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John Shannon Hendrix

Roger Williams University, jhendrix@risd.edu

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The Other of Jacques Lacan

John Shannon Hendrix

Language in the symbolic of Lacan is defined by the Other, which is the “intersubjectivity of the ‘we’ that it assumes,”¹ as described in *Écrits*. The subject enters language in relationship to the other in perception, the perceived object or person, as recognized by the other. As described by Lacan, “What constitutes me as subject is my question. In order to be recognized by the other, I utter what was only in view of what will be [the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming].” The subject is only present in language in anticipation of a response from the other. “In order to find him, I call him by a name that he must assume or refuse in order to reply to me. I identify myself in language, but only by losing myself in it like an object.” In the same way, the subject identifies itself in history, in response to the anticipation of the Other, and loses itself in it like an object. In history, Hegel argued in *Reason in History*, the individual subject must sacrifice itself to the universal; it must sacrifice its *Moralität*, intrinsic morality (the concept derived from the anticipation of the other), to its *Sittlichkeit*, extrinsic morality (the rules of the anticipation of the other). *Moralität* is the retention of the presence of the unconscious in reason, the being-in-itself of subjective spirit. *Sittlichkeit* is the being-for-self of objective spirit, the doubling of reason in language and perception; it is the definition of the subject as constituted by the Other and by history. The subject overcomes its absence, its non-being in history, as in language, by converting itself into an object at the disposal of the other, as an agent of language, and as an object at the disposal of the Other, as an agent of history.

The Hegelian *Moralität* corresponds to the ideal ego of Lacan in the imaginary, the subject as seen by itself as prior to the Other, though mediated by the other, while the *Sittlichkeit* corresponds to the symbolic order, the “I” (*je*) of the subject’s discourse, the subject as seen by itself as it is inserted into language. The distinction between the symbolic, the I (*je*), and the Imaginary ego, the me (*moi*), is the distinction between unconscious and conscious, interpersonal relations in the Other and natural relations in the imaginary, as derived from Freud, who wrote “*Das Ich und das Es* in order to maintain this fundamental distinction between the true subject of the unconscious and the ego as constituted in its nucleus by a series of alienating

identifications” (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 128), according to Lacan. The cycle of alienating identifications which constitutes the ego in language is impossible to break, as the unconscious is inaccessible. The principle of objectification which determines the unbreakable cycle is the principle of *méconnaissance*, misrecognition. When the subject speaks, it is always of something which is other to the subject and which is inaccessible to the subject in any form of consciousness or self-consciousness, that it, the unconscious, thus the subject is lost to itself in discursive reason, language and perception, unable to know itself or understand itself beyond the boundaries of discursive reason, *nous pathetikos*.

The identity of the subject cannot be found within the “infinity of reflection that the mirage of consciousness consists of” (p. 134). Imaginary ego identity in discursive reason is an indefinite play of reflections between mirrors in which the speaking subject is trapped, as it was for Plotinus, without access to the “supposed progress of interiority” in which the subject sees itself constituted in *méconnaissance*. The self-alienation of reason in objective spirit precludes access to the subjective spirit of the subject prior to discursive reason. The subject becomes that which was defined by Georges Bataille in “The Pineal Eye” as enclosed in the “degrading chains of logic,”² or in “closed systems assigned to life by reasonable conceptions,”³ as described in “The Notion of Expenditure.” For Bataille, the subject is defined in the struggle with the imaginary, the inescapable structure of human thought in language and perception. In such a struggle, “being is ‘ungraspable’—it is only grasped in error,”⁴ as in *méconnaissance*. The subject is defined by the mirror reflections in which it is trapped, which define to it the relationship between the self and the other as one of simulacrum, the reflection of a reflection with nothing being reflected, which is the *chôra* in language as trace or *point de capiton*, the point of escape from the play of mirror reflections, of both the perceived world and the inaccessible unconscious, which is a myth.

The subject is as the subject in the allegory of the cave in Plato’s *Republic*, if the cave is taken as representative of the self. The subject is a prisoner in the self as given by language, as the prisoners in the cave in the *Republic* are unable to see “anything of themselves or their fellows except the shadows thrown by the fire on the wall of the cave opposite them” (515).⁵ The cave represents the boundaries of the self as conscious reason and perception. The shadows on the wall of the cave are the others, the objects of perception in the imaginary order, and the fire outside the cave is the unconscious. The fire is separated from the cave by a curtain wall built along

a road, which is “like a screen at puppet shows between the operator and their audience” (514). The curtain wall is the wall of language, through which the unconscious and the objects of perception are filtered. “The realm revealed by sight,” perception in language, “corresponds to the prison” (517), or the cave, in which the subject is caught, in the play of reflections, “and the light of the fire in the prison to the power of the sun,” which is the good, or the One, active or cosmic intellect, or the unconscious. For Plato, “the ascent into the upper world and the sight of the objects there,” on the other side of the curtain wall, that is, on the other side of language, is “the upward progress of the mind into the intelligible region,” an understanding of the self outside of perception and language, in the unconscious. In psychoanalysis, the progress of the mind into the unconscious is seen as more of a descent than an ascent, as the mind isn’t going anywhere outside of itself.

In the constitution of the imaginary ego, the symbolic order dissipates, and the imaginary shields the subject from the absence. It is hard to know the reality of the self as anything other than the shadows on the wall. The objects of the imaginary are the objects structured by perception, as in the shadows on the wall of the cave. For Bataille the imaginary entails a homogeneous representation of perceived reality wherein existence is a “neatly defined itinerary from one practical sign to another” (*Visions of Excess*, p. 82), and “acts undertaken with some rational end are only servile responses to a necessity” (p. 231), in the absence of the unconscious in conscious thought. Lacan explains, “it is thus that the functions of mastery which we incorrectly call the synthesizing functions of the ego, establish on the basis of a libidinal alienation,” the alienation of the imaginary ego, “the development that follows from it, namely, what I once called the paranoiac principle of human knowledge, according to which its objects are subjected to a law of imaginary reduplication, evoking the homologation of an endless series of notaries...” (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 138), in the prison of conscious thought.

The imaginary ego is predicated on a relation to the other which is mutually self-sustaining and mutually exclusive of symbolic identification, although it is dictated by symbolic identification in the Other. The imaginary self is thus delimited in the necessity of the other, and the necessity of the Other, as a homogeneous and functionary self, in the relation between the notary of the profession to the other notary, and the notary to the client. “But for me,” wrote Lacan, “the decisive signification of the alienation that constitutes the *Urbild* of the ego appears in the relation of exclusion that then structures the dual relation of ego to ego.” The imaginary ego is reaffirmed

by the other, in its functionalism, and can never be predicated on anything other than a relation to the other, the other notary in the profession, as in the objective spirit of Hegel, which establishes the self as other, as that which is not the other, in an irresolvable dialectic, which mirrors the structure of reason in which the imaginary is established in language and perception.

