves a passage *through* madness in the form of universal doubt. Derrida thereby maintained its transcendental topos.

51 Lacan, "Of Structure as an Inmixing," in *The Structuralist Controversy*, p. 189.

traffic, and I remarked to myself that exactly all that I could see, except for some trees in the distance, was the result of thoughts, actively thinking thoughts, where the function played by the subjects was not completely obvious. In any case the so-called *Dasein*, as a definition of the subject, was there in this rather intermittent or fading spectator.[52]

Some Lacanian historians, such as David Macey,[53] have unconvincingly attempted to place the accent of this remark on the influence of surrealism on Lacan's thought, citing the resemblance between his description of Baltimore and notable Surrealist paintings, as well as Lacan's well-known mingling with the Surrealist movement early in his career. And while it is true that the Surrealists profoundly influenced Lacan's early work, as I have already pointed out, it is my contention, contra Macey, that the true accent of this quote ought to be placed, as strange as it may seem, on the city of Baltimore itself: that structures, just like the Cartesian *cogito*, far from being purely abstract systems of thought, can also be thought of as concrete—that is to say, perceived *in the form of* actual, material reality. Thus, against the May 1968 protestors, one should defend Lacan's infamous retort to Lucien Goldmann: "If the events of May demonstrated anything at all, they showed that it was precisely that structures had taken to the streets!"[54]

Since 1972 the world has undergone a profound shift in political, cultural, and economic practices: the shift from "modernism" to "postmodernism."[55] While modernism has traditionally been understood as a rejection of the positivist strain

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52 *Ibid.*

53 Cf. Macey, "Baltimore in the Early Morning," in *Lacan in Contexts.*

54 Françoise Dosse and D. Glassman, *History of Structuralism: The Sign Sets, 1967-Present* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 122.

55 This was also the year in which support for the gold standard was officially dropped by the Nixon administration. Interestingly, just as postmodernism began as a critique of foundationalism, this internal shift within capitalism brought about its own "crisis in foundationalism": since 1972, the number of crises in the world-economy have rapidly escalated.

of Enlightenment thought in favor of epistemological perspectivism as a means of revealing what it still took to be a unified notion of truth underlying appearance (the quintessential modernist gesture is one of unveiling the essence behind the multitude of appearances),[56] postmodernism has been described by literary critic Terry Eagleton as the collapse of the "meta-narrative."

> Post-modernism signals the death of such "metanarratives" whose secretly terroristic function was to ground and legitimate the illusion of a "universal" human history. We are now in the process of wakening from the nightmare of modernity, with its manipulative reason and fetish of the totality, into the laid-back pluralism and language games which has renounced the nostalgic urge to totalize and legitimate itself…Science and philosophy must jettison their grandiose metaphysical claims and view themselves more modestly as just another set of narratives.[57]

The shift from modernism to postmodernism thus entails a shift from epistemology to ontology, from perspectivism to the "foregrounding of questions as to how radically different realities may coexist, collide, and interpenetrate."[58]

Theorists such as Fredric Jameson and David Harvey have also argued that this change is inherently bound up with the new hegemonic forms in which we experience space and time. Harvey's provocative thesis is that by analyzing the shifting dimensions of space and time one can adduce the *a priori* grounds upon which the necessary relation between the rise of postmodern cultural forms and new flexible modes of capital accumulation are founded. Thus for Harvey the "postmodern condition" is understood as "space-time compression," in which the collapse of temporality results in the reduction of experience to a series of pure and unrelated

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56 David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1989), p. 30.

57 Terry Eagleton, "Awakening from Modernity," *Times Literary Supplement* (20 Feb. 1987), p. 194.

58 Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 41.

presents and that of space to what Jameson refers to as "contrived depthlessness," the postmodern fascination with surfaces, mirrors, and appearances.[59] According to Harvey, this leads to new techniques and organizational forms through which surplus-value is extracted.[60]

Citing transformations in architecture and urban design, Harvey points to the evolution of the city of Baltimore during the late-1960s and early-1970s as an exemplary case of this aesthetic, cultural, and economic transition. For Harvey it reflects the postmodern penchant for eclecticism and the usage of a-historical pastiche apropos gentrification and urban renewal projects,[61] as well as the postmodern appropriation of urban spectacle in the wake of the 1968 race riots (as in the case of the Baltimore City Fair, which marked the beginning of the institutionalized commercialization of spectacle).[62] In all of these cases, the differentiation in tastes and aesthetic preferences (the intermingling of local and cosmopolitan, classical and modern, etc.) has led to the production and consumption of what sociologist Pierre Bourdieu called "symbolic capital," the collection of luxury goods attesting to the taste and distinction of the owner.[63] Thus the deconstruction of urban space and the collapse of historical narrativity apropos "space-time compression" has resulted in the decline of what Jameson refers to as "cognitive mapping," our ability to properly narrativize and grasp the coordinates of social-symbolic reality, thus allowing for the proliferation of Capital as the ultimate deconstructive agent in the world.

