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MEANING FORCE AND TRUTH IN POST-STRUCTURALISM:
A CRITICAL PRESENTATION OF RECENT FRENCH PHILOSOPHIES

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ABSTRACT

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MEANING FORCE AND TRUTH IN POST-STRUCTURALISM:

A CRITICAL PRESENTATION OF RECENT FRENCH PHILOSOPHIES

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This thesis is a critical presentation of the work of some of the leading
French thinkers of the 1960s and 1970s belonging to the tradition known as
'post-structuralism'. It examines in detail the thought of Derrida, Lacan,
Lyotard and Foucault, offers an interpretation of the logic of development of
post-structuralism as a whole, in terms of the relations between the concepts
of meaning, force and truth, and suggests the reasons for the impasse at
which post-structuralism arrived in the late 1970s.

Chapter One is concerned with the work of Jacques Derrida, as the first
thinker to develop a widely-accepted post-structuralist critique of
structuralism. It examines the nature of this critique, assesses the parallels
and divergences between Derrida's work and that of Heidegger, and concludes
with some suggestions on the way in which Derrida's thought can be seen as
reviving the 'philosophy of identity' of German Idealism. In the first section
of Chapter Two Jacques Lacan's work is considered in its relation to Freud,
and in its development from an initial concern with psychosis in the 1930s. In
a second section of this chapter Lacan and Derrida are compared, and Lacan
is found to have a more sophisticated theory of the interrelations of language,
meaning, intention and reference than can be found in Derrida's work.

Chapter Three presents the work of Jean-François Lyotard as marking the
transition to a second phase of post-structuralism, in which language is no
longer given absolute primacy, and problems of meaning are displaced by the
problem of forces. Lyotard's criticisms of the Lacanian conception of the
unconscious as 'structured like a language', and the reasons for the evolution
of his thought, from the dualism of <u>Discours, Figure</u>, to the libidinal monism
of <u>Economie Libidinale</u> are examined. In Chapter Four the work of Michel
Foucault, whose concept of power is seen as complementary to Lyotard's
concept of desire, is discussed. A first section traces the development of
Foucault's views on the relation between power and subjectivity, and a second
deals with his account of the relation between power and knowledge. It is
argued, in both cases, that the philosophers of the Frankfurt School have a
more philosophically coherent conception of these relations.

A final chapter deals with the Nietzsche-inspired assault on the concept of
truth which is a central feature of much post-structuralist thought, and points
to the political and moral difficulties to which this attack leads. In the
Conclusion the internal logic of development which forces the post-
structuralists into this attack is traced, and again it is argued that the
tradition of Critical Theory preserves what is of value in the post-
structuralist position, without engaging in a self-defeating assault on truth
and reason as such.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

One of the more remarkable features of cultural life in the English-speaking world over the last decade or so has been the widespread discussion and diffusion of the theories of the group of French thinkers whose work is commonly designated by the term 'post-structuralism'. The impact of this importation of Gallic paradigms and procedures has perhaps been most profoundly felt in the field of literary criticism. Both in Britain and - to an even greater extent - in North America the recourse to forms of analysis and interpretation originating in post-structuralism, and in particular to the methods of 'deconstruction' developed by the philosopher Jacques Derrida, has provoked major debates about the nature of literature, the purpose of criticism, and the epistemology of interpretation. The group of critics known as the 'Yale School', including Harold Bloom, J. Hillis Miller and the late Paul de Man, are only the most distinguished of those who have espoused and propagated post-structuralist modes of reading.[1] In other areas post-structuralist thought has been scarcely less influential. In Britain during the 1970s, for example, a burgeoning film culture centred on the magazine Screen made considerable use of French semiology, and later of Jacques Lacan's reformulation of psychoanalysis, in order to analyze the production of meaning in cinema, and to theorize the implication of the viewing subject in the film text. Similarly, new forms of historical research into the development of institutions of social administration and control, or into changing conceptions of sexuality, looked to the philosopher-historian Michel Foucault for inspiration,[2] while both Foucault and Lacan have influenced feminist theories of gender and subjectivity.[3] More recently the work of Jean-François Lyotard has become important for aesthetic and political debates on the relation between modernism and post-modernism, again particularly in North America.[4] Indeed, even outside the narrower confines of the academy, the concepts of post-structuralism have provided a kind of lingua franca for the discussion of problems of ideology, aesthetics, sexuality and politics within the broadly left-wing culture which emerged from the radicalizations of the later 1960s.

This panorama, however, reveals a curious anomaly. Although most of the leading post-structuralist thinkers are, by training and in virtue of their major preoccupations, philosophers, or - like Lacan - are deeply concerned

with problems of a philosophical nature, there has been comparatively little
interest in the post-structuralists among English-speaking philosophers. This
lack of interest cannot be attributed to simple insularity, since over the last
few years there has taken place a remarkable opening-out of philosophy in the
English-speaking world towards alternative traditions of thought, an erosion of
the securities - and prejudices - of the dominant stream of analytical
philosophy. It is rather that the style of discourse employed by post-
structuralism, playful, gestural, elusively metaphorical, a style which has made
complex philosophical argument resonant and pertinent to readers with
predominantly literary interests, has proved a barrier to understanding for
professional philosophers. This discrepancy between the general neglect of
philosophers such as Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze by their counterparts in
the English-speaking world, and the enthusiastic adoption of their ideas in
departments of art and comparative literature, has had the effect of distort-
ing the Anglo-Saxon understanding of post-structuralism as a whole. For
although the reception of post-structuralist thought by theorists of literature
and culture has been responsive to the style and ethos of post-structuralism,
sometimes to the point of slavishly imitating its typical gestures and postures,
this reception has often shown little awareness of the traditions of philo-
sophical thought to which the post-structuralists - however rebelliously -
belong, and has therefore been tempted to present arguments which have a
long history in philosophy, and which are open to well-established objections,
as unprecedented revelations. On the other hand, those few English-speaking
philosophers who have taken a serious interest in post-structuralism, and who
have sometimes expressed dismay at the wilder espousals of French ideas by
colleagues in neighbouring disciplines, have often shown little interest in the
local context and detail of philosophical debates in France. Richard Rorty,
perhaps the most well-known of these authors, has tended to blend the
clashing opinions of the post-structuralists into a generic relativist position,
and to dilute the - often disturbing - political implications of post-
structuralist thought into his own brand of pragmatic liberalism.[5]

The present work is intended to remedy some of these defects in the
reception and understanding of post-structuralism, by presenting in a
systematic and detailed manner the philosophical content of the work of
leading post-structuralist thinkers, by examining the traditions of argument
and clashes of viewpoint which have marked out the internal contours of

post-structuralism, and by offering a critical account - in terms of the shifting relations between the concepts of meaning, force and truth - of the development of the post-structuralist phase of French thought as a whole. One or two words should perhaps be said, in this context, about the selection and presentation of thinkers. Firstly, within the confines of this study, it would have been impossible to treat evenly the corpus of every thinker included. Thus, there is little discussion of Jacques Derrida's work of the later 1970s, which arguably, despite its stylistic embroidery, introduces few substantial alterations to his basic position, while the treatment of Deleuze is largely restricted to a discussion of the 1962 book on Nietzsche, indispensable because of its strong influence on later post-structuralist uses of Nietzsche. For the most part Jean-François Lyotard is employed as the representative of the 'philosophy of desire' of the 1970s, since the greater detail of his criticisms of Lacan, contrasted with Deleuze's more politicised assault on psychoanalysis, sets the crucial disagreements between the two phases of post-structuralism in clear relief. Finally, the comparisons with the Frankfurt School are intended as no more than an indication of the direction in which a critique of post-structuralism might be developed. There has recently been a growing awareness that, despite the differences of vocabulary and attitude, there is a considerable overlap between the concerns of post-structuralism and of Critical Theory.[6] For those who believe, like the present author, that post-structuralism raises problems which it is unable to resolve in its own terms, and which can be more consistently addressed within the Marxist tradition, more sustained comparisons of post-structuralism and Critical Theory are clearly an important task for the immediate future.

CHAPTER ONE

JACQUES DERRIDA: BETWEEN PHENOMENOLOGY AND STRUCTURALISM

Although 'post-structuralism' is the term most commonly employed in the English-speaking world to refer to the philosophical currents which succeeded the formalism and positivism of the early 1960s in France, this designation cannot be understood in a purely chronological sense. In his seminars of the mid-1950s, for example, Lacan had already indicated many of the failings of structuralism in its Lévi-Straussian form, especially the tendency of structural determinism to transform structure itself into a kind of 'para-animal formation' or 'machine', and its consequent inability to account for the position of the speaking subject.[1] Similarly, the publication of Michel Foucault's Madness and Civilization, with its implicit critique of the repressive functioning of the human sciences, preceded the enthusiasm for the human sciences which was fired by Lévi-Strauss's work in anthropology, and in particular by the appearance of The Savage Mind in 1962.[2] At the same time, however, both Foucault and Lacan are, in their different ways, deeply influenced by structuralism. Lacan's conception of a 'symbolic order' which is the ultimate determinant of human action is clearly derived from Lévi-Strauss's account of society as composed of systems of signification,[3] while Foucault's later work of the 1960s attempts to apply, in the domain of the history of science, the notion of structures independent of - and determining - human consciousness.[4] It is perhaps to these relations of simultaneous dependence upon, and distance from, structuralism that the term 'post-structuralism' should most properly be seen as applying.

Nevertheless, the chronological implications of the term cannot be entirely discounted. For although post-structuralism can be shown to be almost as old as structuralism itself, it was not until the late 1960s that the possibility of a theoretical advance beyond structuralism began to dawn upon public consciousness. Up until this point even projects as divergent as those of Lacan and Foucault, and as subversive of Lévi-Strauss's original intentions, could be included under the generic title of 'structuralism', the common denominators of hostility to phenomenology, and a new precision of attention paid to the immanent relations constituting symbolic or discursive systems

being sufficient to obscure any deeper theoretical discrepancies. Furthermore, such was the implicit equation of philosophical activity with a phenomenology of the Sartrian type, that Lévi-Strauss's proclamation of the redundancy of the concept of the human subject appeared to herald the end of philosophy - considered as speculative, unscientific form of discourse - altogether. The theme of a positivist supersession of philosophy was in the air, and in their different ways - Lacan as psychoanalyst, Foucault as historian of cultural formations, even Althusser as theoretician of theoretical practice - the leading French thinkers of the early and middle 1960s tended to present their work not simply as anti-phenomenological, but as something other than philosophy in the traditional sense, as convergent - if not identical - with science.[5]

In 1967, however, the philosopher Jacques Derrida published a cluster of works - Speech and Phenomena, Writing and Difference, and Of Grammatology - which marked the first major break with this 'structuralist consensus', and rapidly secured their author a central position in French intellectual life. Derrida's originality was not only to suggest that the methodological assumptions of structuralism could not be considered immune to further investigation, but in so doing to restore the rights of philosophy as an autonomous form of enquiry, entitled to question the epistemological status of the sciences, rather than obliged to approximate to this status.[6] This is not to suggest, of course, that Derrida was the first thinker to develop a philosophical critique of structuralism: from the very beginning the advance of structuralism had been contested by writers of the calibre of Sartre, Dufrenne, Lefebvre and Ricoeur.[7] Yet, for all their frequent acuity, these critiques went largely unheeded, since their recourse to 'pre-structuralist' philosophical resources - Hegelian and existentialist versions of Marxism, phenomenology, hermeneutics - could be dismissed as theoretically regressive.[8] Derrida's success, in this climate of opinion, was achieved by means of an ingenious double shift of position. His intellectual debts are, unmistakeably, to precisely those thinkers which structuralism was believed to have deposed - Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger - and this affiliation to the tradition of German Idealism and its 20th century inheritors allows him to develop a powerful critique of the limitations of formalism and positivism. Yet, at the same time, Derrida endorses certain central insights of structuralism and turns them against the tradition to which he belongs, thereby producing the impression of a more

consistent and radical advance beyond the philosophies of consciousness and the subject.

Unlike contemporaries such as Foucault and Althusser, Derrida does not aim his critique of phenomenology at its most readily available and culturally dominant form - the thought of Sartre. It is a peculiarity of his work, and also perhaps a significant weakness, that his attack on phenomenological accounts of the relation between language and experience concentrates on the views of the originator of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl. The central impulse of Husserl's philosophy, and hence his conception of language, is inseparable from the climate of intellectual crisis which pervaded the years around the turn of the century, a crisis to which the very success of the 19th century in extending empirical science into the human domain - in the form of psychology, anthropology, historiography - had largely contributed. For if all human beliefs, as these disciplines suggested, could be explained as the effects of natural, psychological or historical causes, it no longer seemed possible for any particular set of beliefs, whether religious, scientific, or philosophical, to claim a privileged objectivity or veracity. The nascent 'human sciences' themselves appeared to lead towards a self-cancelling scepticism and relativism.[9] Husserl's solution to this problem relies upon two fundamental contentions: that even those theories which argue for an external conditioning of consciousness must ultimately be based upon data which are given to consciousness; and that in all such experience it is possible to distinguish what is presented from the fact that it is presented, the essential from the empirical. Thus, whatever the causes of experience and belief discovered by scientific investigation, such discoveries cannot affect the essential relations between phenomena, as these are initially revealed to consciousness. Indeed, it must be possible to suspend the inherited ontological commitments, including those of natural science, which permeate our habitual experience of the world - an operation which Husserl terms the 'transcendental reduction' or 'epoche' - in order to describe such essential relations. In this way, not only will cultural relativism be circumvented; it will be possible to establish a new 'scientific' philosophy which, in clarifying the a priori structures of experience, will place the empirical sciences themselves on a sounder basis.[10]

However, in thus instating a consciousness purified by the transcendental reduction as the foundation of all knowledge, Husserl is obliged to adopt a particularly stringent version of a conception of the relation between language and experience which is well established in the philosophical tradition. Fundamentally, Husserl considers phenomenology not as a position supported by argument within philosophy, but as the activity of entirely unprejudiced description. It is an account of phenomena which are presented with peculiar self-evidence within what he conceives as a field of inward vision. In Ideas I, Husserl suggests that 'complete clearness is the measure of all truth, and ... statements which give faithful expression to their data need fear nothing from the finest arguments'.[11] Yet in order for such clarity to be possible, in order for the results of 'essential intuition' to be recorded in language, not only must the meanings expressed by language be considered as ideal and immutable, independent of the empirical fluctuations of language-use, but the adequation between these meanings and the acts of consciousness in which the objects of experience are intended must itself be a possible object of experience. In Philosophy as Rigorous Science Husserl affirms this requirement with the utmost conviction: 'All statements that describe the phenomena in direct concepts do so, to the extent that they are valid, by means of concepts of essence, that is, by conceptual significations that must permit of being redeemed in an essential intuition.'[12]

In his writings on Husserl, most thoroughly in Speech and Phenomena, his monograph on the problem of the sign in the first of the Logical Investigations, Derrida traces the difficulties into which Husserl is led by his attempt to sustain this conception of linguistic meaning. In order to guarantee that what is given in experience may be mirrored without distortion in language, Husserl must demonstrate that, in its primary form, language functions as a means of expression of the inner life: the production of the articulated sounds or marks of language is accompanied by a sequence of meaning-conferring intentional acts which are phenomenally unified with the experiences of a conscious subject. At the very beginning of the first Logical Investigation, therefore, Husserl feels it necessary to clear up what he sees as a terminological confusion. For many of the things which we refer to as 'signs' are not in fact accompanied by conscious intentions in this way: he gives the examples of the stigma as a sign of slavery, or the flag as a sign of the nation. Such signs (Zeichen) are merely indications (Anzeichen), they serve

to motivate belief in a being or state of affairs which is not immediately present to consciousness by means of a being or state of affairs which is so present, but they do not possess meaning in the strict sense. The meaningful sign, which Husserl refers to as an 'expression' (Ausdruck), can only be constituted by the intentional act of a subject.[13]