It was Bataille's desire to escape the cycle of functionalism created by the imaginary ego, to search for something in life which is other to it. As he wrote in *Eroticism, Death and Sensuality*, "there is in nature and there subsists in man a movement which always exceeds the bounds, that can never be anything but partially reduced to order. We are generally unable to grasp it. Indeed it is by definition that which can never be grasped, but we are conscious of being in its power: the universe that bears us along answers no purpose that reason defines."⁶ For Lacan the movement is the movement of the unconscious, which exceeds the bounds of conscious reason, which is unable to be grasped, that is exterior to the universe of the imaginary, the universe of language, a universe which cannot answer to its own premise, because it is only a partial reality.

For Bataille, in "The Notion of Expenditure," "human life cannot in any way be limited to the closed systems assigned to it by reasonable conceptions. The immense travail of recklessness, discharge, and upheaval that constitutes life could be expressed by stating that life starts only with the deficit of these systems" (*Visions of Excess*, p. 128). Human life cannot be limited by conscious reason; the discharge and upheaval within the systems of reason are the manifestations of the unconscious in conscious thought, made present in the deficit and limitations of the systems of reason in language and perception, in the absences, gaps, scotomata, and *méconnaissance* that reveal the limitations of reason. In "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," Bataille endorsed "acts undertaken in pursuit of seductive images of chance," which are "the only ones that respond to the need to live like a flame" (p. 231). The seductive images of chance are the traces or hints of the unconscious, that which exceeds reason in conscious thought. Bataille sought, as described in "The Pineal Eye," a transgression of the "degrading chains of logic" (p. 80) of conscious thought which constitute the imaginary ego; he sought "a new laceration within a lacerated nature," access to the symbolic order of language in the unconscious.

For Lacan, the self-identification of the subject, and perhaps a transgression of the imaginary order, begins when the subject "recognizes and therefore distinguishes his action in each of these two registers," the imaginary

and symbolic, “if he is to know why he intervenes, at what moment the opportunity presents itself and how to seize it” (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 140). This is accomplished in the understanding of the relation between the subject and the other in perception in the imaginary, in distinction from the relation between the subject and the Other, that is, language, in the symbolic. “The prime condition for this is that he should be thoroughly imbued with the radical difference between the Other to which his speech must be addressed, and that second other who is the individual that he sees before him, and from whom and by means of whom the first speaks to him in the discourse that he holds before him.” Such recognition would enable the subject to accomplish the “annulling of his own resistance when he is the other with a small *o*,” and then “he will be able to be he to whom this discourse is addressed.”

This is not an easy task, because, as has been seen, the relation of the subject to the other is determined by the relation of the subject to the Other, and the imaginary identification that the subject might have with the other is subsumed by the symbolic identification with the Other, without the awareness of the subject, in unconscious functionings, which has objectified the imaginary identification into a dialectical product of reason. Thus “the imaginary shaping of the subject by desires more or less fixed or regressed in their relation to the object is too inadequate and partial to provide the key to it” (p. 141). As Freud established the extent to which linguistic discourse determines unconscious activity, the structure of the Other has already played a role in the constitution of the Imaginary ego, as seen in the original conflict of the mirror stage, between gestalt object identification and the fragmentary nature of experience and the world as it is perceived.

The Other is “the locus in which is constituted the I who speaks to him who hears, that which is said by the one being already the reply,” the function of the subject in language as always already objectified in the anticipation of signification, but the Other extends into the subject beyond language itself, in the constitution of the subject as it enters into language. Imaginary desire or ego is embedded in “a signifier that has been taken possession of by repression,” as manifest in the desire for recognition. The relation between the subject and the other is dictated by the relation between the subject and the Other in so far as the linguistic mechanisms of repression, displacement and distortion, are operative both in the unconscious and in conscious discourse. The unconscious appears in conscious discourse through the primary repression of language, which is also a mechanism of unconscious activity, as shown in the analysis of dreams. As the unconscious is the discourse of

the Other, the relation between the subject and the other, on both the symbolic and imaginary level, is a relation determined by the Other, despite what might be given by the mirage of consciousness in perception and the *méconnaissance* of conscious thought. Access to the Other would be useless without an understanding of how the other is constituted by the Other, and how the perceived object in the imaginary is transformed in the mirror stage, subject to the laws of discursive reason.

The ego which is formed during the mirror stage and the acquisition of language is based on an object identification which is interceded by a relation to the self as object, a relation which is formed during the mirror stage and which is in conflict with the fragmentary experiences of phenomenological perception, and which is influenced by the symbolic in the entrance of the subject into language. The ideal ego is the imaginary ego, and it serves as a link between the objects of perception, and spoken words in language, and the symbolic order, and the ego ideal of the symbolic order. The retention of the gestalt ideal ego in the subject in the imaginary is a form of resistance to the symbolic ego ideal, the unconscious constitution of the subject, and the resistance is sustained by the subject's relation to the other, which makes the differentiation between the relation of the subject to the other and the Other more difficult.

As a function of the imaginary, the ideal ego is both a permanence and totality, and a fragmentation and ambiguity, in the self-identity of the subject. The ideal ego is as reinforced by the gaze or regard of the other in perception as it is by enunciation of the subject by the other, in the anticipation of presence. The self-perception of the subject as image in relation to the other is thus as illusory as the self-perception of the subject as name in relation to the other. The subject is objectified and elided in anticipation of the gaze in the same way that the subject is elided in the signifying chain of language. Both the gaze and the spoken word, object identification and auditory perception, as mnemonic residues, are present in the imaginary ego, as fragmentary objects. They are subject to linguistic mishaps—ellipsis, pleonasm, syllepsis apposition, catachresis, autonomasis—which reveal the unconscious, and which threaten the mirage of the totality of the ideal ego. The basis of the imaginary ego is the *méconnaissance* which leads it to mistake itself for a totality in relation to the fragmentary psyche of the subject. The subject “who thinks he can accede to himself by designating himself in the statement, is no more than such an object” (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 315), fragmentary and nonrepresentational. The repression of the subject is thus

given by both its definition in the Other and the false identity fixations of the ideal ego. The ideal ego is both a constituent of the Other, as the mirror stage is coincident with the development of language, and in rivalry with the Other, as an imaginary construct. The ideal ego is nevertheless subject to the relation to the other, in the anticipation of recognition and signification, thus the problematic situation of the subject in the desire to access the Other.

Spoken language in discursive reason is the source of *méconnaissance*, subject to the community of symbols into which the subject is inserted, which is the Other. In its participation in the Other, the ego misrecognizes its own unconscious, but the unconscious contributes to the constitution of the ego, the imaginary function. The subject is excentric to its unconscious, to its own mechanisms of thinking, and does not know what it is. It is impossible for the subject to know itself, given the dichotomy of the imaginary and symbolic, and the constitution of the subject by forces inaccessible to it. The knowledge on the part of the subject of its unconscious is replaced by the illusions of consciousness, the mirage of the *cogito*, the thinking subject. The subject decenters itself in its commitment to language; science and technology in discursive reason are manifestations of the mechanisms of language, symbolic structures, into which the subject inserts itself, and through which the subject loses itself. Language itself is as a machine in that it detaches itself from the subject, as the Other, and objectifies the subject in its detachment. In language, in its objectification, the subject is fragmented and disconnected, but the ego of the subject retains the virtual and alienated unity given by the gestalt image of the ideal ego from the mirror stage. The subject is divided in language, and further divided by the relation between language and the perceived object, between the Other and the other.