Given the emphasis on space and time throughout the aforementioned cri-

59 *Ibid.*, p. 58.

60 *Ibid.*, pp. 152-155.

61 *Ibid.*, pp. 74-79.

62 *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

tiques of postmodernity, it is surprising that little effort has been made to link together the transcritical dimensions of Marx and Kant's respective critiques, particularly as a means of exploring the decline of symbolic efficacy under late capitalism. Harvey, for example, mentions Kant only twice throughout *The Condition of Postmodernity*, and both times only in relation to aesthetic judgment. Yet what is crucial in relation to "flexible accumulation" is not aesthetic judgment, but rather the transcendental aesthetic: space and time as the *a priori* forms of sensible intuition.

Following Karatani, one can read Marx's notion of *relative* (as opposed to *absolute*) surplus-value in a similar manner: as the *a priori* ground of commodity exchange insofar as the production of surplus-value is necessarily conditioned by space and time. Thus, in the section of *Capital*, vol. 1 examining the production of relative surplus-value, Marx wrote:

> By an increase in the productivity of labour, we mean an alteration in the labour process of such a kind as to shorten the labour-time socially necessarily for the production of a commodity…[64]

According to Marx, technological innovation—the constant "self-revolutionizing" of the means of production—is necessary in order for capitalists to extract greater quantities of surplus-value in the labor process by, on the one hand, maintaining the length of the working-day while simultaneously increasing output.[65] The resulting increase in the productivity of labor therefore entails a *temporal* shift in the circulation process, as seen in today's hyper-kinetic production and consumption of

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64 Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1: *A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), p. 431.

65 Joseph Schumpeter maintained that capitalism was justified on the basis of its "creative destruction," the process of transformation that accompanies radical innovation. Yet while it is true that capitalism engenders technological innovation and entrepreneurship, this comes about only as a means of achieving an end: surplus-value. In other words, Schumpeter's position appears valid only by "bracketing" the question of ethics.

information-commodity under late capitalism and its accompanying shift in emphasis away from industrial towards what Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri refer to as "immaterial" labor.[66]

On the other hand, for Marx the creation of surplus-value through commodity-exchange "begins where communities have their boundaries, at their points of contact with other communities, or with members of the latter."[67] In other words, the production of surplus-value relies on the (*spatial*) confrontation between *different systems of value* (hence Marx's notion of "socially necessary labour time" as the basis of his value-theory). As David Harvey points out, "[f]lexible accumulation typically exploits a wide range of seemingly contingent geographical circumstances, and reconstitutes them as structured internal elements of its own encompassing logic."[68] Thus, as Harvey and Jameson (if only latently) argue, the relationship between capitalism and its ideological supplements (e.g., postmodernism) can be grasped in relation to the fundamental passivity of sensibility (time and space) as the *a priori* grounds which structure empirical consciousness. This is the transcritical dimension of Marxist cultural criticism.

Lacan's structuralist turn in psychoanalysis has been most famously encapsulated in his dictum, "The unconscious is structured like a language." But what, precisely, is the *subject* of the unconscious? This is the question—the point of reference—that has been persistently posed throughout this chapter.

66 M. Hardt and A. Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 290: "Since the production of services results in no material and durable good, we define the labor involved in this production as immaterial labor — that is, labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication."

67 Marx, p. 182.

68 Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 294.

Although Lacan's transcendental schema of the Real, Symbolic, and the Imaginary came to be extracted as early as 1953 in the aftermath of the so-called "Controversial Discussions" between Melanie Klein and Anna Freud, this discovery nevertheless resulted in of the elision of subjectivity. Thus in Lacan's "L schema" the subject came to be overdetermined by and *alienated* in the structure. As Lacan argued in Seminar II:

> The coming into operation of the symbolic function in its most radical, absolute usage ends up abolishing the action of the individual so completely that by the same token it eliminates his tragic relation to the world…At the heart of the flow of events, the functioning of reason, the subject from the first move finds himself to be no more than a pawn, forced inside this system, and excluded from any truly dramatic, and consequently tragic, participation in the realization of truth.[69]

Thus Lacan conceived the subject as radically de-subjectivized, as a structure without a subject. But starting in 1963, the year in which he was "excommunicated" from the SFP due to his controversial use of variable-length sessions, Lacan inaugurated the beginning of a "return to Descartes" with the introduction of the logic of *separation* into his work: a return to the *cogito* as the subject of doubt. In that sense, it was a return to the radical foundation upon which structuralism was premised (in the form of Jakobson's "zero sign"), yet was quickly abandoned by later structuralist thinkers.