An important consequence of this argument is that in 'living conversation' language functions both indicatively and expressively. To the hearer the words perceived are merely the indications of the signification- intentions of the speaker; it is only the latter who is able to experience directly the meaning which he or she bestows upon speech. Husserl therefore goes on to affirm that, although verbal expression is 'originally called on to fulfill a communicative function',[14] solitary speech nevertheless retains what is essential to language: the correlation of physical word and conscious intention. Indeed, it is possible to carry out a further reduction. Not even the perception of the real word is required since the word may be broken down into a physical and an ideal component, thereby revealing its physical aspect as merely the 'support' for an act of meaning; it is sufficient that an imaginary representation of the word occur in the inner discourse of the subject. Admittedly, for genuine communication the real existence of the word is required, but - Husserl affirms - it cannot be seriously argued that in interior monologue anything is communicated: at most one imagines oneself as communicating. In this situation the word has no need to function as an indication of intentional acts, since 'the acts in question are experienced by us in the same instant'.[15] Rather, being expressed is simply 'a descriptive moment in the experienced unity between the sign and what it signifies'.[16]

It is after a meticulous tracing of this argument in Speech and Phenomena that Derrida makes his own intervention, suggesting that there can be no way of knowing if the suspension of communication which Husserl assumes has truly taken place. Husserl's critique of psychologism prompts him to advance beyond the tradition in distinguishing between the flux of psychic experiences which accompanies speech, and meanings as the ideal unities which are intended in such experience. Yet, as Derrida points out, such an ideality of meaning is only made possible by, and is therefore dependent on, the repeatability and actual repetition of the sign. For a sign which was employed on a sole occasion would possess no conventional value, and there-

fore could not be employed as the support of an act of meaning.[17] Further-
more, if all expression of meaning requires the 're-presentation' of the sign,
in the triple sense of its appearance to consciousness, its reappearance as a
sign, and its betokening of the sign as an ideal type, there seems to be no
means of subordinating this structure of representation to a supposed intuitive
presence of meaning to consciousness.[18] Husserl's contention that interior
monologue is merely 'represented communication', and therefore that
consciousness has immediate access to its own contents, cannot be
phenomenologically established even after the most strenuous efforts to
reduce the functioning of the sign to pure 'expression'. It becomes doubtful
whether the indicative aspect of language can be expunged.[19]

In Speech and Phenomena, and in other writings by Derrida from this
period, the conception of the linguistic sign as constituted by the possibility
of repetition leads from a rejection of the phenomenological view of the role
of conscious intention in the determination of meaning, to a critique of the
priority of the subject in general. In order for Husserl to isolate a purely
expressive function of language, he must consider the meaning to be expressed
as present to a consciousness which is prior to - and independent of -
language, in the inner domain which Derrida refers to as that of 'phenomeno-
logical silence'.[20] If the notion of pure expression is illusory, however, then
the assumption of such a self-presence of consciousness prior to language
becomes equally suspect. Indeed, if self-consciousness essentially requires a
reflexive relation between two terms or moments, between the act of
expression and that which is expressed, and if such a relation requires the
mediation of language, then self-consciousness must be seen as being
dependent on language, we must begin to speak of 'an anteriority of the text
to my presence to myself'.[21] For Derrida, therefore, not only must the subject
be demoted from the status of origin of meaning which it claims in
phenomenology. More broadly, self-consciousness can no longer serve as the
anchoring-point of philosophical reflection: the 'punctual simplicity of the
classical subject'[22] must be seen as fractured by - even as an 'effect' of -
the linguistic process of signification.[23]

As the course of this argument makes clear, Derrida's critique of phenomen-
ology is strongly influenced by the structuralist view of language as a system

of relations which precedes and renders possible the individual statement or expression: at a number of points in his writings Derrida suggests that the work of Saussure and his followers has played an indispensible critical role in relation to earlier philosophical accounts of language.[24] In a longstanding tradition of philosophical thought, the sounds of human language are seen as standing in for experiences or ideas which exist in the mind of the speaker prior to their expression, and which function in turn as the representation or resumé of objects in the world. Husserl's conception of a coincidence between 'signification-intention' and 'signification-fulfillment', in which - in place of a contrast between the ideal and the real - both aspects of the latter correlation are considered as idealities, is a sophisticated reworking of this tradition.[25] However, Derrida suggests, when Saussure describes the inseparability of signifier and signified, comparing them - in a famous simile - to the two sides of a sheet of paper, he tends to undermine this tradition: language can no longer be seen as expressing a pre-existent meaning, for - as the standard accounts of semiology emphasize - the plane of the signifier and the plane of the signified must be seen as divided up in the same moment and by the same movement. The argument of the Course in General Linguistics that langue is constituted by a system of differential relations tends to reinforce this subversive effect, for this makes it impossible to identify either signifier or signified with any particular substance or entity, whether real or ideal. On the level of the signifier, there can be no rationale for preferring one material embodiment of language to any other, a point which holds a particular significance for Derrida, while, on the level of the signified, the notion of the semantic value of the sign as as relative to the value of all other signs within the language renders impossible the Husserlian conception of meaning as 'what is identical in intention',[26] as an ideal unity. Derrida therefore concurs with the structuralist view that Saussure's distinction between langue and parole, and his insistence that langue is independent of the will of the individual speaking subject, already contains - by implication - a powerful critique of phenomenology.[27]

After this point, however, the paths of Derrida and of structuralism begin to diverge. The elimination of the subject practised by structuralism took the form of a belief that linguistic, social and cultural systems could be adequately analysed, and their functioning explained, without reference to human aims and motivations. Since meanings are determined not intentionally,

but by the rule-governed assembly of the differentially-defined elements of a
symbolic system, it can be shown that the concept of the subject is redundant
from an objective, 'scientific' point of view. For Derrida, however, such a line
of argument is unacceptable: to appeal to the successes of structural analysis
in order to refute the phenomenological conception of the subject is to
presume already solved the problems of the foundations of knowledge which
Husserl had attempted to resolve by his recourse to transcendental subject-
ivity. In this respect the tendency of structuralism to arrive at cognitive
relativism via _empirical_ research shows the same incoherence which Husserl
perceived in the work of his historicist contemporaries. In contrast to the
majority of post-structuralist thinkers, Derrida never ceases to express a
profound respect for Husserl's phenomenology (which he refers to as 'the most
modern, the most critical, and the most vigilant form' of metaphysics[28]), and
repeatedly declares his determination not to fall below the 'transcendental'
level of interrogation - of enquiry into _a priori_ structures of empirical
knowledge - opened up by phenomenology. Thus, when Derrida argues that the
subject cannot be considered to pre-exist language, his argument does not rely
on the success of any empirical investigation. His concern is not with
particular languages or semiological systems, but with what he terms - in his
introduction of Husserl's The Origin of Geometry - 'transcendental
language',[29] with language as the condition of all thought and knowledge,
including the knowledge produced by structuralism itself. Viewed from this
standpoint, the claims of structuralism and semiology no longer appear so
immune to criticism. It seems possible to argue that, despite their concentra-
tion on the mechanisms of language, these forms of analysis tend to 'forget'
their own status as enquiries conducted in the medium of language.

The central claim of structuralism in its classical form was to provide a
'science of the signified', an objective account of how meaning is produced by
the operation of symbolic systems. Yet the only way in which the meaning of
a sequence of signs can be specified, and therefore the relation between
sense and structure determined, is by means of a second sequence of signs,
the meaning of which is in turn not self-evident, but must be subject to
further elucidation, and so on in an apparently endless sequence. In Of
Grammatology Derrida argues that this process could only be brought to a halt
by the postulation of what he terms a 'transcendental signified', a meaning or
reality which could be directly experienced, which would no longer be relative

to a system of signifiers. Husserl's conception of the Wesenschau, an 'intuition of essence' logically prior to its expression in language, embodies one version of this doctrine. But in so far as structuralism retains a belief in the possibility of an objective account of systems of meaning, it must also ultimately claim 'to refer to a pure unity, a rigorously identifiable face of meaning or of the signified';[30] if signification is determined by the assemblage of elements within a system, these elements must be considered as the bearers of irreducible components of sense. In this respect, Derrida suggests, the conception of meaning implied by semiology may also be viewed as 'phenomenological', since it secretly supposes that meaning is 'originally given to consciousness in perceptive intuition'.[31] In Of Grammatology Derrida goes on to argue that the very retention by Saussure and semiology of the concept of the sign, with its implication of a dichotomy of signifier and signified, tends to reinforce the assumption that - at some ultimate point - there could be found such a meaning 'in itself', independent of and prior to the signifying system. He therefore attempts to escape this duality through the evocation of what he terms the 'trace', which is neither the presence of the signifier representing the signified nor that of the signified represented by the signifier, but rather the condition of both signifier and signified.[32]

At this point, it would perhaps be open to a defender of structuralism to argue, against Derrida, that structuralist analysis is far from requiring the possibility of a direct perception of a meaning independent of language. Rather, the lesson of structuralism is that there can be no access to meaning, or indeed to reality, independent of the differential process of signification. In Elements of Semiology, a classic presentation of 'high' structuralism, Barthes remarks that 'it appears increasingly more difficult to conceive a system of images and objects whose signifieds can exist independently of language: to perceive what a substance signifies is inevitably to fall back on the individuation of a language: there is no meaning which is not designated, and the world of signifieds is none other than that of language'.[33] For structuralism the 'meaning' of an element is simply its role within a system of formal relations, so that meanings cannot be considered as an irreducible and ideal unities. In Derrida's view, however, this appeal to the priority of system over signification fails to resolve the inconsistency. For what is conceded at the level of structure is recouped at the level of the knowledge of structure, which now itself becomes the reality to be objectively known. In one of his

most influential essays, 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Human Sciences', Derrida suggests that, in this respect, structuralism represents a kind of unsatisfactory and unstable half-way house: an objective representation of structure could only be produced from a point which was itself immune to the effects of structure, yet the logic of the structuralist argument is that there can be no such privileged position. What Derrida perceives is that the claims of structuralism to objectivity can only make sense if a correlative concept of the subject is implied. For the point which is at the centre of structure, and yet remains outside the structure, the 'fundamental immobility and reassuring certitude which is itself beyond the reach of freeplay'[34] which structuralism is obliged to assume, can be nothing other than a reformulation of the notion of self-consciousness as ultimate epistemological anchoring-point which has been central to post-Cartesian philosophy. The only way to avoid this conclusion, to prevent the tacit presupposition by structuralism of what phenomenology has at least conscientiously thematized, would be to abandon all objectivity, to admit that not even structure itself can play the role of the 'transcendental signified', and therefore that meaning resists any ultimate determination.

In Derrida's view there is no accident in the complicities he detects between phenomenology and structuralism. The reliance of phenomenology on a conception of pre-linguistic experience, and tacit use made by structuralism of a static point beyond the effects of structure, are both forms of the quest for a stable presence or intuition of meaning which would be ontologically prior to - and independent of - the play of language. This striving to transcend language is in turn, for Derrida, characteristic of a broader theoretical tradition, which ultimately expands to embrace the entire philosophical history of the West. This audacious suggestion lies at the heart of Derrida's work: many of his essays take the form of attempts to support it through an analysis of a central or symptomatic text of the Western intellectual tradition. However, in carrying out such analyses, Derrida does not see his role as being to refute a persistent philosophical error, or to propose a sounder solution to a perennial set of difficulties. His argument is rather that this 'error' simply _is_ philosophy: the central premise of Western thought has always been the belief in a reality 'in itself', independent of all linguistic representation. Two important consequences follow from this.

Firstly, since philosophy can only be conducted in the medium of language,
yet is centred on an attempt to reveal or grasp a reality unmediated by
language, philosophy can be shown to be committed to a fundamentally
contradictory project. Secondly, to analyse the successive forms in which this
contradiction has made itself apparent in the history of Western thought is no
longer to engage in philosophy as such: a tentative step beyond what Derrida
terms the 'closure of metaphysics' has been taken. It is these two conclusion
which combine to define the theoretical activity to which Derrida gives the
name of 'deconstruction'. Unlike conventional criticism, which breaks the text
apart, separating the valid from the invalid, deconstruction would leave the
philosophical text entire and yet dismantled: its formerly unperceived
mechanisms of self-contradiction laid bare.

In Speech and Phenomena, and in subsequent texts, Derrida introduces a
highly original way of characterising what he perceives as the continuity of
metaphysics: it was undoubtedly the suggestiveness of this characterisation,
and the metaphorical power of its ramifications, which largely contributed to
the original popularity and influence of his work. Derrida argues that, in the
Western philosophical tradition, the notion of speech has always suggested an
immediate linkage of inner and outer, a special intimacy between the meaning
which is present in the mind of the speaker and the verbal form in which that
meaning is expressed. Because in speech the voice is produced from within the
body of the speaker, because the signifier is heard at the very instant in
which it is produced, the concepts of the voice and of speech have always
been interwoven with belief in the possibility of a direct intuition of meaning
and in the sovereignty of conscious intention: the philosophical assumptions
which Derrida has striven most consistently to undermine. By contrast, the
notion of writing has always been associated with the separation of the
speaking subject from language, and therefore with the loss or insecurity of
meaning. In the case of Husserl, for example, the spatiality of writing, its
inexpungeable reference to mundanity and exteriority, threatens to disrupt the
continuity and self-security of consciousness: his idealised form of 'expression'
is depicted as an interior speaking-to-self.[35] This contrast between speech
and writing provides Derrida with a guiding thread for his deconstructive
readings of the philosophical tradition. Beginning with Plato, in La Pharmacie
de Platon, and continuing with studies of Rousseau, Hegel, and even Saussure,
Derrida shows both the perenniality of the relegation of writing to a status

inferior to that of the spoken word, and the ineluctable ambiguity of that relegation. In the Phaedrus, for example, Plato represents writing not only as an inferior imitation of the speaking voice, to be condemned along with all other forms of mimesis, but as a threat and a danger: it is an artificial aid which can only serve to undermine the immediacy of memory, which should rather be preserved by the legitimate art of mnemotechnics. Yet the word which Plato employs to suggest the dangers of writing is marked by a radical ambiguity, since pharmakon refers to a drug in the sense both of a poison and a remedy. The contradiction thus betrayed makes itself felt throughout Plato's text, the permanence of truth being suggested, for example, by the metaphor of an 'inscription' in the soul.[36]

Similarly, Saussure's theory of langue as 'a form and not a substance'[37] should logically imply an indifference to the medium in which the linguistic sign is embodied. And yet, as Derrida shows in Of Grammatology, Saussure denounces writing in violently moralistic terms as a pathological threat to the integrity of the spoken word.[38] Not even Hegel who, for Derrida, represents the most radical form of questioning achievable within the closure of metaphysics, escapes this fundamental prejudice: he measures the advance of civilizations in terms of their approximation to the ideal of phonetic script, the mode of writing most subservient to the voice.[39] This 'phonocentrism' or 'logocentrism' of the Western tradition cannot, however, be considered immutable, since to identify phonocentrism is already to have passed in some sense beyond it. Derrida tends to argue that his own work is merely one symptom of an epochal shift which is taking place in the Western consciousness of language. The resistance of writing to its ancient metaphysical bondage is beginning to break through.[40]

Derrida does not – of course – believe that he is the first modern thinker to have reflected this shift in the consciousness of language. In his writings Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger appear as the three figures who have announced this transformation in the recent history of Western thought.[41] Of these, Nietsche and Heidegger have had the most direct influence on Derrida's own mode of philosophizing: he is close to Nietzsche in temperament, but it is from Heidegger that he derives his general characterisation of the history of Western thought as the history of 'metaphysics'. What Heidegger understands

by metaphysics can best be grasped by considering a distinction which is
central to his work, from Being and Time onward. In the introduction to that
work Heidegger suggests that the Western philosophical tradition has been
characterised - ever since Plato and Aristotle - by an increasing obliviousness
to what he terms the 'question of Being'. This effacement takes the form of a
neglect of the distinction between 'being' (in the sense of 'what there is' -
das Seiende) and 'Being' (as the sheer fact that anything should exist at all -
das Sein). For Heidegger it is characteristic of metaphysical thought to erase
this distinction by equating Being with the totality of beings or with some
specific determination of Being. Heidegger sees his own task as one of
re-awakening an enquiry into Being itself, a task which - in Being and Time -
he believes must be prepared by an enquiry into the Being of the being who
possesses an implicit or 'pre-ontological' understanding of Being: the human
being or Dasein. In order to dig beneath inherited assumptions, this enquiry
takes place in a phenomenological mode, although Heidegger's interpretation
of phenomenology is already very different from that of his teacher Husserl,
and is largely concerned with the conditions under which Dasein can actively
grasp the meaning of its own Being.[42]