The ego is in the beginning an imaginary function, but is then objectified as a symbolic function in the entrance of the subject into language. The imaginary ego reinforces itself in the image of the other, while the ego ideal of the symbolic reinforces itself in the fragmentary and dispersed structure of language. The subject in language is a “body in pieces,” as described by Lacan in *Seminar II (The Ego in Freud’s Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis)*,⁷ as a product of the linguistic structure of perception, and the linguistic structure of the unconscious. The dream contains the dialectic of the imaginary and symbolic, image and word. The body of the other appears in the dream to reinforce the unified body image of the ideal ego of the subject, but the unified body is inserted into a fragmented structure which reflects the structure of language, the structure of the Other. The dream is an

“imaginary iridescence” (p. 57) of shifting changes, interplays of forms, varieties of viewpoints, condensations and displacements, which fragments the unified possibility of experience as language fragments the body (the ideal ego) of the subject.

The unconscious is “always manifested as that which vacillates in a split in the subject,” between the imaginary and the symbolic, as Lacan described in *Seminar XI (The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis)*.⁸ If the unconscious is structured like a language, then its structuring is one of discontinuity, impediment, vacillation, a “strange temporality” (p. 25). The vacillation in the split of the subject is manifest in metaphor and metonymy in language, in the relation between the signifier and the signified, the subject and the other. The unconscious is seen as a primordial “cut” in thought. The function of the unconscious is “in profound, initial, inaugural, relation with the function of the concept of the *Unbegriff*—or *Begriff* [idea] of the original *Un*, namely, the cut” (p. 43), which is the *arché* of the bar between the signifier and the signified, and the *point de capiton* in language. The function of the subject is predicated on the cut, the split, which manifests itself in a temporal “pulsation” in language, as the subject is elided and then re-emerges from underneath the bar between the signifier and the signified. Language can only establish the possibility of the presence of the subject temporarily, and thus the temporality of the unconscious is a pulsative one, in the coming and going of the illusion of consciousness.

The dialectic of the ego and the Other, the circuit in which the subject becomes a link, is the dialectic of the ego and the unconscious. The subject can only experience itself in the Other, in the unconscious, as in pieces, decomposed. The perception-consciousness system is itself fragmented, and unknowable in its entirety to the subject which is divided in the symbolic. As the subject reaffirms its ideal ego in the other, in the imaginary function of the ego, it has consciousness, but the consciousness is only a reflection, the product of the play of reflections given by perception, as in the allegory of the cave of Plato. The consciousness of the subject is only the consciousness of the other. Consciousness becomes self-consciousness as it becomes objectified in the Other, as objective spirit becomes subjective spirit for Hegel, but as such consciousness only sees itself as the consciousness of the other. Consciousness cannot see itself; the subject cannot identify itself in language, the Other, the unconscious—it is only present to itself as an absence. “This is what gives you the illusion that consciousness is transparent to itself [the *co-*

gito],” Lacan wrote in *Seminar II*. “We aren’t present, in the reflection; to see the reflection, we are in the consciousness of the other” (p. 112).

This is illustrated in the painting *Las Meninas* by Diego Velazquez from the seventeenth century. The viewer of the painting is in the place of the subject of the painting, which is the king and queen of Spain, whose portrait is being painted by the painter, off to the left. The painting presents the process of the royal portrait being painted from the point of view of the sitters. A reflection of the king and queen is visible in a mirror on a wall in the background. When the viewer of the painting, the subject, enters the painting, it takes the place of the sitters, the other, but the reflection of the subject is not visible in the mirror. To see the reflection, the subject must assume the consciousness of the sitters, the other, whose reflection is in the mirror. The subject, the viewer, is only present as an absence, and the consciousness of the subject, the *cogito*, is only given by the consciousness of the other.

The subject must constitute its ideal ego, its imaginary self, in the Other, which would be the perspective construction of the painting. The subject cannot see itself from the ideal ego of the imaginary body image of itself, the reflection of the other, because it is separated by the wall of language, because “it is in the space of the Other that he sees himself and the point from which he looks at himself is also in that space” (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 144), as described by Lacan, the mirror in the painting, the vanishing point in perspective construction. The place of the Other from which the subject sees itself is also the point from which the subject speaks in language, and it is the place of the unconscious, which determines the subject in language and perception as a construct of the Other, but the subject as construct of the Other does not have access to its source, as conscious thought does not have access to unconscious thought. The dream, as the road to the unconscious, takes the subject along in its search for its place in the Other. In every place that the subject looks, it perceives the image of its body as the ideal ego formed in the mirror stage.

Because the image of the unified body can only be perceived in the other, it is only perceived from the outside, from the ex-centric subject. Lacan explained in *Seminar II*, “Because of this double relation which he has with himself, all the objects of his world are always structured around the wandering shadow of his own ego” (p. 166). The ideal unity of the subject which is unattainable is evoked at every moment of perception. The object identification that the subject experiences, and the identification with the other, can never satisfy the subject faced with its own absence and dehiscence in such

an ego identification. The subject is irreducibly separated from the objects of perception, from the world which it perceives, because it cannot find itself there, though its dehiscence is contained in the object. The imaginary is always mediated by the symbolic, and “it is in the nature of desire to be radically torn.” The momentary, ephemeral experiences of perception alienate the subject from itself; the shadows on the wall of the cave reinforce the subject as prisoner in the cave, prisoner of itself.

The object can only be perceived in unity with the subject from without, temporarily, and this alienation causes disarray and fragmentation in the subject. Perception can only be sustained “within a zone of nomination” (p. 169), according to Lacan. The name has no relationship to the “spatial distinctiveness of the object,” the imaginary object identification, but rather to its temporal dimension in perception. The object, while it is “at one instant constituted as a semblance of the human subject, a double of himself” in a reflection, it “nonetheless has a certain permanence of appearance over time,” as given by the insertion of the object in perception, and the insertion of the subject in the symbolic. Perception is not possible without naming, without language; such is the relation between the imaginary and the symbolic, conscious and unconscious.

The self-perception of the subject is one of unsatisfied desire. When the subject sees itself as a unity in the other, in the imaginary, the world as given by the Other becomes fragmented, alienated, decomposed. When the subject sees the world (the Other) as a unity, in the symbolic, it is the subject which becomes fragmented and alienated. Such an oscillation in perception is manifest in the dream. The subject is either in one place, in the imaginary, or in several places, in the symbolic, exceeding the limitations of perceived reality, exiting the cave, as it were. If the subject is in several places in the symbolic, it is in the form of multiple ideal egos which reinforce the imaginary. The perceived object or the other occurs in the dream as the body of the subject itself in the ideal ego, as a reflection of the subject, a mirror image, which is not present. The image in the dream is thus a simulacrum, a copy of an original which does not exist, as in a *chôra*, a place which is not a place. The reflection of the subject also occurs in conscious perception; it is present in every act of perception. In perception, the subject is not aware of that which it perceives as its own reflection, while in the dream it becomes apparent, because the ideal ego, a product of conscious experience, is not as present in the dream. As a result, in the dream the subject becomes aware of

its isolation and alienation from the world which it perceives, as it is reproduced in the mnemonic residues of its won perception and intellection.