So what is the Cartesian *cogito* and how, precisely, does it relate to the field of the unconscious? In his *Discourse on Method*, René Descartes wrote:

> For a long time I had noticed that, as for morals, it is sometimes necessary to follow opinions that one knows to be quite uncertain, all the same as if they were indubitable, as has been said above; but, because I then desired to devote myself solely to the search for the truth, I thought that it was necessary that I were to do completely the con-

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69 Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-1955*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), p. 168.

trary, and that I were to reject, as absolutely false, all that in which I could imagine the least doubt, in order to see whether there would remain, after that, something in my beliefs that were entirely indubitable…I resolved to feign that all the things that had ever entered my mind were no more true than the illusions of my dreams. But, immediately afterward, I took note that, while I wanted thus to think that everything was false, it necessarily had to be that I, who was thinking this, were something. And noticing that this truth—I think, therefore I am—was so firm and so assured that all the most extravagant suppositions of the skeptics were not capable of shaking it, I judged that I could accept it, without scruple, as the first principle of the philosophy that I was seeking.[70]

Here Descartes makes a distinction between "I think" and "I doubt," yet, quickly confusing these terms, he concludes that "I think, therefore I am." Due to this error Descartes deduced from the process of doubt the substantial ego [*res cogitans*] of Western metaphyscs, thereby eliding the doubting subject apropos its "withdrawal-into-self"—the moment when all knowledge is bracketed. "Descartes apprehends his *I think* in the enunciation of the *I doubt*, not in its statement," argues Lacan, "which still bears all of this knowledge to be put in doubt."[71] So while the doubting subject (the subject of enunciation) belongs to the field of unconscious desire (hence Descartes's use of the word "desired"), the "I am" (the subject of the statement) belongs to the Imaginary field of misrecognition. Lacan continues:

> I dare to state as a truth that the Freudian field was possible only a certain time after the emergence of the Cartesian subject. In order to understand the Freudian concepts, one must set out on the basis that is the subject who is called—the subject of Cartesian origin. This basis gives its true function to what, in analysis, is called recollection or remembering. Recollection is not Platonic reminiscence—it is not the return of a form, an imprint, a *eidos* of beauty and good, a supreme truth, coming to us from beyond. It is something that comes to us from the structural necessities, something humble, born at the level of the lowest encounters and of all the talking crowd that precedes us,

70 René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* [1637], trans. and ed. George Heffernan (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), p. 51; pt. 4, sec. 1.

71 Lacan, *Seminar XI*, p. 44.

at the level of the structure of the signifier.[72]

For Lacan the subject of the unconscious is the *cogito*, the void that is produced by the doubting subject's [*dubito*] enunciation of its own doubt. So although this barred/doubting subject proceeds from the signifier and is itself a signifier, it is irreducible to the totality of the structure. Thus Lacan, like Kant, upholds that the subject is paradoxically both free and unfree: on the one hand the subject is completely overdetermined by the signifier, reduced to a pure function of the structure (alienation); on the other hand, this process of totalization fails on account of the fact that the Other, like the subject, is not-all, incomplete, lacking (separation).

Additionally, the *cogito* is that which is located in between systems of thought: in the transcendental topos. This is the space in which Lacanian psychoanalysis, as I have argued, is situated, as is evident in the case of Lacan himself. His incessant transposition led him to encounter the problematic of "the other" throughout his career: in 1953, for example, he abandoned the SPP and in doing so lost his IPA membership (thereby encountering the parallax between Melanie Klein and Anna Freud); in 1963 he was forced out of the field of legitimate Freudianism and forced to found his own school, the École Freudienne de Paris (encountering the parallax between structuralism and post-structuralism). Finally, in 1969, the year he began his most thoroughgoing formalization of psychoanalytic theory, the administration of the École Normale Supérieure attempted to have him fired for allegedly sowing rebellion amongst students.[73] In that regard, the *cogito* as an abstract (theoretical) space cannot be separated from its concrete (practical) position: the two orientations, theoretical and practical, are intimately bound together.

72 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

73 Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, p. 341.

CONCLUSION

TOWARDS THE QUESTION OF ANALYTIC *PRAXIS*

The entirety of this thesis could be summarized through the question: What is the common gesture inherent to both Kantian transcendental philosophy (as well as post-Kantian German Idealism) and Freudian/Lacanian psychoanalysis? The answer is that, for both (as for any *true* philosophy), the common sense notion of "reality" is no longer taken at face value. Kant, for example, points to the "synthetic unity of apperception" as the impossible (in the Lacanian sense of the Real) void that nonetheless structures the synthesis of our concepts (formal rules of the understanding) and intuitions (the content of our sense-perceptions). Lacan, meanwhile, demonstrates that many conditions must first be satisfied before we are able to experience something as "reality," such as the construction of our self-identity through misrecognition, our proper installation into the Symbolic order vis-à-vis castration, etc. Behind this gesture, however, lies something more fundamental: the dimension of transcritique.