Shortly after Being and Time, however, there takes place what has
come to be known as the 'turn' in Heidegger's thought, after which the
initiative in the revelation of Being may be said to pass over from Dasein to
Being itself. Heidegger's later thought is centred on what he terms 'the
history of Being' (Seinsgeschichte), an interpretation of the history of Western
thought as a series of 'sendings of Being' (Seinsgeschicke), fundamental modes
of disclosure in which Being has both concealed and revealed itself - for
Heidegger these processes are always interdependent - in human thought and
human existence.[43] Despite the obvious similarities of this schema to Hegel's
speculative philosophy of Geist, the orientation of Heidegger's 'history of
Being' is the reverse of that of Hegel's thought. Heidegger believes that,
rather than taking the form of the progress of the self-comprehension reason,
history reveals a decline from the level of insight to be found at the origins
of Western thought. 'The basic error,' Heidegger suggests in his Introduction
to Metaphysics, 'lies in the belief that history begins with the primitive and
backward, the clumsy and weak. The opposite is true. The beginning is the
uncanniest and mightiest. What comes after is not development but shallow-
ness and diffusion, the failure to hold onto the beginning, rendering it

ineffective and harmless...'.[44] For Heidegger, however, this process of decline is by no means an arbitrary or accidental one. The forgetfulness of Being, which he believes to have culminated in the disasters of the 20th century, was already implicit in the fact that Being eludes all objectifying thought: Western metaphysics - in its efforts to comprehend Being - has insistently, and inevitably, interpreted Being as presence, rather than as that which renders the presence of what is present possible. Furthermore, for Heidegger it is only _in extremis_ that the re-awakening of the question of Being can become a task for thought. It is the experience of the aridity of the techno- logically objectified world, and of our own incarceration within a correspond- ing subjectivism, which prompts an enquiry into the foundations of the meta- physical thought which has led to these developments. Thus, for Heidegger, despite his evocations of a 'thinking' beyond philosophy, there can be no simple passing on to a new mode of thought. Rather, there is no ultimate distinction between an 'overcoming' of metaphysics and a penetration into the ground of metaphysics: one cannot start afresh without returning to and comprehending what is most ancient.[45] It is for this reason that many of Heidegger's later essays are concerned with the exegesis of fragments from the writings of the pre-Socratic thinkers - Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides - in whose thought he glimpses the splendour of an apprehension of Being which has cut short when Being first fell 'under the yoke of the Idea' in Plato.[46] For Heidegger, 'to ask "How does it stand with Being" means nothing less than to recapitulate the beginning of our historical-spiritual existence, in order to transform it into a new beginning'.[47]

Although Derrida's work would be unthinkable without the precedent of Heidegger's attempt to define the continuity of Western thought in terms of the 'metaphysics of presence', Derrida is deeply suspicious of the mythico- religious tenor of many of Heidegger's later pronouncements, of the suggestion that salvation can only be attained through a receptive stewardship of Being. Although Heidegger's meditation on the 'ontological difference' has constituted an indispensible stage in the loosening of the grip of metaphysics, his quest for an authentic relation to Being is all too reminiscent of the philosophical nostalgia for the lost homeland, the search for a stable reality beyond the process of signification. Thus, in Of Grammatology, Derrida argues that 'Heideggerian thought would reinstate rather than destroy the instance of

the logos and of the truth of being as "primum signatum": the "transcendental" signified ... implied by all categories of all determined significations, by all lexicons and all syntax, and therefore by all linguistic signifiers ...'.[48] At the same time, however: 'Heidegger's insistence on noting that being is produced as history only through the logos, and is nothing outside of it, the difference between Being and entity: all this clearly indicates that fundamentally nothing escapes the movement of the signifier ...'.[49] Similarly, Heidegger's conception of truth as Aletheia, as the 'un-hiddenness' of Being, marks an important advance over the traditional conception of truth as an adequation between thought and reality. Yet, for Derrida, the very retention of a conception of truth holds Heidegger within the closure of metaphysics: truth as revelation in the complementary aspect of - not a break with - truth as representation.[50] More generally, Derrida objects to the Heideggerian view of history as the progressive impoverishment of an initial apprehension of the plenitude of Being. In searching for a primal richness and experiential density of the meaning of the word 'Being', by means of the arcane etymologising which is an integral part of the later style, Heidegger tends to 'limit the destruction of classical ontology to the horizon of a reappropriation of the semantic plenitude of Being, of a reactivation of the lost origin'.[51] Derrida's suspicions are finally confirmed by the frequency with which metaphors of the voice and the ear, of speaking and of hearing, recur throughout Heidegger's work. The later writings in particular crucially depend upon a play of affinities between the German terms for speech (das Sprechen) and for correspondence (das Entsprechen), for hearing (das Gehör), propriety (die Gehörigkeit) and obedience (der Gehorsam), in order to articulate their lesson of submission and attendance. As Heidegger entreats us to harken in humility to the voice of Being, Derrida's belief in the 'phonocentrism' of the Western tradition, his detection of a solidarity between the mystique of the spoken word and the quest for an authenticity and intimacy of meaning, is once again confirmed.

Derrida's relation to Heidegger, therefore, is one of critical affiliation: he agrees with Heidegger's general characterisation of the Western philosophical tradition as a 'metaphysics of presence', yet cannot concur with Heidegger's diagnosis of what has gone awry within this tradition. The play of affinities and disparities which this relation produces is clearly illustrated by the respective attitudes of Heidegger and Derrida towards the question of language. At first glance there is a considerable agreement between the two

thinkers, particularly with respect to their account of the misconceptions of traditional philosophical views on this topic. In the essays of <u>On the Way to Language</u>, for example, Heidegger lists the central 'metaphysical' contentions concerning language in a manner which has evident parallels with Derrida: firstly, language has been traditionally understood as a form of expression, the external sign of an interior reality, which can therefore only be understood by means of a return from the outer to the inner; secondly, speaking is considered as primarily an activity of human beings, in which verbal signs function as tools of communication; and finally, the expressions produced by human individuals are seen as representations of the real and the unreal, of a world independent of language.[52] In both Derrida and Heidegger, furthermore, the implications drawn from the rejection of these views have a remarkable similarity: the common tendency is to defend the independence of language and of linguistic meaning against any form of subjectivism. Derrida urges us to 'recognise in its historicity the autonomy of the signifier which, prior to myself, says alone more than I believe myself to be saying, and in relation to which my meaning, suffering instead of acting, finds itself in default, inscribes itself - so to speak - on the debit side (<u>en passif</u>)',[53] while Heidegger reiterates that it is not primarily the human individual but language itself which speaks: we speak only in so far as we listen to the 'historical speaking of language'.[54] Similarly, both Heidegger and Derrida argue against any form of reductionism in the interpretation of the literary text. In <u>On the Way to Language</u> Heidegger employs the term 'site' (<u>der Ort</u>) to refer to the unattainable core of poetic utterance. 'Our discussion speaks of Trakl', he writes, 'only in that it thinks about the site of his poetic work. To an age whose historical, biographical, psychoanalytical and sociological interest is focussed on bare expression, such a procedure must seem patently one-sided, if not wayward';[55] and in <u>Positions</u> Derrida suggests that the concern of the Russian formalists with the 'literariness' of literature has proved a valuable safeguard against 'a certain number of reductions and misreadings which will always tend to re-emerge (thematicism, sociologism, historicism, psychologism, in their most disguised forms)'.[56] Perhaps most importantly, both Derrida and Heidegger argue for the open-endedness of the process of interpretation. For Heidegger 'the multiplicity of meanings is always historical. It springs from the fact that we ourselves, in the speaking of language, are at every moment differently addressed, differently meant, in accordance with the 'sending' (<u>Seinsgeschick</u>) of the Being of beings';[57] while, for Derrida, what he terms

'dissemination' 'bursts the semantic horizon' - even in its polysemic form - and produces 'a non-finite number of semantic effects'.[58]

The closeness of these parallels appears to confirm Derrida's view that his own position loses nothing of what is valuable in Heidegger, while abandoning Heidegger's vision of historical decline, and his dubious nostalgia for the plenitude of Being. Derrida frequently suggests that the conception of an ontological difference between Being and beings can perhaps be seen as an 'intrametaphysical effect' of his own more inclusive notion of différance, a notion which Derrida employs to suggest both the perpetual deferral and differentiation of a supposedly unified presence of meaning. It seems to him plausible to argue that Heidegger's concern with the meaning and with the 'truth' of Being eternalizes what is merely one epoch - indeed, even the word epoch is no longer applicable - in the play of a différance which cannot itself be determined in this way, since it 'has no meaning and is not'.[59] Derrida's self-understanding, however, is not immune to criticism on this point. For it is equally possible to present the work of the two thinkers as both parallel and opposed, as two complementary ways of expressing a common dissatisfaction with a conception of language which has been dominant in the philosophical tradition. This may become clearer if we examine more closely the arguments which support Derrida's and Heidegger's apparently shared critique of the 'metaphysical' view of language.

Heidegger's primalism pervades his account of language no less than other aspects of his philosophy. His central purpose - part of a broader attack on the objectifying and representational thought of metaphysics - is to weaken the view of language as a reflection or expression of a pre-existing reality. Yet to achieve this aim Heidegger does not - like the structuralists - stress the nature of language as a system of signs with its own immanent laws of operation. Rather he suggests that even the most basic concepts of linguistics - sign, denotation, signification - fail to grasp the essence of language. In a movement which reveals the fundamental impulse of his thought, Heidegger retreats from the systematic analysis of language to the contemplation of the mystery of the individual word, and from a conception of the sentence as the primary unit of meaning to a chain of more elementary notions which lie on the borderline of gesture and utterance: calling (das Rufen), naming (das Nennen), beckoning (das Winken), showing (das Zeigen).[60]

By this return to the very threshold of articulate speech Heidegger wishes to recapture the pristine moment in which, rather than referring to a pre-given range of entities, and expressing a determinate truth about such entities, language first 'calls the world into being' as world, allows things initially to appear as that which they truly are. 'Language speaks,' writes Heidegger, 'in so far as it reaches, as showing, into all the regions of presence, and out of them allows what is present at any moment to appear and disappear'.[61] Accordingly: 'Naming does not come afterward, providing an already manifest being with a designation and a hallmark known as a word; it is the other way around: originally an act of violence which discloses being, the word sinks from this height to become a mere sign ...'.[62] This conception of the revelatory power of language places language in a special relation to Being itself. For Heidegger it is language which 'reigns throughout and orders the openness of the clearing' in which all things appear, indeed – in two of his most famous formulations – language is 'the house of Being', it is the 'lightening-concealing advent of Being itself'.[63] The task of any post-metaphysical meditation on language, therefore, must be to listen to the stillness of revelation which lies at the heart of speaking. The superficial concentration of the Western philosophical tradition on language as an articulated system of signs, considered as the bearers of meanings, has drawn attention away from this deeper unity, the rootedness of all representation in the one disclosure of Being.

Derrida's account of the errors of the metaphysical tradition is quite the reverse of that offered by Heidegger. Whereas, for Heidegger, it is the obsession with language as 'a stock of words and rules for the association of words' which has led us to forget that 'always in the essential word it is One and the Same which is revealed',[64] for Derrida what is central to the meta-physical tradition is precisely the attempt to conceal or deny the status of language as an articulated system. Derrida's account of writing as the funda-mental condition of all language is intended to underline the fact that 'signification is only formed within the hollow of différance: of discontinuity and discreteness, of the diversion and reserve of what does not appear',[65] while his history of the suppression of writing shows how metaphysics has attempted to reduce the inherent spatiality and dispersion of language in order to restore the communion of mind and meaning. In Of Grammatology, for example, Derrida shows how Rousseau assumes language to begin with the

direct, exclamatory expression of the passions; any development away from this point towards a more articulated speech may represent a progress for civilization, but it is also - measured against Rousseau's absolute conception of the natural - a degeneration, and ultimately a movement from life towards death. Heidegger's view of poetry as the 'original language' (Ursprache) in which the 'founding of Being' takes place, and his conception of everyday language as merely a fading echo of this poetic calling, appears in one respect, at least, to have far less affinity with Derrida than with the mode of thought which Derrida 'deconstructs' in Rousseau.

Perhaps the concisest way of characterising this contrast is to suggest that, whereas Heidegger's position implies a 'meta-hermeneutics', Derrida espouses a 'meta-formalism' or 'meta-structuralism'. Heidegger is fundamentally in sympathy with the hermeneutic contention that mastery of language consists in the ability to grasp and impart meaning, rather than to manipulate a system of rules. In the process of understanding, language is always transcended towards that of which it speaks; indeed, the very notion that language as a formal system could be abstracted from the world of meaning which it reveals is mistaken. If, for Heidegger, 'Language speaks', then 'Its speaking speaks for us in what is spoken (im Gesprochenen)'.[66] As a result, Heidegger opposes all attempts to formalize language, of the kind represented by contemporary linguistics, information theory, or symbolic logic. Such enterprises, in reducing language to an instrument of communication, can only intensify our alienation from the essence of language, our inability to hear its primal poetry. Unlike the mainstream of hermeneutical thought, however, Heidegger goes beyond an affirmation of the primacy of the experience of meaning in general, to suggest that all meaning must be seen as rooted in the meaning of Being. Our attention should most properly, most authentically, be directed not towards the significance of the individual statement, but towards the fundamental ontological relation from which all possibility of statement derives. Not only does the 'signified' precede the 'signifier' for Heidegger, but Being itself could be said to function as the 'signified of the signified': the inexhaustible, transcendent source towards which all experience of meaning points.