The isolation and alienation that the subject feels in relation to the world which it perceives is alleviated through the intervention of the symbolic, to which the dream leads the subject. The alienation of the subject is absolved in its conscious rationality, in the universality, the all-encompassing reality system, of language, in an illusion of consciousness and a *méconnaissance*. But it is in that conscious rationality that the subject disappears, becomes “no more than a pawn” (p. 168), is objectified in the signifying chain of language, and becomes determined by language, by the Other, which is the discourse of the unconscious. For Lacan in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, “The signifier, producing itself in the field of the Other, makes manifest the subject of its signification. But it functions as a signifier only to reduce the subject in question to being no more than a signifier, to petrify the subject in the same movement in which it calls the subject to function, to speak, as subject” (p. 207). The result is “the temporal pulsation in which is established that which is the characteristic of the departure of the unconscious as such—the closing.” Time, alteration, mathematics in discursive reason, are the mechanisms of conscious thought in the repression of the unconscious. The unconscious is something which perpetually opens and closes within the mechanisms of conscious thought. It is never present as other than an absence, a trace, in the gap between the imaginary and the symbolic, in which the subject is “born divided” (p. 199).

The subject becomes the network of signifiers in language, which is the dream. The subject finds itself in the layers of images in dreams in which the network of signifiers is played out. The optical model of the dream, in the intersection of the imaginary and symbolic, consists of “a number of layers, permeable to something analogous to light whose refraction changes from layer to layer. This is the locus where the affair of the subject of the unconscious is played out” (p. 45). This something analogous to light is as an inner light, as it were, a reflection of the perceived light of the ideal ego in the imaginary, in the mnemonic residue of perception, the construction of which forms the imaginary subject in relation to the symbolic.

The inner light is as the inner light of Plotinus. For Plotinus, as the constructed model of perception interacts with that which is perceived, as objects are reconstructed in mnemonic residues, perception does not depend entirely on an external light, but also an internal light, as a mnemonic residue itself. In the *Enneads*, “there is an earlier light within itself, a more brilliant,

which it sees sometimes in a momentary flash.... This is sight without the act, but it is the truest seeing, for it sees light whereas its other objects were the lit not the light" (V.5.7).⁹ Internal perception is the truest perception because it is a more immediate perception of that which is constructed in perception in conscious thought. The internal perception, the function of the symbolic and the intellectual, is only engaged with sensible objects as mnemonic residues, and is more closely connected the processes of intellection, the formation and understanding of intelligible form, what can be understood without being perceived. The intellectual of Plotinus, that which is other than discursive reason in mind, or the unconscious, "must have its vision—not of some light in some other thing but of the light within itself, unmingled, pure, suddenly gleaming before it." The pure light is the light which illuminates the intelligible form in the mind's eye, the irradiation of the spiritual light as described by Robert Grosseteste. The pure light is uncompromised by corporeal perception and material relations.

The inner light which is perceived is that which is other than given by reason in perception. Hegel defines the inner light as that which is shapeless and formless, thus that which is given by something other than sense-certainty, perception or consciousness, that which does not correspond to the mnemonic residues of perception. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, light as shapelessness is "the pure, all-embracing and all-pervading essential light of sunrise, which pervades itself in its formless substantiality" (686). The genesis of the being-for-self of spirit, objective spirit, or reason, consists of "torrents of light," while the return into the being-in-itself of spirit from the moments of its existence, the manifestation in particulars, as given by perception, consists of "streams of fire destructive of structured form," that which is given by language.

Lacan described the layers of the optical model of the dream through which the matrix of the symbolic is filtered, in the form of the subject, and through which the inner light is refracted, as an "immense display, a special specter, situated between perception and consciousness" (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 45). The optical model of the dream is located between the mnemonic residues of perception which produce the dream on the imaginary level, and the symbolic matrix of the Other. The Other is situated in the interval that separates perception and consciousness, in the *chôra* of the intersection, and it is there that the subject is constituted, in the layered apparition of the intersection of the imaginary and symbolic, which in rhetorical terms is the in-between, the locus of the trace.

The separation between the functioning of perception and consciousness is necessary in order for the *Wahrnehmungszeichen*, the traces of perception, to become mnemonic residues, to pass into memory. The traces must be effaced in perception, in the temporal and particular mechanisms of objective experience, and must be constituted simultaneously in the “signifying synchrony” (p. 46), the universal concept, or objective of Hegel. The passage from perception to consciousness is the passage from the particular to the universal, as consciousness is given through language; consciousness begins in perception, in the particular of the mnemonic residue. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* of Hegel, perception already “takes what is present to it as a universal” (111); consciousness is already implicated in perception. It is the mnemonic residue which differentiates consciousness from perception, which is the discovery of Freud in the analysis of dreams, and which renders consciousness as alienated from the constitution of the subject. The passage from the particular to the universal, from the diachronic to the synchronic, which occurs for Hegel in perception itself, occurs for Freud in the passage from perception to consciousness, from the imaginary to the symbolic, in which is found the constitution of the subject.

The *Wahrnehmungszeichen* are immediately transformed into a signifying synchrony in that they immediately become signifiers. The layers between perception and consciousness are the layers in which the traces of perception enter the symbolic as signifiers. The permeation through the layers thus entails a dialectical process of fragmentation and dispersal combined with unification and coalescence, in the two-way interaction between the imaginary and symbolic, between image and word. Such a dialectical interaction is present in language, in metaphor. “What we have here are those functions of contrast and similitude so essential in the constitution of metaphor, which is introduced by a diachrony,” said Lacan in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*” (p. 46), and which incorporates both condensation and displacement, as in the dream work. The mechanisms of language reveal the same interstice between perception and consciousness in which the constitution of the subject is to be found.

The definition of the subject between perception and consciousness, as between the imaginary and symbolic, is one of rupture and discontinuity in the lacuna which is present in language, in “the gap itself that constitutes awakening” (p. 57). That which passes in the gap between perception and consciousness is as that which passes in the gaps in the *glissement* of the signifying chain in language, what Lacan calls the gaze, the visual equivalent of

the *glissement* between the imaginary and the symbolic. “In our relation to things, in so far as this relation is constituted by the way of vision, and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it—that is what we call the gaze” (p. 73). The gaze is the presence of absence in perception, the presence of the absence of the subject in perception, as the anchoring point is in signification, and the point at which the subject is defined in relation to the unconscious. The relation of the subject to the Other is “entirely produced in a process of gap” (p. 206) in both perception and language, in both the imaginary and symbolic, and in particular in the intersection between them, as they are always interrelated.