As Kojin Karatani points out, the crux of the transcendental position is not any sort of methodology, but an encounter with the problematic of alterity—of an otherness of the other. Karatani argues that Kant does not attempt to simply "rec-

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oncile" the differences encountered via parallax—this would be impossible. Along these lines, Kant has been frequently misinterpreted as the philosopher who finally succeeded in harmoniously uniting empiricist skepticism with metaphysics (affirming, contra Lacan, that there really *is* a "sexual relationship"!). But evident throughout all of Kant's critical work is that the split between our sensible and rational faculties inexorably leads towards an encounter with a radical otherness—what Kant called the thing-in-itself—grasped by way of the fundamental passivity of sensibility.[1] In that sense, Kant went beyond both empiricism and rationalism through his inscription of "the other" within the transcendental architectonic. For Lacan, this (transcendental) "other" is termed "the Real," the impossible kernel persisting within the depths of fantasy. And as with Kant, Lacanian barred subjectivity (the *cogito)* is isomorphic to this otherness—why?

What is really "other" about "the other" is not some mystical Orientalism or transcendent (divine) Other. Rather, it is the fact that, as Lacan paradoxically claimed, "there is no other of the other." In other words, what we encounter in the transcendental field of "the other" is the fact that the other is lacking, but in order to cover up this lack we project onto it our innermost fantasies (e.g., conspiracy theories, sexual fantasies of a "primal scene," etc.), which is why fantasy is in a way more real than so-called "reality" itself. Thus a confrontation with the lack in the other is nothing less than an encounter with oneself *qua* radical otherness. This is the transcendental standpoint towards subjectivity.

One of the goals, if not *the* goal, of analytic discourse (technique) is to force the analysand to confront this otherness (lack) persisting within the other. This

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1   Karatani, *Transcritique*, p. 90.

brings psychoanalysis in close proximity to the Marxist problematic of what György Lukács called "*praxis*"—the problematic synthesis between the theoretical and the practical. How does one unite the two? Karatani's suggestion is to read Marx into Kant (to unearth the revolutionary core of Kantian transcendental philosophy) and Kant into Marx (to establish the ethical basis of Marxism). But one can also read Kant into Lacan (as I have tried to do throughout this thesis), as well as *Marx into Lacan*: the Möbius strip of the transference is nothing less than the unity of theory and practice, which is why for Lacan the critique of analytic technique is of such great importance. Analytic technique *is* analytic *praxis*.

The question of analytic *praxis* brings us, finally, towards the focal point—the conclusion—of this thesis: what are the *limits* of psychoanalysis? After all, Kant's critique of pure reason was meant to establish the limits of reason by means of reason's self-scrutiny, just as Marx's critique of political economy was meant to discover the limits of capital by means of capital's inherent self-dynamic. For one, psychoanalysis began as a discipline within the interstices—as a "Jewish science."[2] Analytic discourse therefore situated itself as "extimate"—at once intimate and external—in relation to the Law of the community: intimate because its examination placed itself within the locus of unconscious desire; external because it always remained "other" with respect to the Law. In Seminar XI, Lacan argued:

> The analyst's desire is not a pure desire. It is a desire to obtain absolute difference, a desire which intervenes when, confronted with the [Master Signifier], the subject is, for the first time, in a position to subject himself to it. Only there may the signification of a limitless love emerge, because it is outside the limits of the law, where alone it may live.[3]

2 It was also, like Marxism, born out of a certain kind of crisis: psychoanalysis was discovered through the case studies of female hysteria, the crisis of Victorian feminine subjectivity.

3 Lacan, *Seminar XI*, p. 276.

Is there, then, a desire beyond the Law, beyond the limits of the Law? Apropos this question, Lacan's answer (similar to Saint Paul's in *Romans* 7:7) is that *the Law is only sustained through the desire to transgress it.* This, in other words, is the *limit* of the economy of desire: desire aims at the impossible kernel of the Real in order to remain within the limits of the Law, within the boundaries of "sin." Thus after the analysand has "traversed the fantasy" by passing through the lack in the Other, the product of the analyst's discourse is not the analyst's good, but that of a new Master Signifier: the subject's Law outside the limits of hegemonic discourse no longer sustained through its own inherent transgression by revealing the impossibility of desire apropos the subject's constitutive split (the death drive).[4] To that extent, Lacanian psychoanalysis, as a transcendental critique, is always an *ideology* critique.

4   Cf. Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX Encore: On Feminine Sexuality, Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972-1973*, trans. Bruce Fink, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998).

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