By contrast, Derrida is in fundamental agreement with the structuralist contention that language as a formal system determines the experience of

meaning, suggesting that the concept of différance even develops 'the most legitimate principle demands of structuralism'.[67] In his essay on The Ends of Man, which reviews the post-war development of philosophy in France, Derrida affirms that what is most powerful and unprecedented in the new attention paid to system and structure during the 1960s is precisely the idea of 'determining the possibility of meaning on the basis of a "formal" organisation which has no meaning in itself',[68] while in Positions, in stark opposition to Heidegger, he suggests that advances in mathematical and logical notation, as well as truly scientific work in the field of semiotics, can only serve to further his own critique of the metaphysical tradition and its phonocentrism.[69] This sympathy, which marks Derrida's work as unmistakeably 'post-structuralist', is clearly revealed by the terminology which Derrida employs in his own readings of texts. In 'The Double Session', his long essay on Mallarmé, he characteristically presents his aim as being 'to reconstitute a chain in movement, the effects of a network, and the play of a syntax', while in Of Grammatology he refers to the writer as 'inscribed in a determinate textual system'.[70] In general, the purpose of Derrida's deconstructive readings – as the name implies – is not to reveal the hidden meaning of the text, but to dismantle it, to lay bare its systematicity. Yet, just as Heidegger is concerned not with particular beings but with their grounding in Being, so Derrida's thought is directed not towards particular structures, but towards the condition of possibility of structure which he refers to as 'structurality' or 'différance'. It is in this respect that the philosophies of Derrida and Heidegger appear as inverted images of each other. Both are concerned with the perpetual disjunction and interplay between an ultimate ground and that of which it is the ground, between the unconditioned and the conditioned, but whereas Heidegger's ontological difference guarantees the ultimate primacy of that 'signified of the signified' which is Being, Derrida's account of the difference between 'the lesser – necessarily closed – structure and the structurality of an opening', as the 'unlocatable place where philosophy is rooted',[71] assures the priority of what he explicitly refers to as the 'signifier of the signifier' – writing.[72]

One of the most sensitive areas in which this parallelism reveals itself is marked out by what is perhaps Derrida's most celebrated and influential doctrine: the doctrine of open-endedness and indeterminacy of the play of meaning. For, as Derrida is well aware, hermeneutic thought, particularly in

its post-Heideggerian forms, can provide accounts of meaning which appear in many respects to pre-empt his own. If meaning must ultimately be identified with the 'truth of Being', and if this truth discloses itself only in a sequence of historical forms or 'sendings' which are at the same time manifestations and concealments, there can never be any definitive revelation of truth, but - at the same time - the experience of meaning can never be brought to a close. In Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, a direct continuation of this Heideggerian line of thought, meaning is not thought of as the signified - as the object of a possible intuition - put as a 'happening' (Sinngeschehen) in which both interpreter and interpreted text are caught up.[73] For Gadamer the situation of the interpreter within a finite, self-transforming tradition entails that 'one understands differently when one understands at all':[74] no single interpretation can claim to exhaust the 'fundamental unclosability of the horizon of meaning'.[75] Similarly, in France during the 1960s, Paul Ricoeur, along with other phenomenological philosophers, emphasized that, although structural analysis might constitute a valuable provisional stage of interpretation, 'in hermeneutics there is no closed system of the universe of signs'.[76] Language in use has an ineradicable referential dimension, it opens out towards the world, and in so doing takes on the equivocalness of the being of which it speaks.[77]

Derrida must take special care, therefore, that his critique of what he calls 'formalist structuralism' - the claim to provide a definitive account of the matrix of signification of the text - is not confused with that of hermeneutics or phenomenology. 'If polysemy is infinite,' he remarks in 'The Double Session', 'this is not because a finite reading or finite writing remains incapable of exhausting a superabundance of meaning';[78] and elsewhere in the same essay he affirms: 'summation is impossible without however being exceeded by the infinite richness of a content of sense or meaning; the perspective functions as far as the eye can see, without having the depth of an horizon before which or into which we will never have ceased to advance'.[79] In opposition to this conception Derrida adopts the structuralist view of meaning as an epiphenomenon, a product of the operation of a logically prior system, even agreeing with the structuralists that language may be seen as the 'closure' of a 'finite ensemble' of elements.[80] He diverges from structuralism only in his belief that it is impossible to arrest the 'freeplay of substitutions which takes place within such an ensemble',[81] to 'reduce a text

as such to its effects of meaning, of content, of thesis or of theme'.[82] To
adhere to a determinate interpretation of a text, therefore, is not primarily
to close off further possibilities of meaning, since for Derrida the endlessness
of the process of signification is not a result of a transcendent excess of the
signified. Rather the reverse: to discover meaning or truth in a text can only
be a means of disguising or evading the recalcitrant senselessness of the
signifier, of repressing what Derrida - more dramatically - terms 'the
effective violence of disseminating writing'.[83]

The issues at stake in this clash between Derrida and Heidegger over the
relation between meaning and non-meaning, language and being, are perhaps
at their clearest in their conflicting interpretations of a third philosopher who
is one of their common points of reference: Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche's
vehement denunciation of the entire tradition of Western metaphysics, his
belief that the crucial, disastrous turning was already taken with Socrates and
Plato, clearly foreshadow the major themes of Heidegger's thought, as of
Derrida's. Yet - for Heidegger - Nietzsche's work does not represent an initial
break with the metaphysical tradition, but is rather its awesome culmination.
'With Nietzsche's metaphysics philosophy is completed. That is to say: it has
paced out the circle of its predetermined possibilities.'[84] At the centre of
Heidegger's argument is his interpretation of the two central concepts of the
thought of Nietzsche's maturity: the 'will to power' and the 'eternal return of
the same'. He contends that metaphysics has traditionally striven to answer
two central questions, the question of the Being of being as such (or of
essence), and the question of the mode of Being of the whole being (or of
existence), and that Nietzsche's enigmatic formulations may be seen as a final
desperate attempt to provide a solution to these problems of the metaphysical
tradition.[85] The concept of the will to power expresses - even for Nietzsche
himself - the 'innermost essence of Being', while the thought of the eternal
return must be seen as an attempt to reconcile the transient and the change-
less, effecting - through the notion of repetition - a subordination of
becoming to the stability of presence.[86] This continuity with metaphysics does
not diminish the importance of Nietzsche's philosophy for Heidegger, however.
On the contrary, when viewed from the perspective of Seinsgeschichte,
Nietzsche's work appears as one of the privileged forms in which Being has
disclosed itself to historical humanity. It is simply that what Nietzsche

presents as a liberation from metaphysics is rather a true and terrible image of the coming age of the planetary expansion of science and technology, considered as the foredestined terminus of metaphysical thought. The doctrine of the will to power expresses the final convulsions of the subjectivism and voluntarism of post-Cartesian philosophy, as it reduces the world to an object of manipulation and conquest, while in the thought of the eternal return, existence is stripped of all intrinsic significance: 'Meaninglessness now becomes the "meaning" of being as a whole'.[87] In Heidegger's view Nietzsche's thought reaches this point of collapse because it fails to question with sufficient persistence the concepts of metaphysics. Rightly perceiving the intractable difficulties of the traditional view of truth as correspondence or adequation, for example, Nietzsche nihilistically denounces truth itself as a form of 'error' rather than seeking for a deeper understanding of truth as the 'truth of Being'. In the same way, the concept of the eternal return represents a final extinction of any intimation of the question of Being, even in the muted forms characteristic of previous metaphysical thought: it is a vision of perfected senselessness in which Nietzsche himself is held prisoner. Yet the very fact that - with Nietzsche - the possibilities of metaphysics are exhausted in this way can be seen as opening the path towards a new meditation on the 'ontological difference' which Heidegger sees his own work as initiating: 'With the beginning of the completion of metaphysics begins the unrecognised and, for metaphysics, inaccessible preparation of a first appearance of the twofold of Being and beings.'[88]

Derrida's conception of the relation between his two predecessors, however, is markedly different. He agrees that both Nietzsche and Heidegger - to whom he adds the figure of Freud - mark in their contrasting ways the beginning of the closure of the epoch of metaphysics. But he denies that it is possible to place Nietzsche unequivocally within, and Heidegger unambiguously beyond, this closure. In Derrida's view the virulence of Nietzsche's text, its constant recourse to what he terms '"empiricist" or nonphilosophical motifs that have constantly tormented philosophy throughout the history of the West', its obliviousness to the question of Being in Heidegger's sense, are in fact the signs of a breakthrough, an escape from metaphysics which, in certain respects, is more radical than that of Heidegger.[89] Whereas Heidegger continues to search for a deeper, more authentic understanding of truth, for example, Nietzsche 'contributed a great deal to the liberation of the signifier

from its dependence or derivation with respect to the logos and the related concept of truth or the primary signified'.[90] Derrida's sympathies in this debate are clearly signalled at the end of the essay on 'Différance', which in many respects functions as his philosophical manifesto: 'There will be no unique name, not even the name of Being. And it is necessary to think without nostalgia, that is to say outside of the myth of a purely paternal or purely maternal language, of the lost homeland of thought. It is necessary, on the contrary, to affirm, in the sense in which Nietzsche sets affirmation in play, by a certain laugh and a certain dancing step.'[91] Accordingly, Derrida also argues for the need 'to save Nietzsche from a reading of the Heideggerian type'.[92] Much of his monograph on the question of style in Nietzsche is devoted to what he accurately terms Heidegger's 'onto-hermeneutical' interpretation of his predecessor. By means of an analysis of the complex metaphorical play with the notions of woman and womanliness in Nietzsche's work, Derrida attempts to show that - for Nietzsche - 'the question of woman suspends the decidable opposition of the true and the non-true'.[93] Since 'Nietzsche did not entertain the illusion - on the contrary he analysed it - of knowing what was at the root of the effects termed woman, truth, castration',[94] any account of his work as organised by a determinate set of metaphysical beliefs must miss the mark. By the 'parodic heterogeneity' of his style Nietzsche outflanks in advance any philosophical interpretation of his writings, including Heidegger's earnest attempt to read his work as an oblique revelation of the truth of Being.

In Derrida's work this preference for Nietzschean iconoclasm over Heideggerian piety links up in a distinctive way with his adoption of a structuralist view of the status of meaning. Nietzsche's mature thought may be said to begin with the realization, clearly stated towards the end of The Gay Science, that the world is devoid of any intrinsic moral order, purpose or significance. From this point onwards the central problem of his philosophy will be to transform this vision into a source of affirmation rather than a reason for despair. Yet, as part of this task, Nietzsche must also provide an account of how the world comes to appear to human beings as ordered, cohesive, governed by an inherent meaning, a task which he attempts to carry out by suggesting that it is human beings who impose an order on the world, driven by the need for existential security and instrumental control. As the duality of the 'will to power' and the 'eternal return of the same' - which lies

at the heart of Nietzsche's later thought - suggests, value and significance
are projected onto a world which is blank, indifferent, purposeless: the many
terms which Nietzsche employs throughout his work to describe this process
(erfinden, verfälschen, hineinlegen, hinzulügen ...) all contain the fundamental
implication of meaning as an artificial and delusive addition to the world as it
is in itself. It is precisely such a conception of the status of meaning,
however, which characterises high structuralism. Meaning is dismissed as being
- in a phrase of Michel Foucault's - 'a surface-effect, a shimmer, a spume'.[95]
It is true that, in the two cases, the way in which meaning is generated is
very different: for structuralism, it is an effect produced by the operation of
an impersonal system, while for Nietzsche meaning is a creation of the will to
power. Yet in both cases the result - a denial of any ultimate status to
meaning - is comparable, so that Derrida has no difficulty, at the close of his
essay on 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Human Sciences', in fusing the
structuralist and Nietzschean currents of his work into a declaration that the
only alternative to the 'sad, negative, nostalgic, guilty, Rousseauist' longing
for the lost immediacy of meaning is 'the joyous affirmation of the freeplay
of the world without truth, without origin, and offered to an active
interpretation'.[96] Derrida belongs to that current of modernity which sees the
loss of meaning as a liberation.

Derrida's temperamental affinity with Nietzsche should not be allowed to
obscure the profound differences of philosophical outlook which divide them.
Nietzsche's work, as Derrida himself stresses, is marked by a constant
recourse to 'empiricist or non-philosophical motifs'.[97] His reflections on the
nature of knowledge and truth are not guided by a quest for epistemological
guarantees; rather they consist in psychological - or even quasi-biological -
speculation on the drives and interests which lie behind and determine the
forms of cognition. Nietzsche's motive for proceeding in this way is a deep
conviction - which he shares with his positivist contemporaries - that the rise
of empirical science has irrevocably undermined the claims of metaphysical
and transcendental philosophy to grasp the nature of reality or adjudicate
claims to knowledge. In The Twilight of the Idols he remarks that 'Today we
possess science precisely to the extent that we have resolved to accept the
testimony of the senses - that we have learned to sharpen them further, to
arm them, to think them through to the end. The rest is miscarriage and not-

yet-science: that is to say metaphysics, theology, psychology, theory of knowledge.'[98] Nietzsche is aware, of course, that such a procedure lays him open to an obvious objection: it is incoherent to rely on forms of empirical knowledge in order to establish the status of knowledge in general, particularly when the conclusion drawn is that all knowledge is in some sense a falsification of reality. Nietzsche's response to this difficulty is not to abandon completely the naturalistic treatment of knowledge, but to treat such naturalism as itself merely one of a number of possible perspectives, none of which can establish a claim to ultimate validity.

Such a strategy would be unthinkable for Derrida because of the influence on his work - in some ways more profound than that of Heidegger - of the procedure of the transcendental epoche. As we have seen, this procedure was developed by Husserl as a means of escaping from the self-destructive implications of positivism, historicist relativism and Lebensphilosophie, philosophical trends which Nietzsche's thought incorporates and transforms in a highly idiosyncratic manner. Husserl's philosophy relies on the possibility of a description of essential structures of cognition, without regard to the reality or unreality of the transcendent objects of cognition: he is convinced that only the radical suspension of all empirical assumptions made possible by the epoche can preserve the coherence of the Western philosophical project. Surprisingly, perhaps, this argument for the priority of transcendental enquiry recurs throughout Derrida's work. In Of Grammatology he remarks that: 'To think play radically the ontological and transcendental problematics must first be seriously exhausted; the question of the meaning of being, the being of the entity and of the transcendental origin of the world - of the world-ness of the world - must be patiently and rigorously worked through, the critical movement of the Husserlian and Heideggerian questions must be effectively followed to the very end, and their effectiveness and legibility must be conserved ... It is therefore the game of the world that must first be thought; before attempting to understand all the forms of play in the world.'[99] It is revealing, in this respect, that in his 'Introduction' to Husserl's The Origin of Geometry, Derrida takes issue with interpretation of the later philosophy of Husserl proposed by Merleau-Ponty in his essay on 'Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man'. For Merleau-Ponty suggests that the later Husserl - confronted with the alien forms of social life depicted by contemporary anthropologists such as Lévy-Bruhl - was driven to conclude

that, in the social and historical domain at least, there can be no purely a
priori knowledge. 'Historical relativism', Merleau-Ponty writes, is now no
longer dominated at one stroke by a mode of thought which would have all
the keys to history ... The eidetic of history cannot dispense with factual
investigation.'[100] Derrida, however, vigorously contests this attempt to soften
the line between the essential and the empirical, arguing that Husserl never
significantly alters his original view of the priority of the science of pure
possibility over the knowledge of real facts. Derrida's thought, of course, does
ot remain at this point, yet he does not wish to 'fall behind', but rather to go
beyond, the transcendental reduction. 'A thought of the trace,' he remarks in
Of Grammatology, 'can no more break with transcendental phenomenology
than be reduced to it.'[101]

This continued belief in the necessity and possibility of the reduction -
even if only as a stage of philosophical enquiry - is sufficient to mark Derrida
off from the majority of 20th-century thinkers influenced by Husserl's
phenomenology. For within the phenomenological tradition, and the closely
allied tradition of philosophical hermeneutics, it is precisely Husserl's belief in
the possibility of a total suspension of the natural attitude, in the self-
sufficiency of consciousness, and hence in a rigorous distinction between the
factual and the essential, which is the first fundamental principle to be
attacked. Thinkers as diverse as Gadamer, Adorno, Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur
have argued that the relation between subject and object, 'essence' and
'fact', must be seen as a reciprocal one, and that philosophy must therefore
become an open-ended exploration of this reciprocity, abandoning its claims to
apodictic knowledge. All these thinkers, therefore, are united in their attack
on the notion of a 'first philosophy', a philosophy of absolute foundations.
Derrida's criticism of Husserl, however, is not directed against the project of
transcendental philosophy as such, but against Husserl's equation of the realm
of absolute being with a phenomenologically purified self-consciousness.[102] As
we have seen, Derrida's contention is that the self-presence of consciousness
is not a primordial given, but is itself the effect of a more fundamental
principle which he terms variously 'différance', 'writing', or the 'trace'. In
employing these expressions Derrida is clearly not referring to empirical
writing or to an empirical trace, since it is inconceivable how any empirical
entity could be the ground of a transcendental consciousness. Hence these
terms must denote a transreflexive, or what Derrida himself calls an 'ultra-

transcendental text',[103] a source of self-consciousness which is itself beyond the grasp of self-consciousness. In contrast to the majority of post-Husserlian thinkers, whose reflections on the phenomenological reduction lead them to stress an irreducible facticity as its point of departure, and thus to abandon the notion of the reduction as absolute self-reflection, Derrida attempts to reduce the transcendental reduction itself.