The image in the dream, the transposition of the mnemonic residue of perception, is the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* described by Freud, which is not a representative representative (*le représentant représentatif*) according to Lacan (p. 60), but “that which takes place of the representation (*le tenant-lieu de la représentation*)” between perception and consciousness, the gap in which the subject is constituted. The *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* is located in the “schema of the original mechanisms of alienation in that first signifying coupling that enable us to conceive that the subject appears first in the Other” (p. 218), in the signifying chain, the product of which is the elision, the aphanisis or disappearance of the subject. The subject is divided because as soon as it appears in the signifying chain, as represented by a signifier, it disappears, in the same way that the mnemonic residue of perception disappears when it is inserted into the signifying chain of the dream and is replaced by the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*. The *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* is as the pronoun in language, that which replaces the absent subject in the imaginary, conscious thought, thus the divided subject.

The *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* is as the binary signifier in the metaphor, which in the process of condensation and displacement produces signification by substituting the name of one thing for something else, and an idea is formed in the combination of two names. In the *glissement* the signified is transferred from one signifier to another, in what is called *signifying substitution* in the binary signifier. The idea, the subject, is produced in the gap between signifiers, at the *point de capiton*, the intersection of the imaginary and symbolic vectors in the L-schema, in the retroactive anticipation of presence. At the anchoring point, “sense emerges from non-sense” (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 158), as Lacan described it in *Écrits*.

The binary signifier is represented in the algorithm of the metaphoric process: $f(S'/S)S \approx S(+s)$, where S' is the first signifier in the metaphor, S is the second, and the $(+)$ represents “the crossing of the bar” (p. 164) between signifier and signified, given by the condensation in the binary signifier. The second metaphoric algorithm illustrates the importance of displacement, the elision of the second signified in order for the metaphor to function: $S/\$' \cdot \$'/x \rightarrow S(U/s)$, where S is a signifier, x is the unknown signification, s is the signified created by the metaphor, and $\$'$, the barred S , is the elision of the substituted signified in the *glissement*. A third algorithm, $S'/S \times S/s \rightarrow S'/s/S/S$ (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 248), shows the substitution of one signifier for another, and the elision of the first signifier, in the metaphoric process. The repressed signifier is placed in the *Unterdrückt*, the denominator under the bar, as the binary signifier.

As the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* is the binary signifier in the metaphoric process of condensation and displacement in the formation of the dream, as that which takes the place of the representation, it is the supersession (*Urverdrängung*) of the signifier in condensation, between the imaginary and symbolic, which creates the point of attraction (*Anziehung*), the *point de capiton*, through which the unconscious is momentarily revealed, and which creates repression in the *Unterdrückung* of the signifier, which is the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*. It is that which occurs in the gap between the imaginary and the symbolic, conscious and unconscious, and between perception and consciousness, which is repressed, in the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* which is that which takes the place of the representation, in the *glissement* which occurs in the in-between, and the in-between which occurs in the *glissement*, in the intersection of the imaginary and symbolic as in the L schema. Signification occurs in the *Vorstellung* (Hegel’s picture-thinking), while the *Repräsentativ* occurs in the imaginary.

The imaginary exists in the intersubjective relation, in the ideal ego through which the subject identifies itself in relation to the other, based on the gestalt image attained in the mirror stage. The imaginary also exists in perception and consciousness, in the Other which constitutes the subject in the unconscious, in the ego and the mechanisms of thought. The ego is a product of the relation with the other, the necessity of intersubjectivity. The subject is discordant in its inability to identify itself as the image reflected by the other in relation to its own disappearance in language, which preserves the existence of the other to the subject. The ego, the mechanism of thought, is itself an object which appears in the world of objects. Consciousness, the

self-identity of the subject with its ego, is defined as a tension between the ego which has been alienated from the subject in its experience in language, and in the impossibility of its relation to the other.

In the perception of Plotinus, sensible forms are recognized as manifestations of ideas, and thus participate in the universal, as perception is a product of ego, and participates in the Other. In the intellectual, forms are self-generating and self-supporting, as they would be mnemonic residues of the imaginary subject to the symbolic. As forms in the intellectual are self-generated and universal, they are not subject to the mechanisms of ego, of the particulars of perception or conscious reason. In the *Enneads*, the “faculty of perception in the Soul [intellect] cannot act by the immediate grasping [*percipi*] of sensible objects, but only by the discerning of impressions printed upon the Animate by sensation: these perceptions are already Intelligibles, while the outer sensation is a mere phantom of the other (of that in the Soul) which is nearer to Authentic-Existence as being an impassive reading of Ideal-Forms” (I.1.7). The intelligible form is the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, that which takes place of the representation, which is self-generating and self-supporting in intellect because it has entered the symbolic. The internal perception of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* is taken as the archetype of the perception of sensible objects, which is only ephemeral and given by the ego in its imaginary identification with the other as the result of the division and alienation of the subject resulting from the mirror stage.

If the subject for Plotinus becomes self-generating and self-supporting like the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* which it experiences in its intellect, then the subject becomes that which it perceives in the intelligible, and “when you perceive that you have grown to this, you are now become very vision” (*Enneads* I.6.9). The subject becomes identical with a perception which is symbolic, which detaches itself from the perception based on the formation of the imaginary ego in the mirror stage. If the intelligible perception is symbolic, then it is an unconscious form of perception, not determined by conscious reason or the insertion of the subject into language, though it is predicated on the intersection of the imaginary and symbolic, the mnemonic residues of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanzen*. If the subject of Plotinus detaches itself from the perception of objects, in both the construct of perception and the mechanisms of reason which produce the perception, and perceives only the intelligibles in the intellect, then the subject will “be no longer the seer, but, as that place has made him, the seen” (V.8.11). The subject will see itself as being seen by the Other; it will turn itself into an object in the symbolic, and it will

disappear, according to the schema of Lacan, under the conditions that the imaginary relation reach its own limit, and the ego fades away, dissipates, becomes disorganized, dissolves.

For Lacan the subject is always fragmented in the relation between sensible perception and language. The gap between the perception (as opposed to apperception) and language, between the particular and universal, between the signifier and the signified, between the imaginary and symbolic, is defined as desire. Desire is the product of the impossibility of the imaginary in the symbolic, the splitting of the subject between identification with the other and identification in the Other, the splitting in which the unconscious is formed, in the repression of desire as misrecognition, *méconnaissance*, which is the only recourse of the subject. The splitting occurs in the processes of language, in metaphor and metonymy, as the impossible representation of what the subject cannot know as itself; as Lacan wrote in *Écrits*, “it is the concrete incidence of the signifier in the submission of need to demand which, by repressing desire into the position of the misrecognized, gives the unconscious its order.”¹⁰ Desire is maintained by language, as is the dehiscence of the subject, and the possibility of the unconscious.

Rather than represent the subject, language misrepresents the subject, and is the source of the subject’s *méconnaissance*, in the conflict between the imaginary and symbolic, conscious and unconscious thought. Language conditions the relation of the subject to the Other, and blocks the relationships of the subject to the other. Intersubjectivity, the specificity of desire, cannot be articulated in language. The unconscious, as the discourse of the Other, is the locus of the inarticulation of desire in relation to the other in language. According to Lacan, “The unconscious is that part of the concrete discourse, in so far as it is transindividual, that is not at the disposal of the individual in re-establishing the continuity of his conscious discourse” (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 49). As the discourse of the Other, the unconscious is that by which the subject is constituted as object, “the sum of the effects of speech on a subject, at that level where the subject constitutes itself from the effects of the signifier,” in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (p. 126.). The unconscious is the locus of the splitting of the subject, as it is inaccessible to the subject. The unconscious can only be grasped by the subject in *méconnaissance*, in the knowledge of its own division and impossibility.

Self-identity as given by consciousness or the *cogito*, or by the reflection of the subject in the other, can only be a mirage in the play of reflections in both the structure of the psyche and the structure of perception. When the

subject identifies itself in the other, or in the mirror, it is never the case of a subject identifying itself, but of an other identifying the subject, in the structure of the Other, as if it were identifying itself, as described by Lacan in *Écrits* (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 138). The same is true in language; the subject misidentifies itself as the source of the signifier, while it is the signifier which is the cause of the subject, in the structure of the Other. Because the imaginary and symbolic represent themselves to the subject as unified totalities, the subject, as ego, cannot perceive its own dehiscence. The unified totality of the ego is reinforced by its participation in perception, and its participation in language, in its identification with the other. The ego is thus a mechanism of both sustenance and resistance. The symbolic ego ideal in language is constituted by opposition, negation, and denial. As a construct of language it is ephemeral and constantly changing; the subject as a construct is fleeting and vanishing. The imaginary ego is the product of a play of reflections in the mirage of consciousness; the subject is free to constantly redefine itself in language, but much less free to redefine itself in perception.

In language the subject is caught up in the dialectical signification of the self and the other, the other and the other, as played out in the *glissement* of the signifying chain. As opposed to being constant and re-affirming, unlike the imaginary, the symbolic in language, or the Other, is constantly changing, is discontinuous and vacillating, in the double inscription (*Niederschrift*) of the conscious and unconscious, signifier and signified. Such a vacillation and double inscription alienates the subject from language, that by which it is constituted, as in the self-alienation of reason of Hegel, the infinite self-affirmation in absolute negativity, as described in *Philosophy of Mind*. The dialectical oppositions of the subject in language, self/other, subject/object, conscious/unconscious, signifier/signified, imaginary/symbolic, are discontinuous and vacillating as well, never constant or clearly defined. The symbolic, the unconscious, is an insufficiency in relation to the identity of the subject, and the locus of its non-being. The subject is defined as the gap between its self-definition and its self-definition in perception, the gap between the symbolic and imaginary, unconscious and conscious, from which desire is generated in the attempt to compensate for the lack caused by language. The relation between the Other and the imaginary is one of discontinuity and conflict, so the subject can only be divided, and impossible to complete; thus the mechanism of desire. The lack, the incompleteness, is inscribed into the subject by the unconscious.

The subject is always given as other to itself in language, in its relation to the imaginary other in consciousness. The reflection of the other “becomes visible with the particular configuration we call consciousness, in as much as the imaginary function of the ego comes into play. Man gets to see this reflection from the point of view of the other. He is an other for himself. This is what gives you the illusion that consciousness is transparent to itself. We aren’t present, in the reflection; to see the reflection, we are in the consciousness of the other” (*Seminar II*, p. 112), which is manufactured by the subject. The identification with the other, in the dialectic of the imaginary and symbolic, is a function of misrecognition, as first played out in the mirror stage. The dialectic of the imaginary and symbolic is a dialectic of the desire of the Other, the desire instituted in the subject by language, and the desire of the other, which is mistakenly taken to compensate for the lack caused by the desire of the Other.

For the subject in the mirror stage, “the image of his body is the principle of every unity he perceives in objects. Now, he only perceives the unity of this specific image from the outside, and in an anticipated manner” (p. 166), in the same way that the subject is inserted into language, in a particular signifier given by the universal of the Other, the signifying chain. “Because of this double relation which he has with himself, all the objects of his world are always structured around the wandering shadow of his own ego,” in conflict with the Other. “Man’s ideal unity, which is never attained as such and escapes him at every moment, is evoked at every moment in this perception,” thus the division of the subject, and the consequent desire. The object in which the subject seeks its unity “is never for him definitively the final object...it thus appears in the guise of an object from which man is irremediably separated, and which shows him the very figure of his dehiscence in the world,” which is an “object which by essence destroys him, anxiety, which he cannot recapture, in which he will never truly be able to find reconciliation, his adhesion to the world, his perfect complementarity on the level of desire.”

As a result of this, “it is in the nature of desire to be radically torn.” It is impossible for the subject to fulfill itself, to mediate the dialectic between the imaginary and symbolic. The attempted mediation, desire, is “maintained by a succession of momentary experiences” which constitute the subject in language, the fleeting and vanishing subject in the signifying chain. Consciousness is sustained in the subject by seeing itself be seen by the other, in the gaze or in the reflection, as the imaginary is subject to the symbolic, the Oth-

er. The gaze of the other, the seeing oneself being seen, is a structuring mechanism of the subject in perception. Seeing oneself being seen is translated into understanding oneself being understood in language, the anticipation of the recognition of the subject by the other in the communicative function in language. In the same way that the subject cannot in actuality see itself being seen by the other, because the subject only exists as a signifier in the Other for the other, the subject cannot in actuality understand itself being understood by the other. The mirage of consciousness of the subject is sustained in the illusion that what the subject says is being understood by the other in relation to what is said. This is never the case. Language only communicates by misunderstanding, *méconnaissance*. What the other understands to be communicated is never what is intended, because language can only function as a resistance to the imaginary relation between the subject and the other, the wall of language which intersects object identification in the quadrature of the ego in the L schema. I can never completely know how other people see me or what they think of me, or if they understand me; I am driven by the desire to know what I cannot know.

The barrier between language and communication is the unconscious, the interposition of which in conscious discourse makes communication impossible between the subject and the other, in the *méconnaissance* of the dialectic of the imaginary and symbolic in the formation of the ego, the mechanisms of thought. The unconscious for Lacan only appears in trans-individual or trans-subjective relations, in the impossibility of communication in language. Conscious discourse is a sequential structuring which, with the introjection of the unconscious, the Other, is subject to discontinuity and vacillation, which lends to the impossibility of communication. As Lacan says, it is not the function of language to communicate, but rather the function of language to evoke, to evoke the impossible relation of desire between the subject and the other as inscribed in the Other.

The imaginary, as opposed to the symbolic, is subjected to a sequential structuring, and is thus at odds with the symbolic in the attempt at communication. The mechanisms of regression, repression, omission, ellipsis, pleonasm, catachresis, etc., are as fundamental in the structuring of language as are grammar and syntax, and represent the problematic function of language as that which communicates. Metaphor and metonymy combine both sequential structuring and repression and over-determination, displacement and condensation; they thus combine the mechanisms which make language possible with the mechanisms which make language impossible. Repression in

language, the *Unterdrückung* in metaphor and metonymy, is the repression of the subject, and maintains the illusion of consciousness in language, while at the same time preventing the subject from knowing its own unconscious, and thus preventing the subject from being able to communicate to the other, which it can only identify in the structure of the Other, to which it does not have access. The repression in language is a repression of the ideal ego formed in the mirror stage, which nevertheless continues to be present, and through which the subject seeks itself in the other, in a function of desire, which cannot be consummated, because of the inaccessibility of the Other in which the desire is formed.