In the history of philosophy a close parallel to Derrida's move can be found in the development of post-Kantian idealism. Kant's pupil Fichte, with whose thought Husserl often recognizes an affinity,[104] perceived the limitations of reflection theories of self-consciousness, and developed a theory in which an absolute ego posits within itself a finite and mutually determining ego and non-ego. This position was challenged, however, by Schelling, the next major thinker in the chain of German Idealist philosophy, who was unhappy with the elevation of self-consciousness to the status of an absolute. In his early essay, Vom Ich als Princip der Philosophie Überhaupt, Schelling already argues that self-consciousness 'is no free act of the immutable, but a subordinate striving of the mutable ego, which, conditioned by the non-ego, strives to save its identity, and to grasp itself again in the onward-rushing stream of change'.[105] As a result of this dissatisfaction, Schelling takes a step which, to Fichte, can only appear as a lapse into dogmatism: he begins to move beyond the enchanted circle of self-consciousness towards the notion of a transreflexive absolute. It is at this point that the comparison with Derrida becomes particularly marked. For since Schelling's absolute is 'beyond' self-consciousness, it must be described as neither subject nor object, neither pure thought nor pure being, neither ideal nor real, but rather as the 'absolute indifference' (Indifferenz) of all these determinations.[106] In his late Philosophie der Offenbarung, Schelling describes this development away from Fichte in the following manner: 'It required only a step, in order to recognise the prius of all being. It was only necessary to let drop the limitation of self-positing, as it appeared in the ego, in order to find the absolute point of development. In this way science <i.e. philosophical science> became independent of the subject.'[107] It can be plausibly argued that Derrida's notion of a 'trace' which is 'not more ideal than real, not more intelligible than sensible, not more a transparent signification than an opaque energy'[108] represents a 20th-century attempt to evoke such an 'absolute point of

development' which would be 'independent of the subject'. A différance prior to all determinate difference would not differ from an absolute Indifferenz.

Derrida, of course, does not deny the proximity of his own thought to German Idealism, although the particular affinity he recognizes is with Hegel rather than Schelling. But there is one crucial textual device which - he believes - protects his work from becoming simply another form of transcendental or speculative philosophy, a device which he inherits from Heidegger. In his essay Zur Seinsfrage Heidegger attempts to ease the apparently insoluble difficulties of talking about Being, without Being taking on the appearance of a referable entity, by employing the unusual procedure of crossing out the word 'Being' in his text, while leaving it legible. For Derrida this attempt to leave patent in the text the incompatibility between an ineluctable mode of expression and what is to be expressed has a programmatic significance. The procedure of placing sous rature, illustrates that 'necessity of passing through the erased determination'[109] which is one of the central preoccupations of Derrida's work in its attempt to turn metaphysics against itself. Thus although the actual kreuzweise Durchstreichung employed by Heidegger appears comparatively rarely in Derrida, the idea it expresses is omnipresent, often indicated by the use of inverted commas around a word or phrase, or by the use of qualifying clauses and disclaimers.

One obvious riposte to the use of such devices would be to argue that, according to Derrida's own account of language and meaning, it would be impossible to erect a barrier of self-conscious linguistic devices against the dissemination of meaning, and against metaphysical contamination: the absolute self-awareness which Derrida reveals to be an impossible dream appears paradoxically to be the aim of his own style of writing. Derrida's argument, in the introduction to La Voix et le Phénomène, that Husserl's 'precautions, inverted commas, renovations, innovations' cannot release him from the tradition could well be turned against Derrida himself.[110] However, the notion of 'erasure' need not be expressed by a neologism or typographical device, but is most precisely captured by a peculiar type of self-contradiction which occurs in Derrida's work. For example, in Of Grammatology he writes: "The trace is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general. Which amounts to saying once again that there is no absolute origin of sense in general.'[111]

This juxtaposition can only be interpreted in the following way: the notion of the trace has a function analogous to an absolute point of origin or ground, but cannot be considered as such an origin or ground since - within metaphysics - the ground itself must be knowable if anything is to be knowable. Derrida's claim therefore is that although différance or the trace looks like an origin it cannot be conceptualized or determined, and therefore no longer performs the function of an origin. This becomes clear when he states in Of Grammatology that 'The ontico-ontological difference and its ground in the "transcendence of Dasein" are not absolutely originary. Differance by itself would be more "originary", but one would no longer be able to call it origin or ground.'[112] Thus it is clear that the break with foundational or first philosophy expressed by the process of erasure is not directed against the notion of an unconditioned or an Absolute, but merely against its comprehensibility: this is why Derrida can erase the Husserlian epoche - itself an 'erasure' of the natural attitude - rather than questioning its possibility.

Arguably, a more radical critique of first philosophy would criticize the very recourse to an ultimate, even if this ultimate can no longer function as a ground in the metaphysical sense. Adorno, for example, argues that metaphysical dualities should not be hypostatized, but that neither can they be transcended. For Adorno, the transcendental reduction is a deception, since consciousness can never entirely shake itself free of, although it can take a reflective distance from, nature; the gap between the factual and the essential, the material and the ideal can never be closed over,[113] whereas the function of différance in Derrida is precisely to dissolve these dualities. In the 'second phase' of post-structuralism, which dominates the 1970s, this type of Nietzsche-inspired, naturalistic critique of the heritage of phenomenology will acquire a central importance. However, a more immediate challenge to Derrida's position is to be found in the work of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, since Lacan develops a critique of representationalist theories of language, and espouses a scepticism about meaning, very similar to that of Derrida, while basing his stance on a less speculative - and more systematically elaborated - conception of the relation between self-consciousness, subjectivity and language.

CHAPTER TWO

SECTION ONE

JACQUES LACAN: A PHILOSOPHICAL RETHINKING OF FREUD

It has long been commonplace in philosophical discussions of psychoanalysis to point out that Freudian thought is characterised by a deep theoretical ambiguity.[1] Freud, who spent the formative years of his career as a physiologist in the laboratory of Ernst Brücke, could not fail to be influenced in his scientific outlook by the mechanism and determinism of the then dominant Helmholtz School of Medicine, in which Brücke himself was a leading figure. Indeed, Freud's early training moulded his views to such an extent that, throughout his life, he never entirely abandoned the expectation that the discoveries of psychoanalysis would ultimately be translatable into the scientifically 'respectable' vocabulary of neurology and physiology. Even when, during the 1890s, the centre of Freud's interests shifted from the physiological to the psychic, as he began to piece together from clinical evidence his model of the mind, he continued to assume that the processes with which he was concerned could be accounted for in purely causal and mechanical terms. In the opening sentence of an unpublished manuscript of 1895, the now celebrated Project for a Scientific Psychology, Freud announces his intention to 'furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science: that is, to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determinate states of specifiable material particles, thus making these processes perspicuous and free from contradiction'.[2] The Project attempts a theorisation of the fundamental operations of the mind in terms of the increase, diminution, displacement and discharge of an energy or 'quantity' conceived of as flowing through and accumulating within a differentiated network of neurones. Freud's subsequent abandonment of the already metaphorical neurology of the Project in favour of the postulation of an overtly psychic apparatus and topography, despite its far-reaching implications in opening the domain of psychoanalysis proper, produced no major alteration in his commitment to energetic and causal modes of explanation. Natural science was always to remain for Freud the only conceivable prototype for objective knowledge.

In practice, however, neither Freud's general theory of the mind nor the methods employed in particular analyses ever began to approximate to this epistemological ideal. Although Freud and his early followers perceived themselves as the founders of the first truly scientific psychology, it has become clear in retrospect that, far from suppressing our intentional vocabulary - the vocabulary of meanings, motives and purposes in terms of which the activities of human beings are ordinarily discussed - in favour of purely causal forms of explanation, the achievement of psychoanalysis was rather to extend the application of these concepts to a new domain of psychic activity, whose recognition had formerly been hindered by its unavailability to consciousness: Little Hans develops his phobia of horses in order to mask his own antagonism towards - and fear of the castrating power of - his father; Freud himself dreams the dream of Irma's injection in fulfillment of a wish to exonerate himself for the unsuccessful treatment of a patient. Freud's work presents us with fear, rivalry, love, anxiety, the whole range of human thought and emotion, operating at an unconscious level, while seeking disguised expression in conscious life in the form of dreams, symptoms, parapraxes. Freud's aim, however, is not simply to achieve the recognition of such a domain of unconscious psychic activity. The natural-scientific tenor of his work is maintained in his attempt to anchor the complexity of human behaviour in the biological needs and drives of the organism, which he sees as impinging forcefully upon, indeed - after much transmutation and transformation - as constituting the life of the psyche. Thus in Freud's work there always exists an interplay and tension between the hermeneutic foreground of his work, in which his concern is with the interpretation of human behavioiur, and a metapsychological background, in which the fundamental processes of the psyche are described in terms of an economics and dynamics of libido.

Such a characterisation of Freudian psychoanalysis may create the impression that Freud himself was fundamentally confused about the methodological bases and cognitive status of his work. Certainly, there has been no lack of philosophically sophisticated commentators on psychoanalysis ready to suggest that, because of his intellectual background, Freud was obliged to clothe what was in effect a new hermeneutics of human speech and action in the antiquated vocabulary of 19th-century scientism. It is remarkable that

Freud's work betrays no awareness of the Methodenstreit between the proponents of causal explanation (Erklären) and of interpretive understanding (Verstehen) in the human sciences which occurred in the German-speaking world during his lifetime. And if one examines the detail of Freud's texts this innocence manifests itself on every level, from the overall structure of his metapsychology to the individual sentence, where Freud can be found fusing together both intellectual operations. In the discussion of the dream of the burning child, for example, which opens the final chapter of The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud claims to have shown that 'the dream was a process with a meaning, and that it can be inserted into the chain of the dreamer's psychical experiences',[3] while in his 'Short Account of Psychoanalysis' he emphasizes the 'thoroughgoing meaningfulness (Sinnhaftigkeit) and determination (Determinierung) of even the seemingly darkest and most arbitrary psychic phenomena'.[4] Yet, paradoxically, it is Freud's refusal to recognise the distinction between explanation and understanding which has endowed the discipline which he founded with its depth and power. For this refusal enabled psychoanalysis to do justice simultaneously to two profoundly-rooted, yet apparently irreconcilable, views of human behaviour, to combine a realization that human action is moulded and impelled by biological and social forces, even - and especially - when these forces remain excluded from awareness, with an appreciation that no amount of scientific investigation could invalidate the treatment of human beings as responsible agents, capable of forming purposes and enacting intentions.

The history of post-Freudian developments in psychoanalysis, however, makes clear how fragile was the ambiguity - and equilibrium - which constituted the strength of Freud's work. The original Freudian synthesis - a commitment to determinism in the domain of the psyche, a penchant for biological modes of explanation, an analytical practice founded in a hermeneutics of human speech, and (with Beyond the Pleasure Principle) even a certain return to the Naturphilosophie against which Helmholtz and his followers had rebelled - proved too complex and unstable to be sustained in its entirety by any of Freud's inheritors. During Freud's lifetime, with the major secessions of Jung and Adler, and to an even greater degree after his death, psychoanalysis began to fragment into a variety of different schools and tendencies, each laying claim to only a part of the Freudian legacy. At

one extreme stands the work of Wilhelm Reich, who championed the Freudian theory of libido – of the fundamentally sexual nature of psychic energy – as the natural-scientific foundation of psychoanalysis, against what he saw as the increasing squeamishness of his fellow analysts. The adoption of this stance led Reich eventually to abandon the principle of the 'talking-cure' altogether in favour of a direct manipulation of the body, and culminated in the theoretical delirium of his final years, in which the apparatus of a naive scientism is applied to the pursuit of a cosmic libidinal energy.[5] Far more frequent and varied, however, have been those developments of psychoanalysis in which Freud's biologism, and his insistence on the sexual aetiology of mental disorder, are underplayed in favour of a less reductionist perspective. In the New York School of 'ego psychology' such anti-reductionism is reconciled with a broadly natural-scientific orientation by means of the postulation of a 'conflict-free' sphere of the ego, which has at its disposal sources of energy independent of the id.[6] In general, however, from Binswanger's marriage of psychoanalysis with the categories of Heideggerian Daseinsanalyse to the emphasis on social and cultural determinants of neurosis in the work of 'Neo-Freudian revisionists' such as Fromm and Horney, the critique of Freud's biologism has gone hand in hand with an aversion to the natural-scientific ethos, and a corresponding highlighting of the social and hermeneutic dimensions of analysis.

Some consideration of the history and of the divergent currents of psycho-analytical theory is an essential preliminary to an appraisal of the work of Jacques Lacan, since at the heart of Lacan's teaching – which began in earnest in 1953 with his departure from the International Psychoanalytical Association and the inauguration of the Seminar – is the call for a 'return to Freud', for a renewed close reading of Freud's original texts, a reaffirmation of the dislocating radicality of the concept of the unconscious, and a rejection of the dilutions and deviations which have characterised psycho-analysis since the death of Freud.[7] Moreover, Lacan himself has characterised the history of psychoanalysis, in a manner not dissimilar to the outline above, as a series of complementary departures from an original Freudian norm. In an article on 'Variants of the Standard Treatment', published in 1955, Lacan suggests that 'an external coherence persists in these deviations from analytical experience, which frame its axis as rigorously as the fragments of a

projectile, in their dispersal, preserve its ideal trajectory at the centre of gravity of the sheaf which they trace'.[8] In Lacan's view this ability of psychoanalysis to preserve its fundamental coherence and efficacity is due to the fact that it is 'nothing other than an artifice of which Freud has given the constituents, while laying down that the notion of these constituents is englobed by their ensemble':[9] the theory of psychoanalysis is internal to its practice, so that the 'purely formal maintenance of these constituents is sufficient to ensure the effectiveness of their overall structure'.[10] Yet if the effectiveness of analytical practice may thus be seen to possess a certain independence from the adequacy of psychoanalytical theory, this autonomy is far from absolute. Lacan argues that 'the incompleteness of the analyst's notion of these constituents <of psychoanalysis> tends to become one with the limit which the process of analysis will not be able to pass in the analysand',[11] so that his call for a 'return to Freud' is ultimately of clinical significance. The major question which hangs over Lacan's work, therefore, is whether its self-presentation as a return to the complexity and radicality of Freud's original doctrine is sustainable, or whether Lacan too - for whatever reasons - was obliged to become a revisionist.

Lacan did not begin his professional life as a psychoanalyst, but trained first as a doctor of medicine, and subsequently entered psychiatry as a disciple of the distinguished French psychiatrist Clerambault. By the early 1930s he was a young chef de clinique, with a promising future before him. Yet, as his doctoral thesis on paranoid psychosis - first published in 1932 - makes clear, Lacan at this point was already in rebellion against the theoretical tradition in which he had been reared, at odds with the pervasive and deepset belief of his profession in the organic origins of mental illness. Centred upon the full-length case-history of a patient named 'Aimée', De la Psychose Paranoïaque dans ses Rapports avec la Personnalité argues persistently that psychosis cannot be viewed as a physiologically-grounded intrusion into - and disruption of - an otherwise 'normal' personality. This is not simply because psychosis can be shown to occur in the absence of any - even merely conjectural - organic lesion,[12] or because of the difficulties into which such theories run when confronted with the phenomenon of 'double delirium' (délire à deux).[13] Far more fundamental for Lacan is the argument that the phenomena of mental life cannot consist in patterns of causally-linked events, comparable to

processes in nature, since these phenomena reveal an intentional character. 'Every phenomenon of consciousness', Lacan affirms, 'has in effect a sense (sens), in one of the two connotations which language gives to this term: that of meaning or that of orientation. The simplest phenomenon of consciousness, which is the image, is either symbol or desire'.[14] The task of the psychiatrist, therefore, cannot be to establish a putative aetiological chain which would ultimately lead back to organic factors, since such an orientation towards causal explanation neglects the 'human meaning' of the behaviour of the mentally disordered, which can only be made available through a methodology of understanding (compréhension). Lacan demonstrates in the course of his case history that the attempt to understand, rather than reductively explain, disturbed behaviour will show that psychosis – far from representing an alien intrusion into the inner life of the patient – stands in an intrinsic relation to the 'personality' of the patient, understood as 'the totality constituted by the individual and by their particular environment'.[15] This holistic and interpretive approach is confirmed in an article written shortly after the appearance of De la Psychose Paranoïaque, in which Lacan explicitly includes his own research with that of Binswanger in the category of 'works of phenomenological inspiration on mental states' which 'do not detach the local reaction, which in the majority of cases is remarkable only because of some pragmatic discordance, and which can thereby be isolated as mental disorder, from the whole lived experience of the sick person, which they attempt to define in its originality'.[16] Since there can be no intrinsic or objective mark of mental disorder, any psychiatry which looks towards natural science must ignore the role of intepretation in the very definition of its object.