The intercession of the imaginary ego in the maintenance of the symbolic in language represses the non-being of the subject to itself and prevents the metaphoric death of the subject to itself. It is impossible to separate the imaginary ego, the recognition of the subject in the other, from the symbolic, the objectivity of the Other. The identification of the imaginary and symbolic, the mirage of identity in reflection, the illusion of continuity in consciousness in language and perception, is the locus of *méconnaissance*. Language is that which distorts experience. In the identity given by reflection, and the objectification of the subject in language, the self-identity of the subject is a sustained fiction, a myth. Language, according to Lacan, is a mythology, as the Other, that which cannot be known and is yet the allegory of human identity. The identity of the subject is always in a state of flux, and is always inaccessible.

The individual speech act in language, *parole*, is that which interjects the Other, the unconscious, into discourse, and which disrupts the imaginary relation. *Parole* is that which enacts the impossible desire on the part of the subject in the attempted identification with the other; it is that which makes communication in language impossible, which enacts the impossible relation between the subject and the other, in the presence of the imaginary which introduces discontinuity in the symbolic. *Parole* is the catachresis, pleonasm or ellipsis inserted into the signifying chain which announces the presence of the Other and the possibility of the unconscious in the disruption of the signifying sequence. *Parole* is also that which enacts the *point de capiton* in the retroactive sliding of the signifier in the anticipation of the subject, the interreferentiality of the signifier in relation to other signifiers. *Parole* is set in opposition to *la langue*, which is the underlying structure of language seen as separate from individual speech acts, which is the structure of the Other,

which is the unconscious, which appears in the signifying chain at the *point de capiton*.

In *Seminar XX (On Feminine Sexuality: The Limits of Love and Knowledge)*, *la langue* is suggested by “*llanguage*,” which is defined as that which in language exceeds conscious discourse and *parole*, but which incorporates them, according to Lacan. “*Llanguage* serves purposes that are altogether different from that of communication” (p. 138),¹¹ different from the functions of dialogue as a mechanism in the relation between the subject and the other. “If I have said that language is what the unconscious is structured like, that is because language, first of all, doesn’t exist,” because the unconscious does not exist. “Language is what we try to know concerning the function of *llanguage*” as psychoanalysis is what we try to know concerning the function of the unconscious. Scientific discourse is a language which approaches language but does not actualize language, because it misrecognizes the unconscious. “The unconscious evinces knowledge that, for the most part, escapes the speaking being” (p. 139) in language. What is articulated in the subject is beyond the knowledge of the subject in language, and is that which is given by *llanguage*, and is that which is articulated of *llanguage* in language by the unconscious.

The effects of *llanguage* are not something that the speaking subject is able to enunciate, as in *parole*. The linguistic structure of the unconscious is only a hypothetical structure, conceived to support the existence of *llanguage*, that which is other than that which can be enunciated, or that which can be known through language. *Llanguage* is thus an effect of the real. *Llanguage* reveals that language is other than communication. Language, as a complex of signifiers which represent the subject, is a function of *llanguage* in revealing the unconscious of the subject. *Llanguage* is the language of the unconscious, which is unknowable and inaccessible, but which reveals itself as absence in language, in the communicative shortcomings of language in the imaginary and conscious discourse, language and perception.

The speaking subject is an instrument of language as a function of *llanguage*, a function of the unconscious, in the discourse of the Other. As a result, “the subject turns out to be—and this is only true for speaking beings—a being whose being is always elsewhere, as the predicate shows” (p. 142), that is, “speaking.” “The subject is never more than fleeting and vanishing, for it is a subject only by a signifier and to another signifier.” *Llanguage* is the space of the structure of language outside of language itself, like the “gaspung chasm in the sky” in the Myth of Er in the *Republic* (614) of Plato,

where there was revealed to the immortal souls “a shaft of light stretching from above straight through earth and heaven....this light is the bond of heaven and holds its whole circumference together, like the swifter of a trireme” (616). *Llanguage* is as the mythological unseen superstructure of the universe of language, that which exceeds that which cannot be exceeded in knowledge, given the limitation of knowledge.

Language itself is only a continuous misconstruction, as language is that which defines the subject in relation to the Other, which is the unconscious. The subject is an effect of language, an effect of misconstruction. The misconstruction of language is the illusion of consciousness, the self-identity of the subject in reason, and the limitations of knowledge, which are the subjects of metaphysics. Conscious discourse, as perpetuated by the imaginary ego, screens the subject from the unconscious; the unconscious cannot be revealed in conscious discourse, except as an interruption, or disturbance, or absence, thus “the less we articulate it, the less we talk, and the more it speaks us,”¹² according to Lacan in *Seminar III (The Psychoses)*. Access to the unconscious is a kind of *docta ignorantia*, learned ignorance. In the *De docta ignorantia* of Nicolas Cusanus in the fifteenth century, visible things are seen as enigmas and images of divine creation, that which is hidden and incomprehensible (p. 22),¹³ as the subject of Lacan is an enigma of the unconscious, that which is hidden and incomprehensible. According to Cusanus, everything is visible as a continual instability in the material world, as the subject of Lacan is given by language.

For Lacan, every word in language, every signifier, contains the dialectic of the symbolic and the imaginary, the Other and the other. The subject is always present and always not present in the fluctuation of language caused by the interjection of the unconscious, and each word contains the trace of the previous signifier and the trace of an absence, as in the *différance* of Derrida. The splitting of the subject occurs in every word that is spoken, in the very act of speaking. Language itself is a metaphor for lack of being, the absence which it replaces as supplement (Derrida’s term), and it is also a metonymy in the production of nonsense in relation to the subject as constituted by the unconscious. The mechanisms of language, condensation and displacement, as revealed in dream analysis, are the mechanisms of the desire of the Other, in both the imaginary and symbolic.

In metaphor and metonymy, according to Lacan, “the subject has to find the constituting structure of his desire in the same gap opened up by the effect of the signifiers in those who come to represent the Other for him, in so

far as his demand is subjected to them" (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 264). The imaginary ego of the subject identifies itself in the other through the mechanisms of the symbolic, the Other, in the gap created by the signifiers in the discourse which is presented to it. The subject recognizes the same effect of desire in the dream, also a desire of the Other, as the dream reveals the discourse of the Other. "Perhaps one can catch a glimpse in passing of the reason for his effect of occultation that caught our attention in the recognition of the desire of the dream. The desire of the dream is not assumed by the subject who says 'I' in his speech," the ego ideal of the symbolic. "Articulated, nevertheless, in the locus of the Other, it is discourse.... Thus the wishes that it constitutes have no optative inflection to alter the indicative of their formula." The effects of desire on the subject in the dream are given by the linguistic structure of the dream, and not the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* that occurs in the dream as the product of imaginary ego identification.