Although, at the time his thesis was published, Lacan was still working as – and considered himself to be – a psychiatrist (he joined the Paris Psychoanalytic Society in 1934, after an analysis with Rudolf Loewenstein), De la Psychose Paranoïaque deals sympathetically, and at considerable length, with Freudian theory. Lacan argues that his analysis of the case of Aimée, which involves a detailed examination of her life history and of her 'inspired' writings, has confirme certain fundamental discoveries of psychoanalysis concerning the role, in psychopathology, of infantile sexuality and childhood history. Furthermore, in the final theoretical section of the book, he claims that he has taken two very general postulates of psychoanalysis as guidelines

for the development of his own proposed 'science of personality': that there exist 'certain typical stages of the development of the personality, that is to say a certain typical coherence between its genesis and its structure'; and 'that there exists a certain equivalence or common measure between the different phenomena of personality, an equivalence which is expressed by the common use of the term - imprecise, but imposed by the necessities of thought - 'psychic energy'.[17] As the reticence of this final phrase indicates, however, for Lacan the specifically sexual or biological content of libido-theory is far from being the core of Freud's doctrine. It is crucial to note that Lacan's initial gravitation towards psychoanalysis is not towards an explanatory and reductive science of the mind, but rather towards what he terms 'a semantics of behaviour and of representative phantasies'.[18] For Lacan psychoanalysis is primarily a 'method of interpretation', since far from engaging in a futile attempt to trace mental disorder back to physical causes, it reverses the relation of mind and body to reveal the 'psychogenic meaning' not only of dreams and parapraxes, but even of organic reactions.[19] From the very first psychoanalysis is considered by Lacan as a means of countering the orientation of theories of the mind towards the paradigm of natural science.

This early evaluation of psychoanalysis was not altered by Lacan's official conversion to Freudianism. If a shift in attitude can be detected in those writings of the 1930s and 1940s which Lacan refers to as the 'works of our entry into psychoanalysis',[20] it is simply that the conflict between organicism and reductionism, and a psychology of comprehension, which in De la Psychose Paranoïaque had been embodied respectively by psychiatry and psychoanalysis, is now considered as an incoherence within Freudian doctrine itself. Lacan perceives a fissuring of Freud's work between a view of the human being as a solipsistic organism, for whom other individuals figure only as sources of gratification and frustration, and an understanding of the dimension of social meaning inherent in neurosis and psychosis, between an implicit recognition that the proper object of psychology is the 'specific reality of inter-human relations'[21] and a tendency towards biological reductionism. Accordingly, Lacan now defends what he terms 'the phenomenological advance of Freudianism', the grasp of human behaviour as moulded by a series of identifications, as 'bearing the mark of a certain number of typical psychic relations which express a certain social structure',[22] while deploring the attempt ultimately to derive such typical relations, or 'complexes', from

an underlying system of instincts.[23] For the young Lacan, the Freudian notion
of a death instinct - in particular - testifies to 'the aporia that confronted
this great mind in the most profound attempt so far made to formulate an
experience of man in the register of biology',[24] while in his definitive
critique of organicist aetiologies of madness (Propos sur la Causalité
Psychique), dating from 1946, Lacan suggests that Freud remained - in
opposition to the dominant movement of his thought - a victim of the
prejudices of psycho-physical parallelism.[25] Yet this reading of Freud as
providing primarily an account of the structuring of the domain of inter-
human relations is not without its own difficulties. For while insisting on the
irreducibility of images, social meanings, and identifications to any purely
biological substratum, Lacan cannot afford to lose touch with the kernel of
truth concealed in Freud's propensity for biologism: that human existence
cannot be seen as centred on an essentially cognitive consciousness, but, even
in its most non-physical reaches, is traversed by physical needs and
appetences. The difficulty, therefore, becomes one of developing a non-
reductionist critique of consciousness, or - to reverse the terms of the
problem - of producing an account of the emergence of a specifically human
form of desire.

Like so many other influential thinkers and writers of his generation, Lacan
found - not the solution to this problem - but the fundamental mould within
which his successive attempts at a solution would be cast, in Hegelian
thought, and more specifically in the interpretation of the Phenomenology of
Mind proposed by the emigré Russian thinker Alexandre Kojève. It was to
prove of crucial importance for the subsequent development of Lacan's work
that the period during which he produced his first psychoanalytical essays was
also the period during which Hegel made his first major impact on French
thought,[26] and that Lacan - along with Raymond Aron, Georges Bataille,
Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and other future celebrities - attended the lectures
on the Phenomenology given by Kojève at the Ecole Normale Superieure
between 1933 and 1939. For in his lessons on Hegel there is one particular
section of the Phenomenology to which Kojève repeatedly returns, and which
clearly forms one of the keys to his interpretation; it is the passage, at the
beginning of Part Two, in which Hegel describes the transition from organic
life to properly human existence, from 'sentiment of self' (Selbstgefühl) to

'self-consciousness' (Selbstbewusstsein). As rewrought by Kojève, the core of Hegel's argument is that self-consciousness – as opposed to a consciousness which is purely passive absorption in its object – can only emerge on the basis of animal life, out of the cycle of desire and of the satisfaction of desire. The first rudimentary experience of selfhood is made possible by the non-self-sufficiency of the organic, since to crave a particular external object for the satisfaction of physical need is at the same time to experience oneself as lacking that object. At the same time, however, the awareness of dependency upon external reality which necessarily accompanies such craving is experienced as an injury to this incipient sense of selfhood, so that the consumption of the object can be interpreted as its 'negation', a denial of dependency aimed at reinforcing the 'certainty of self' (Selbstgewissheit). Yet at the purely animal level such negations are doomed to failure: physical desire can provide no durable support for self-consciousness, since its temporary satiation leads to an extinction of the awareness of lack upon which the sense of self depends, while its re-awakening leads only to another futile repetition of the cycle. Thus, in Hegel's view, self-consciousness can only truly emerge when desire is no longer oriented towards a perishable object, but rather towards another desiring subject, since only a second subject, in acknowledging the first, can undergo negation without forfeiting its alterity; only another self can support a self-consciousness which is individualized, rather than simply reflecting the generic natural object. True self-consciousness is therefore for Hegel dependent upon the mutual recognition of consciousnesses.[27]

However, although Hegel sketches such a form of reciprocity at the close of the introduction to Part Two ('The Truth of Self-Certainty'), fully mutual recognition does not, in the Phenomenology, follow directly upon the transition from consciousness to self-consciousness. Indeed, the remainder – and by far the larger part – of the Phenomenology is taken up with an account of the oscillations and diremptions through which consciousness must pass in order to attain its goal. For Hegel the primordial encounter of consciousnesses is inherently unstable: consciousness can grasp itself only through its reflection in and recognition by the other, yet – as was the case at the level of organic life – an inherent aspiration towards autonomy repugns against the dependency which this relation implies. The initial result of this dilemma is a comic stasis of mutual imitation, in which neither consciousness

dares differ from its other for fear of losing the ground of recognition, and in which, therefore, neither can gain a significant advantage over its fellow and rival: 'Each sees the other do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore does what it does only in so far as the other does the same.'[28] This deadlock can only be broken when one self-consciousness is prepared to grasp for universality by detaching itself entirely from the compulsions of physical existence, to risk death itself in what Kojève terms a 'struggle for pure prestige' in order to extract recognition from the other without being required to acknowledge the other in its turn. The result of this battle is therefore the constitution of the characteristic relation of master and slave, a relation which Hegel describes as 'the divergence of the centre into extremes, which as extremes are opposed to each other, and of which one is only recognised, while the other only recognises'.[29] The master-slave relation, in other words, represents the maximal disequilibrium of self-consciousness, and it is from this point that the long peregrination of conscious towards an adequate concept of itself will begin. Clearly, such a concept can only emerge when full reciprocity becomes possible, when consciousness can 'recognise each other as mutually recognising each other,'[30] without coercion, and without abandoning their individuality in futile imitation. For Hegel such recognition involves the abandonment of total autonomy as a possible goal. Full reciprocity is only attained when human individuals cease to cling to the punctuality of self-certainty, and recognise themselves and each other as common participants in the practical unity of a social world, in that 'I which is We, and We which is I' which Hegel refers to as Geist.[31]

It would scarcely be an overstatement to affirm that the entire first phase of Lacan's work as a psychoanalyst, from his first address to the International Psychoanalytical Association in 1936 to the ceremonial announcement of his apostasy from official Freudianism in the Discours de Rome of 1953, is dominated by the elaboration of this Hegelian account of the dilemmas of self-consciousness and their resolution, a reworking in which the fundamental contributions of Freud and Hegel are enriched from sources as diverse as animal ethology and the phenomenology of Heidegger. The basic direction which Lacan's thought will take is already clear in his inaugural address, the celebrated paper on 'The Mirror Stage', unorthodox in its introduction of a

phase of childhood development entirely absent from classical Freudianism. The child, according to Lacan, when somewhere between the age of six and eighteen months, and hence before the beginnings of articulate speech, is profoundly affected by the encounter with its own image as reflected in a mirror, despite its ability to verify the illusory nature of the image, the point at which a primate placed in this situation would lose interest. Through a 'flutter of jubilant activity', in which it tests the correspondence between its perceived movements in their reflected environment, and its own body in relation to the persons and objects which surround it, the child demonstrates a first apprehension of bodily unity, as the support of the division between a coherent self and that which is other, before it is capable of concretely assuming such an identity in the actual control of its bodily movements. It is through this experience, Lacan argues, in 'a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation',[32] that the 'I' or ego is consolidated in its primordial form. In contrast to the majority of Freudians, however, Lacan does not portray the emergence of the ego as the beginning of a reckoning with the demands of reality, and therefore as a step on the path to maturity. Lacan's parable of genesis rather marks the ego from the very start as a form which is both ineluctable and ominous. For the very exteriority of the image, its inverted symmetry, and the contrast between its height and apparent fixity and the turbulent sensations which the child experiences, presage what will become in Lacan's account the fundamental characteristics of the ego as a form of estrangement, a mirage of coherence and solidity through which the subject is seduced into misrecognition of its own truth. The mirror stage inaugurates the constitution of what Lacan describes as 'the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development'.[33]

The novelty, within the psychoanalytical tradition, of Lacan's account of the formation of the ego can only be fully appreciated if contrasted directly with that of Freud himself. Freud's initial conception of the ego, and - arguably - the conception which remained most fundamental throughout his career, is already to be found in the Project, when the ego is portrayed as a system which progressively differentiates itself from the rest of the neural network as a result of its perceptual contact with external reality, and which consequently becomes the representative of the demands of that reality, charged with controlling the spontaneous impulse of the organism towards a

reckless or hallucinatory gratification. In Freud's later psychoanalytical thought the concept of the ego will always remain associated with the system of perception and consciousness, and with the function of reconciling the conflicting exigencies of the inner and outer worlds. From 1914 onwards, however, with the publication of the 'On Narcissism: an Introduction', a new group of themes begins to overlay this primary, biologically-grounded conception. Freud now suggests that the ego itself can become an object of libidinal cathexis, indeed, that a state of 'primary narcissism' should be assumed, in which the whole store of libido is focussed upon the ego, so that the development of the ego may be said to consist in a displacement of libido onto external objects. At the same time, this transformation of ego-libido into object-libido brings with it a dilemma, since the more libido is invested in the object, the more libidinally impoverished becomes the ego itself, a process which reaches its culmination in the state of 'being in love'. It is in order to counter this danger that there emerges what Freud terms 'narcissistic object-choice', the tendency of the ego to model its object on itself, or to select an object which possesses precisely those virtues which it feels itself to lack. 'To be loved,' affirms Freud, 'represents the goal and satisfaction of narcissistic object-choice ... Dependency upon the loved object has a degrading effect (wirkt herabsetzend); whoever is in love is humble. Whoever loves has, so to speak, surrendered a part of their narcissism and can only obtain its replacement through being loved in return'.[34]

A little under a decade after the 'On Narcissism: an Introduction', in his pivotal essay on The Ego and the Id, Freud advances even further in this direction. Although he now abandons the concept of a primary narcissism, arguing that the newly-defined id must be seen as the initial reservoir of libido, Freud suggests that not only does the ego choose objects which resemble itself, it also models itself to a large extent upon its earliest objects. Specifically, the ego is formed by processes of identification which – as in Freud's account of the work of mourning – compensate for the loss of the loved object, the most important of these being the identifications with the parental figures, and especially the father, which form the nucleus of the super-ego. 'The character of the ego', Freud now suggests, 'is a precipitate of the abandoned object-cathexes, it contains the history of these object choices'.[35] However, these new theoretical developments do not entirely displace Freud's former views. He continues to describe the ego as having

privileged access to external reality, and as the much-harassed mediator between the claims of reality, super-ego and id. The ego may be merely a 'constitutional monarch', severely limited in its autonomy and possibilities for action, yet through its control of motility and its development from 'obedience to drives' to the 'curbing of drives'[36] it retains a position of dominance which is by no means undesirable. Indeed, for Freud 'Psychoanalysis is a tool which should make possible the ego's progressive conquest of the id.'[37]

This Freudian conception of the ego and its functions - confirmed by his final papers on analytical technique - is clearly at variance with Lacan's account of the ego as an alienating form, as the support of a register which he will soon come to characterise as that of the 'Imaginary'. This is one of the points at which Lacan's psychiatric formation, his original concern with psychosis rather than neurosis, has left its indelible stamp upon his work. Undoubtedly, Lacan's accession to the study of the mind via an encounter with paranoia profoundly impressed upon him the characteristics of the ego which are salient in that disorder: projection and identification as forms of self-misrecognition, the aggressivity of attempts to dissolve the narcissistic tension of identification, alternating with a fundamental passivity.[38] Accordingly Lacan's tactic, from the very first, will be to detach the biologico-genetic account of the ego which persists throughout Freud's work from the theory of narcissism and identification to be found in 'On Narcissism: an Introduction' and The Ego and the Id: it is these texts which will form Lacan's touchstones in his discussions of the ego. Already in De la Psychose Paranoïaque Lacan had rejected the Freudian assumption of a progressive differentiation of the ego from the id, arguing that the 'reality principle can only be distinguished from the pleasure principle on a gnoseological plane, and it is therefore illegitimate to introduce it into the genesis of the ego, since it implies the ego itself in its role as subject of knowledge <connaissance>.'[39] The cognition of which the ego is the support, however, is inseparable from a process of 'mis-cognition' (méconnaissance) which is rooted in the imaginary identification of the mirror stage. Lacan will persistently denounce 'the deceptive obviousness of the notion that the self-identity which is supposed in the common awareness of the ego has anything to do with a presumed instance of the real'.[40] 'The ego of which we speak,' says Lacan, clearly echoing the arguments of The Ego and the Id, 'is absolutely impossible to

distinguish from the imaginary captivations which constitute it from head to toe, in its genesis as in its status, in its function as in its actuality, by another and for another'.[41]

It will be clear by now that Lacan's procedure in this first phase of his work is to reformulate what he takes to be the central insights of the Freudian theory of the ego in terms of the Hegelian dialectic of self-consciousness. In Freud's own work these multiple insights - into identity-construction as an identification with love-objects, into the contradictions between self-love and object-love, into the frequency of oscillations between affection and hostility - are couched in the terminology of the libido theory, of alternating ego- and object-cathexes, and of a fundamental duality of Eros and the death-drive. In his discussion of the phenomenon of ambivalence, for example, of the interplay of love and hatred within a single relationship, Freud takes special care to refute the suggestion that what is involved is a direct transformation of one emotion into another. He argues, rather, that what takes place is an alternation in predominance between two qualitatively distinct sources of impulse, one libidinal and the other destructive. Naturally, Lacan's opposition to organicism and reductionism - whether inside or outside psychoanalysis - leads him to oppose this view: the oscillation between love and aggression, fascination and rivalry, which is characteristic of many human relationships, cannot be traced back to a biological foundation, but is rather a consequence of the ontological precariousness of the ego, of its fundamental alienation or being-other. When Lacan wishes to illustrate the phenomena of alternation and ambivalence he turns most spontaneously not towards the Freudian theory of drives, but towards the analyses of the dialectic of self and other, of seeing and being seen, of humiliation and domination to be found in Sartre's Being and Nothingness.[42] Despite his strictures on the absolute autonomy of the self assumed by existentialism,[43] Lacan recognises in Sartre a fellow Hegelian.