The effects of desire are instituted by metaphor and metonymy, in condensation and displacement, in the subject as soon as the subject enters into language during the mirror stage. Language provides substitutions for object identifications, as in the *Fort! Da!* game described by Freud. In the newly constituted symbolic order, language forms a link in the subject to pre-linguistic experiences and perceptions, and compensates for the alienation and absence experienced by the subject created by the "wall of language" itself, as both the gestalt image of the mirror stage and the word intervene in the direct experience of the perceiving subject. The metaphoric constitution of the subject in its early formation in language returns to the subject in conscious discourse through metaphor and metonymy as that which is repressed in the Other, the unconscious. These signifying chains occur as secondary repressions referring to the repressed signifying chains in the unconscious, the *Urverdrängung*, as in condensation in the dream. The point of the repression of the signifier is the *point de capiton*, the point at which the repressed is revealed, as the unconscious in conscious discourse, as in the formation of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*. The repressed signifiers are translatable in relation to conscious signifiers.

This is represented by Lacan in the algorithm for the metaphor which reads $S/S1' \cdot S2'/x \rightarrow (I/S'')$ (*Écrits*, 1966, p. 890). $S1'$ is the combination of the signifier and the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, the unconscious representation that takes the place of the mnemonic residue of the conscious perception, the intelligible form that takes the place of the sensible form, that constitutes language (S). $S2'$ is the condensation which occurs in the *Vorstellungs-*

repräsentanz which is absorbed into the signifying chain in language. The linguistic metaphor *S* refers to the imaginary ego or ideal ego (*x*) by which the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* is transferred to identification with the other by the subject. The imaginary identification is supported by inaccessible signifying chains (*S''*) which correspond to the signifying chains in language (*I/S''*). The signifying chains revealed in the structure of the dream correspond to the signifying chains in conscious discourse, and carry with them the same relation between the imaginary and the symbolic. A relation is established between conscious discourse and the repressed discourse of the unconscious as revealed in the dream, and thus the psychoanalyst is able to see how the repressed discourse of the unconscious plays a role in the language of the subject, through the interaction of the imaginary and symbolic in the formation of the subject in the mirror stage.

Given this correlation, unconscious language, or the discourse of the Other in the unconscious, cannot be seen to operate according to the same rules or logic of conscious language, notwithstanding the occurrences of linguistic structures which can be observed in dream work. The dream is not the unconscious, but rather conscious mechanisms in the production of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanzen* which are seen to lead to the unconscious, as the organization of mnemonic residues in dreams is not the product of conscious thought, though the perception of them is, and any signification which might occur in the organization can be read retroactively in the memory of the dream, as it is read retroactively in the signifying chain in conscious discourse. If language is a metaphor, then the dream is a metaphor, for the same supplement to the lack of being created by the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* that is created by the imaginary object identification in the conscious subject. As a metaphor, the dream also contains repressed content, as represented in the algorithm $S \dots S' / \Delta \dots \$,$ where the $S \dots S'$ is the signifying chain of the dream, the manifest content, the dream image, and the $\Delta \dots \$$ is the latent content of the dream, the dream thought, the elided subject which is not accessible to conscious discourse, but which is present in the dream in the imaginary identifications of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanzen*, as they are present in conscious discourse in the elided subject of identifications with the other, within the context of the Other. Just as in conscious discourse, the metaphoric signification of the dream contains gaps, lacunae, scotomata, which disrupt the language of the dream and reveal the mechanisms of the unconscious, not to mention the condensations and displacements themselves, and the ellipses, pleonasm, syllepses and catachreses.

The dream reveals the *llanguage* that is not accessible to conscious reason, the mechanisms of reason which are outside of reason itself, as in the chasm in the sky in the Myth of Er in the *Republic* of Plato, which reveals the structure of the world outside the world, like the swifter on a trireme. But the dream also gives a hint of the mechanisms of *llanguage*, as they are filtered into conscious reason, in *parole*. The effect which is defined as that which connects the mechanisms of *llanguage* with the mechanisms of *parole* is desire. Desire is the effect of the elision of the subject in the metaphoric chain and the necessity of the subject to assume an alienating identity in language; desire is desire of the Other. It is the effect of the mirror stage, that which causes the infant to substitute for the object identifications, to compensate for the internal division caused by the object identification in the imaginary ego, and to compensate for the alienation that goes along with the formation of the symbolic, the Other. Desire is the use of language in the impossibility of returning to the mythical state of unity between imaginary and symbolic; it is the mechanism of the formation of metaphor and metonymy in tropic language in the production of a subject which does not exist.

The product of desire is the vacillating, inconsistent slope of the signifying chain in speech, the disruptive *parole* of imaginary identification, and the lacunae and scotomata produced by the intercession of the unconscious, the desire of the Other. Desire is contained in metaphor and metonymy, in condensation and displacement, as the link between the speaking subject and its identity, which is inaccessible to it. It is manifest in the pulsations of conscious reason, the modulations and transformations of alteration and opposition brought about by perception, as in the "alteration of light and dark" (p. 167),¹⁴ as described by Lacan in *Seminar III (The Psychoses)*, which is, according to Plato, the basis of all mathematics. Desire is present in every word, as a companion to the absence which is present in every word, as trace of the subject which has been elided from its own reason, and which seeks its identity in that reason. It is the desperation and impossibility of the human condition, and that which pushes reason, and language, to exceed themselves, to allow the subject to be freed from them, to travel outside of them, like the immortal souls in the Myth of Er. The instrument of desire is the signifier, which creates the subject, but creates the subject as alienated and divided.

This essay developed and rewritten from sections of *Architecture and Psychoanalysis*, New York: Peter Lang, 2006, without the references to architecture, and with revisions and corrections.

¹ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits, A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), p. 86.

² Georges Bataille, "The Pineal Eye," in *Visions of Excess, Selected Writings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), p. 80.

³ Georges Bataille, "The Notion of Expenditure," in *Visions of Excess*, p. 128.

⁴ Quoted in Jean-Louis Baudry, "Bataille and Science: An Introduction to Inner Experience," in *On Bataille, Critical Essays*, ed. Leslie Boldt-Irons (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), p. 276.

⁵ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee (London: Penguin Books, 1955).

⁶ Georges Bataille, *Eroticism, Death and Sensuality* (San Francisco: City Light Books, 1986), p. 40.

⁷ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954–1955*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), p. 54.

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⁹ Plotinus, *The Enneads*, trans. Stephen MacKenna (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

¹⁰ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966), p. 709, quoted in Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration: Post-Structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory* (London: Verso, 1987), p. 82.

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¹² Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire III*, p. 157, quoted in Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986), p. 197.

¹³ Nicolai de Cusa, *De docta ignorantia, Book I* (Lipsiae: Felicis Meiner, 1932).

¹⁴ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III, The Psychoses, 1955–1956*, trans. Russell Grigg, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993).