If Lacan's reworking of the concept of the ego as the form of the subject's entanglement in the impasses of identification is deeply indebted to Hegel, his account of the resolution of the dilemmas of the imaginary is no less so. In the Phenomenology of Mind, as we have seen, the successive alienations of consciousness - the Stoic's retreat from the world into the empty freedom of thought, the longing of the Unhappy Consciousness of

religion for an unattainable beyond, the inability of the revolutionary's 'general will' to generate concrete social institutions - can only be definitively overcome when self-consciousness abandons its insistence upon its own absolute autonomy, and grasps affirmatively its belonging to and dependence upon the human community in which it has been formed. Conversely, however, such a community can only be adequate to the aspiration towards autonomy inherent in self-consciousness when it embodies a recognition of the subjective freedom of each social member. Thus for Hegel, and - following Hegel - for Kojève, the discrepancy between the self-certainty of consciousness and the truth of Geist can only be resolved politically, through the emergence of a society in which the individual is recognised as such, rather than as a member of a caste or class, through the appearance - as a result of the immanent dialectic of history - of the modern state. Lacan follows this conception in so far as he argues that the dilemmas of the ego cannot be resolved by retrenchment, by its insistence on its own autonomy and self-identity, but only by the acceptance of its implication in the domain of 'intersubjectivity', maximally defined as the 'total acceptance by the subject of the other subject'.[44]

Where Lacan differs from both Hegel and Kojève, however, is in the central role which he allots to language, for although both these predecessors stress the importance of language in the self-formative process of Spirit (for Hegel language is the palpable embodiment of Spirit - das Dasein des Geistes - at each stage of its development, while Kojève argues that language is one of the indispensible preconditions of self-consciousness[45]) neither thinker gives language an absolute primacy over labour and social conflict. Lacan's difference in this respect is evident in his adaptation of Kojève's theory of desire. In his development of this theory Kojève had emphasized the symbolic focus of human conflict: the mere fact of its possession by the other can transform an otherwise worthless thing into an object of contention; human desire is always mediated by the desire of the other, so that all struggle is fundamentally a fight for recognition, and human history becomes - aphoristically - 'the history of desired Desires'.[46] Lacan's account of the crystallization of an initially 'shifting field, stretched in accordance with the lines of animal desire'[47] into a world of knowable objects makes fundamental use of this Hegelian-Kojèvian argument. The human object, distinguished by its 'neutrality and indefinite proliferation', its 'instrumental polyvalence and

symbolic polyphony',[48] is dependent for its identity upon an identification of the ego. 'It is around the wandering shadow of his own ego,' Lacan suggests, 'that will be structured all the objects of <Man's> world.'[49] Yet this relation of subject and object is itself caught up in an anterior intersubjective relation. 'What makes the human world a world covered with objects,' Lacan affirms, 'is grounded in the fact that the object of human interest is the object of the desire of the other', and, as in Kojève's thought, this entails that 'A primitive otherness is included in the object, in so far as it is primitively an object of rivalry and competition.'[50] Lacan differs from Kojève, however, in his suggestion that this conflict, far from requiring a historical and political solution, has always been potentially resolved through the prior possibility of mediation inherent in language. Human speech has the power to still the quarrel of rival consciousnesses, since the contractual nature of language requires that, in order for two subjects to name the same object, they must recognize each other as recognizing the same object, thereby transcending the struggle for possession. 'Speech,' Lacan argues, 'is always a pact, an accord, one comes to an agreement, one is of the same mind - this is yours, this is mine, this is this, this is that.'[51] Conversely, it is 'at the limits where speech resigns that the domain of violence begins'.[52]

By the early 1950s, therefore, Lacan has developed a philosophical position - arrived at by this largely Hegelian route - which rejects the view of language as a representation eitherof inner experience, or of a world of pre-given objects, and which places great emphasis on the relation established by language between speaking subjects. If, as Lacan argues, 'No linguist or philosopher can maintain any longer a theory of language as a system of signs which doubles a system of realities, the latter being defined by the common accord of sound minds in sound bodies',[53] if the mutual recognition of subjects precedes the cognition of objects, this is because no fixation of linguistic meaning, no act of naming, can be accomplished in isolation from the system of language as a whole, and therefore from the continuous intersubjective coordination of language-use which sustains this system. Even at the most elementary level, that of ostensive definition, the attempt to establish a privileged point at which language would hook directly onto the world is condemned to failure. 'There is only one gesture,' Lacan argues, 'known since Augustine, which corresponds to nomination: that of the

index-finger which shows, but ... by itself this gesture is not even adequate to designate what is named in the object indicated'.[54] No definition of a linguistic term can be self-explanatory, so that the explication of meaning involves the potentially indefinite series of interpretive substitutions made possible by the language as a whole: 'the unity of signification ... proves never to be resolved into a pure indication of the real, but always refers back to another signification. That is to say, the signification is realised only on the basis of a grasp of things in their totality.'[55]

One major consequence of this conception of language, evident both in Lacan's work and in the hermeneutic thought to which it is closely allied, is the erosion of the distinction between reference and meaning, between the object of discourse and what is communicated about that object. For if there can be no purely ostensive definition of objects - although this does not preclude a pre-linguistic experience of objects - the identification of objects, and therefore the meaning of the terms by which they are designated, will depend upon what beliefs are currently held by members of a speech community. It is for this reason that Lacan refers to the 'signified' neither as the reality which is referred to, nor as the meaning communicated in language, but as 'the diachronic set of concretely pronounced discourses'.[56] 'The object,' argues Lacan, 'is not unrelated to speech. It is from the very first partially given in the objectal, or objective, system in which must be included the sum of prejudices which constitute a cultural community':[57] the meanings sedimented in language are inseparable from shared patterns of knowledge and belief. But, conversely, any introduction of new information will have its effect upon the distribution of meanings by contributing to the 'diachronic set of concretely pronounced discourses'. Intersubjective communication, therefore, cannot be simply the transferral of concepts from one mind to another, an exchange of tokens which already have their meaning clearly stamped upon them. If the meaning of linguistic terms determines their use, as structuralism had suggested, it is no less true that the way in which words are used transforms their meaning.

If Lacan's grounding of meaning in intersubjective agreement, rather than in a relation of representation between language and reality, blurs the dividing-line between speech and its objects, it has a no less crucial effect on our understanding of the subject implied by speech. For if 'speech is

essentially the means of being recognised',[58] if 'language, before signifying something, signifies for someone',[59] it must be concluded that any utterance not only presupposes an addressee, another subject who is capable both of grasping its meaning, and of grasping this meaning as intended by a subject, but that a position in relation to the speaking subject is implicitly attributed to the addressee by the utterance. 'If I call the person to whom I am speaking by whatever name I choose to give him,' Lacan writes, 'I intimate to him the subjective function that he will take on in order to reply to me, even if it is to repudiate this function.'[60] 'In its symbolising function,' therefore, 'speech is moving towards nothing less than a transformation of the subject to whom it is addressed by means of the link that it establishes with the one who emits it ...'.[61] But since, in accordance with the dialectic of recognition, the very being of the subject is dependent upon its recognition by other subjects, the subject's stance towards the addressee will eventually rebound to determine the position of the subject him- or herself. Lacan's oft-repeated paradigms of this transaction are the statements 'You are my wife', or 'You are my master', in which 'speech commits its author by investing the person to whom it is addressed with a new reality': the attribution of a new status to the other is in fact an indirect transformation of one's own status.[62] Thus every instance of speech is not simply a confirmation, but at the same time the transformation of an intersubjective pact, and thereby of the subjects engaged in this pact. It is in this 'intersubjective logic' of speech that Lacan will discern one of the 'essential dimensions' of psychoanalytical theory and technique.

In the second of the two other 'essential dimensions' of analytical experience, which Lacan mentions in the Discours de Rome, the 'historical theory of the symbol' and the 'temporality of the subject',[63] the influence of Hegel is again unmistakeable. In the narrative of the Phenomenology of Mind Hegel embodies a conception of the relation between consciousness and history which has remained influential ever since, and whose relevance to psychoanalysis Lacan has not been alone in perceiving.[64] Firstly, although Hegel does not deny that forms of consciousness are bound up with determinate historical and social conditions, he argues that the understanding of the past is fundamentally a matter of grasping conceptual rather than causal relations; the ultimate motor of historical development is a recurrent disjunction between the

self-comprehension of human subjects and their actual social and historical positions, between the ostensible intentions embodied in the practical compact of social life, and the processes which this practice sets in motion. Secondly, and even more importantly, in interpreting the past in this way we do not grasp a process which is purely external to ourselves: for the categories in terms of which we interpret the past are themselves a product of that past, so that historical knowledge is at the same time a process of self-discovery and self-comprehension. Lastly, in Hegel's view, the beliefs which human beings hold about themselves and their world at any specific moment in history cannot be the embodiment of truth in the fullest sense of the word. Such beliefs do reveal an aspect of the truth, yet this aspect can only be understood when their determination becomes apparent from a more adequate position, which emerges from the confict between this limitation and the absoluteness of the claim to truth. Thus Hegel argues that in the Phenomenology of Mind - which reconstructs the experience of consciousness as it passes through these conflicts and transformations - 'each moment is the difference between knowledge and truth, and the movement in which this difference is superseded (sich aufhebt).[65] Since it is the unconditionality of truth which necessitates the - often painful - abandonment of what was formerly knowledge, truth itself may be said to be the motor of a historical process which takes the form of its own progressive emergence.

This Hegelian conception of the relations between historicity, subjectivity and truth is clearly at the heart of the account of the psychoanalytic process at which Lacan has arrived by the early 1950s. In the opening chapter of the first Seminar Lacan stresses that the aim of analysis cannot be to provoke a direct reliving of the past, since such a catharsis could not essentially alter the relation of the patient to his or her history. If, in analysis, 'the restitution of the wholeness of the subject ... takes the form of a restoration of the past',[66] this restoration must be understood not as an affective reanimation of the past, but as a 'reconstruction'. 'It is less a question of remembering,' Lacan affirms, 'than of rewriting history.'[67] Furthermore, if such conceptual reordering can have the practical effects which are experienced in analysis, this is because history cannot be reduced to a sequence of external vicissitudes which function as the causal antecedents of neurosis, but rather constitutes the subject in its very being. History, says Lacan, is 'that present synthesis of the past' which forms 'the

centre of gravity of the subject'.[68] Finally, psychoanalysis for Lacan, as
philosophy for Hegel, is concerned with the disjunction between knowledge
and truth, the one being constituted by the relation between the ego and its
objects, while the other resides in the relation to other and former selves in
which the subject is caught up, but which, in the inertia of its imaginary
identifications, it misconstrues. For Lacan, it is not a question of establishing
certain objective 'truths' about the life-history of the patient - all the more
so, as the dividing-line between phantasy and reality can never be
conclusively established - but of interpreting this recalled life-history as an
expression of the 'truth' of the subject whose drama it represents. This
interpretation will then in turn alter the patient's stance towards the past, so
that for Lacan, as for Hegel, 'Truth is not a given that can be seized in its
inertia, but a dialectic in movement'.[69]

Clearly, one of the primary aims of this Lacanian account of historicity
is - once again - to criticize the biologistic and reductionistic aspects of
psychoanalysis, to debunk what Lacan terms the 'mythology of instinctual
maturation',[70] and to effect what he calls 'a disentanglement of the
deciphering of the unconscious from the theory of instincts'.[71] This is not to
imply that Lacan denies the reality of biological or physiological processes.
His argument is rather that no event of this order can have an unmediated
effect upon the formation of the subject, since its effectivity will depend
upon the way in which it is interpreted by the subject, and this in turn will
depend upon the web of interhuman relations in which the subject is caught
up. The infant's attitude towards its own faeces, for example, will be
inescapably influenced by its mother's attitude towards them, and this
intersubjective dimension will be operative no matter how far one returns in
the patient's history: Lacan points out that even a new-born child responds
differently to an accidental knock than to a deliberate slap. From this point
of view, Freud's quasi-biological account of successive stages (oral, anal,
phallic) in the development of libido, and of fixation as an attachment of a
part of the libido to a particular stage, to which the libido as a whole will
tend to return if blocked at a later date, can only be rejected as mythical.
Lacan argues that 'every fixation at a so-called instinctual stage is above all
a historical stigmatum: a page of shame that is forgotten or annulled, or a
page of glory that constrains'.[72] And he continues: 'the instinctual stages,
when they are being lived, are already organised in subjectivity ... the

subjectivity of the child who registers as victories and defeats the heroic chronicle of the training of his sphincters, enjoying the imaginary sexualization of his cloacal orifices, turning his excremental expulsions into aggressions, his retentions into seductions, and his movements of release into symbols - this subjectivity is <u>not fundamentally different</u> from the subjectivity of the psychoanalyst ...'.[73] It is consistent with this view that Lacan should argue that 'there is no relation of engendering between one of the partial drives and its successor'.[74] Whatever the reality of human biological development, 'in psychoanalysis history is a different dimension to that of development - and it is an aberration to attempt to reduce the former to the latter. History only pursues its course in a syncopated, untoward relation to development (<u>en contretemps du development</u>).[75]

One of the important consequences of this argument in Lacan's work is that any notion of analysis as following a predetermined path, or relying upon a preconstructed schema of explanation, is decisively rejected. For Lacan psychoanalysis, like history, is a 'science of the particular',[76] condemned to wrestle with all the paradoxes which flow from such a definition; it proceeds by means of a 'series of revelations which are special to each subject'.[77] Lacan is fond of pointing out that Freud went so far as to suggest that the entirety of analytic theory should be put in question by each new analysis, and insists that this openness to the unforeseen in analytic expeerience is not simply a matter of cognitive punctiliousness, but is essential to the success of psychoanalysis. 'Any intervention will fail,' Lacan argues, 'which is inspired by a prefabricated reconstitution, forged on the basis of our idea of the normal development of the individual'.[78] The goal of analysis should not be to coerce the subject into conformity with some pre-conceived model of psychological well-being, an error which is pushed to its extreme in the view that analysis should encourage the patient to identify with the ego of the analyst,[79] but to enable the patient to avow the idiosyncrasy of his or her desire.

Yet despite the magnitude of its debt to Hegel, there is one crucial facet of Lacan's theory of historicity which differs from its model. For Hegel, the dimension of remembrance and reappropriation of the past is essentially retrospective. Since, as we have seen, the movement of history consists in successive dialectical displacements of the gap between truth and knowledge,

truth and knowledge can only become one, the implicit can only be made fully explicit, when history itself has in some sense come to a close. Consciousness now attains complete freedom since, comprehending the historical process as a whole as its own process of self-formation, it no longer suffers the restriction of dependence upon a reality external to itself. In a psychoanalytical perspective, however, this account is clearly unacceptable. For an analysis can be no more than an episode in the life-history of a patient; any more adequate comprehension of the past which it makes possible must be oriented towards enabling the patient to lead a less impeded or tormented life at its close. The aim of analysis can only be 'the advent of true speech and the realisation by the subject of its history in relation to its future.'[80]

It is no accident that, in emphasizing this dimension of analysis against Hegel, Lacan makes considerable reference to the work of Heidegger, and specifically to the 'existentialist' Heidegger of Being and Time. For although the conception of historicity which Heidegger develops in that work is clearly indebted, both directly and via the thought of Dilthey, to the Hegelian view of human existence as permeated by the human past, Heidegger sharply contests the exclusively retrospective orientation of historical understanding in Hegel. In Heidegger's view, human thought can never elevate itself from its immersion in the past into a position of panoramic survey. Our relation to the past is not one of Erinnerung, of 'recollection in tranquillity', but rather of 'repetition' or 'recapitulation' (Wiederholung: etymologically, 'bringing-back'), in which our attempt to grasp our own rootedness in the past is driven by the urgency of a need to establish an authentic relation to our still to-be-realized possibilities of being.[81] This Heideggerian view of the primacy of the temporal dimension of the future is one with which Lacan's thought has a natural affinity. For already in the paper on the 'Mirror-Stage', Lacan had suggested a 'specific pre-maturation' of the human infant, which makes possible a precocious apprehension of unity and identity in 'a drama whose internal thrust is from insufficiency to anticipation'.[82] From the very first, therefore, one of the functions of the Lacanian Imaginary will be to paper over a gap inherent in the subject's relation to the future, and by the early 1950s the concept of this gap or lack is being formulated in the vocabulary of Being and Time. 'The subject', Lacan argues, in his uncollected paper on 'The Neurotics Individual Myth', always has an anticipatory relationship to his own realization which in turn throws him back onto the level of a profound

insufficiency and betokens a rift in him, a primal sundering, a thrownness, to use the Heideggerian term'.[83]

In terms of the theory of the 'temporality of the subject', most fully developed in the Discours de Rome, this Heideggerian element in Lacan's presentation once again underlines the fact that the actions of the subject cannot be seen as causally determined by his or her past. For the effectivity of the past, like that of any present event in the subject's life, is determined by the manner of its interpretation: it is the way in which we understand our past, for Lacan, which determines how it determines us.[84] But since this understanding is itself intimately related to our orientation towards the future, it can be argued that 'What is realised in my history is not the past definite of what was, since it is no more <this would be the objectivist - and more importantly - structuralist view>, or even the present perfect of what has been in what I am <as argued by Hegel>, but the future anterior of what I shall have been for what I am in the process of becoming.'[85] However, if Lacan agrees with Heidegger that the primary dimension of self-understanding is the future, he draws back - under the influence of Hegel - from the Heideggerian portrayal of the search for an 'authentic' relation to past and future as an essentially solitary quest pursued against the levelling anonymity of collective life. As both the text of Being and Time and Heidegger's brief political engagement make clear, such a conception courts the twin dangers of fatalism and decisionism. For Lacan, by contrast, for whom the Hegelian dialectic of the 'law of the heart' remains a paradigm of madness,[86] the truth of the subject's interpretation of its own past cannot be guaranteed by any Heideggerian notion of 'authenticity' or 'resolute decision' (Entschlossenheit), but must be put to the test in the intersubjective medium of dialogue. An insistence upon the primacy of inwardness belongs to the illusions of the ego.

By the early 1950s, therefore, Lacan has developed a complex and philo-sophically sophisticated reformulation of the theory and practice of psycho-analysis, implying a critique of the biologistic elements of Freudian thought, and including a corresponding emphasis upon the primacy of intersubjectivity and the efficacy of speech. The central inspiration of this reformulation is Hegelian thought. Indeed, in the Discours de Rome Lacan goes so far as to claim that the principles which govern Freud's speech 'are nothing other than

the dialectic of self-consciousness, in the form in which it is realized from
Socrates to Hegel, which starts from the ironic supposition that everything
which is rational is real in order to jump to the scientific conclusion that
everything which is real is rational'.[87] The analyst, by taking the patient 'at
his word', yet refusing to provide a collusive support for the rationalisations
which are thus produced, forces the patient into an articulation of ever
deeper levels of presupposition, until the rationality of the apparently
'irrational' symptoms is revealed. This is a process which Lacan describes as a
transition from 'empty' to 'full speech', in which the subject progressively
abandons the imaginary autonomy of the ego, in order to accept its true
location in the domain of intersubjectivity. To attain full speech means to
cease to speak of oneself as an object, it implies what could be termed a
'recognition of recognition'. 'The subject,' says Lacan, 'begins analysis by
speaking about himself without speaking to you, or by speaking to you without
speaking about himself. When he can speak to you about himself, the analysis
will be over.'[88]

It will also be clear by this point that, despite his portrayal of his work
as a 'return to Freud', as a heretical reassertion of psychoanalytical
orthodoxy, and a challenge to the complacencies of philosophy, Lacan's
reformulation of the theoretical foundations of psychoanalysis is in fact part
of a broader movement of criticism of the reductionist and deterministic
elements of Freud's thought, both inside and outside analytical circles. Among
Lacan's philosophical neighbours and contemporaries, both Sartre and
Merleau-Ponty were concerned to refute the biologism and scientism of
Freud's work, and both turned to the same sources as Lacan in order to
support their critiques: the thought of Hegel and Heidegger. In <u>Being and
Nothingness</u> Sartre interprets the Freudian theory of the unconscious as
referring to a domain of purely causal processes, as being a 'mechanical
theory of condensation and transference', concerned with 'complexes plunged
deep in semi-physiological darkness'.[89] It is then an easy matter for him to
argue that the concept of repression implies both, on the side of conscious-
ness, an awareness of what is being repressed, and, on the side of the
unconscious, an awareness of having been repressed, so that the supposed
division of the psyche introduced by the barrier of censorship can be seen to
belong to a 'reified mythology'. Sartre's alternative explanations in terms of
bad faith have the merit - he claims - of acknowledging the unity of

consciousness which psychoanalysis vainly seeks to challenge. Merleau-Ponty, more sympathetic to psychoanalysis, nevertheless seeks to blunt the edge of Freud's reductionism, arguing, in The Phenomenology of Perception, that 'the significance of psychoanalysis is less to make psychology biological than to find a dialectical process in functions thought of as "purely bodily", and to reintegrate sexuality into the human being'.[90] Conversely, Lacan's attempt to distinguish the historicity of the subject in psychoanalysis from any quasi-biological theory of development clearly echoes in its philosophical intent the efforts of Merleau-Ponty and Sartre in the domain of collective history to temper the determinism of orthodox historical materialism.

Within the international arena of psychoanalysis itself, Lacan's revision of Freudianism can also be provided with numerous parallels. The work of such neo-Freudians as Fromm and Horney involves a systematic critique of Freud's theory of instincts, of his anchoring of neurotic conflict in supposedly archaic and infantile layers of the mind, and a rejection of the tendency towards solipsism in Freud's view of the individual. For Fromm, ' Freud's homo sexualis is a variant of the classic homo economicus. It is the isolated, self-sufficient man who has to enter into relations with others in order that they may mutually fulfill their needs ... In both variants the persons essentially remain strangers to each other, being related only by the common aim of drive satisfaction'.[91] In a very different way, the British analyst R.D. Laing produced during the 1960s a series of works which sought to attack the reifying effects of Freudian metapsychology, indeed of any theory which 'begins with man or a part of man abstracted from his relation with the other in the world'.[92] Like Lacan, Laing is concerned to debunk organicist aetiologies of madness, although his specific concern is with schizophrenia rather than paranoia, and to demonstrate the intrinsic meaningfulness of the speech and action of those labelled insane. Furthermore, in the course of this enterprise Laing develops a theory of intersubjectivity which is remarkably similar to that of Lacan. Despite the fact that Laing places the emphasis on 'experience', whereas for Lacan intersubjectivity is primarily linguistic, both are ultimately derived from Hegel, Lacan's more directly, and Laing's via the philosophy of Sartre.

The occurrence of these parallels to the fundamental thrust of Lacan's thought points to the fact that for Lacan, at this stage of his intellectual

development, psychoanalysis is pre-eminently a humanistic discipline, a body of theory whose great initial merit was to have achieved 'the recreation of human meaning in an arid period of scientism'.[93] It is in this spirit that Lacan compares psychoanalysis not to a science in the modern sense, but to the 'liberal arts' of the Middle Ages: 'What characterises these arts and distinguishes them', he argues, 'from the sciences that are supposed to have emerged from them, is the fact that they maintain in the foreground what might be termed a fundamental relation to human proportion. At the present time, psychoanalysis is perhaps the only discipline comparable to those liberal arts, inasmuch as it preserves this proportional relation of man to himself - an internal relation, closed on itself, inexhaustible, cyclical, and implied pre-eminently in the use of speech'.[94] Thus, at this point, the very primacy which Lacan accords to language within his doctrine is founded in a - Hegelian - view of language as the domain of 'properly human reality, of that which is communicable'.[95] 'If one had to define the moment when man becomes human,' says Lacan, 'let us say that it is the moment when, however little, he enters into the symbolic relation'.[96] Not surprisingly, therefore, Lacan evokes the aims of analysis, during this period, in the vocabulary of post-war philosophical humanism. Analysis should be oriented towards 'the reconquest by the subject of the authentic reality of the unconscious', its aim should be a 'restitution of the wholeness of the subject'.[97] On occasion Lacan will go so far as to suggest that 'full speech is defined by its identity with that of which it speaks',[98] thus fully adopting the Hegelian conception of a coincidence of subject and object as the proper goal of the dialectic of analysis.

The centrality of the Discours de Rome to Lacan's oeuvre can in large part be attributed to the fact that it both represents the culmination and announces the decline of this 'humanist' phase in his work.[99] Shortly after the Discours de Rome, a rapid and remarkable shift of emphasis begins to take place in Lacan's teaching, clearly visible in the disjunction between the first (1953-54) and the second (1954-55) Seminars, in which the theory of the ego and the imaginary, which had been the central concern of the first phase of Lacan's work, is displaced from its primary position by the theory of a new register which Lacan refers to as the 'Symbolic'. Lacan ceases to portray psychoanalysis as the crown of contemporary humanistic learning, and to

present the goal of analysis as a restoration of the lost integrity and authenticity of the subject. He now argues that the notion of humanism is 'sufficiently weighed-down with history for us to be able to consider it as a particular position realised in a distinctly limited domain of what we continue imprudently to call humanity'.[100] Not only this, Lacan begins to suggest that Freud himself has dealt a fatal blow to a humanism which is inseparably inter-twined in the notion of the primacy of consciousness. Hegel had advanced a long way along this path, since throughout the course of history as Hegel understands it there exists a gap between the concept consciousness has of itself, and its actual situation. Yet, in the Phenomenology, this disjunction is ultimately resolved in absolute knowledge, whereas for Freud, Lacan argues, the disjunction is perpetual.[101] The new emphasis of Lacan's thought will be on the extent to which the human subject is irredeemably fractured, decentred, condemned to a permanent dispossession of self.

This shift in Lacan's intellectual orientation, marked by a break with the phenomenological-existentialist terminology which had echoed through his earlier work, was undoubtedly in large part the result of a growing awareness of the methodological principles of structuralism, initially as presented by Lévi-Strauss in The Elementary Structures of Kinship (1949) and in his Introduction à l'Oeuvre de Marcel Mauss, a little later – with the publication of the Course in General Linguistics in 1955 – as formulated by Saussure himself. It is remarkable that, over a decade before structuralism attained the height of its popularity in France, Lacan had already absorbed what he understood to be the principal advances of structuralist theory. Furthermore, unlike many later converts of the 1960s, Lacan – despite his considerable debt to structuralism – never paid uncritical homage either to Lévi-Strauss, or to structuralist principles in general. Indeed, by the mid-1950s he had already stated the fundamental lines of argument of the critiques of structuralism which only began to be widely accepted in the late 1960s. This cautious, discriminating reception of structuralism on Lacan's part was entirely to be expected. For Lacan's fundamental insistence on the intersubjectivity of language excluded from the very start his acceptance of any account of language as a code, or formalizable system of signs. This is not to say that Lacan denies the possibility of specific formalized languages, such as those of mathematics, or even of the formalization of parts of natural language. It is simply that he always makes the elementary 'hermeneutic' point that any such

formalization must itself be grounded in intersubjective agreement, and that the terms of this agreement cannot themselves be formalized. This insight underlies Lacan's oft-repeated dictum that 'there is no meta-language'.[102] He argues that 'it is necessary that all so called meta-languages be presented to you with language. You cannot teach a course in mathematics using only letters on the board. It is always necessary to speak an ordinary language that is understood'.[103] Hence Lacan's encounter with structuralism produces not an unqualified conversion, but rather a pattern of interference with his original Freudian and Hegelian assumptions. The result is a novel synthesis in which each contributory current of thought tends to subvert and modify each of the others. It is precisely this confluence of - and competition between - the philosophical themes of the immediate post-war era and the more recent innovations of structuralism which makes for the richness and ambiguity of Lacan's work from the early 1950s onwards. It is from this point - which coincides with his emergence as the maître of the Seminar - that one may date the inception of Lacan's mature thought.

It is unlikely, however, that a thinker as persistent as Lacan in his central concerns could have 'changed direction' in this way, had there not been present in his earlier work certain assumptions and tendencies favourable towards the theoretical opening offered by structuralism. This conjecture is confirmed if we turn once again to the doctoral thesis on paranoid psychosis. If Lacan appears to be deeply attracted to Freud's thought in this work, as we have already noted, this is precisely because of Freud's respect for the meaningfulness of psychic phenomena, even - and especially -for the processes and creations of the disordered mind. There is, however, a subordinate, yet persistent strain of argument in De la Psychose Paranoïaque, in which Lacan appears anxious to deny that a semantic and psychogenic account of mental illness must entail the ruin of scientific objectivity. Thus he writes: 'To understand <comprendre>, by this we mean to give to the behaviour that we observe in our patients its human meaning ... But it should be noted that if the method makes use of relations of meaning <rapports significatifs> which are grounded in the consent of the human community, their application to the determination of a given fact can be governed by purely objective criteria'.[104] At one or two points Lacan goes so far as to suggest that the meaning grasped by the procedure of Verstehen may be as ill-founded as 'the homogeneous (participationist) interpretation in which the primitive gives to

the totality of natural phenomena';[105] as a method of analysis comprehension
is 'in itself too tempting not to present grave dangers of illusion'.[106] In order
to counter these dangers, he argues, a science of personality must begin from
the hypothesis that 'there exists a determinism which is specific to the order
of phenomena defined by relations of human comprehensibility'.[107] In itself
this hypothesis is simply a postulate, but like the hypotheses which found the
object, the method and the autonomy of any science, its prima facie
acceptance is unavoidable. For 'if there were no psychogenic determinism, it
would be useless to speak of human behaviour other than in poetic
figures'.[108] Throughout De la Psychose Paranoïaque, therefore, Lacan's
persistent rejection of the mock-scientificity of organicism and psycho-
physical parallelism is counterbalanced by an assertion of the potential
objectivity of a purely psychological and semantic account of mental disorder.

In Lacan's doctoral thesis, however, the defence of the autonomy of the
domain of social relations of meaning jostles uneasily with his claims to
scientific rigour. Indeed, Lacan is caught in a severe dilemma. For it is
impossible for him to elucidate how the comprehension of psychic phenomena,
even if the results of such a procedure do not coincide with the significance
attributed to his or her own acts by the subject, can result in anything other
than the grasping of an implicit meaning, of the underlying logic and purpose
of the patient's behaviour, so that the problem of interpretation, and all the
attendant dangers of imaginary identification, simply recur at a new level.
The notion of a form of explanation, in other words, which is not itself simply
the understanding of unconscious meaning, is not supported by any specific
theoretical resource in Lacan's early work. Accordingly, it is the critique of
biologism and reductionism - rather than of the potential illusions,the endless
mirror-play of meaning - which dominates the first phase of Lacan's work. As
late as the opening pages of the first Seminar, Lacan can suggest that it is
the reintroduction of 'something with a different essence, with a concrete
psychological density ... namely meaning', which distinguishes Freud from the
scientistic century in which he was born,[109] while in the Discours de Rome
the 'deliverance of imprisoned meaning' is presented as central to the
enterprise of analysis.[110]

Once the latent anti-hermeneutic current in Lacan's early work has
been perceived, it is no longer difficult to understand how structuralism could

so rapidly reverse the relation of forces between this undertow and a formerly predominant anti-scientism. The single most important idea which Lacan adopts from structuralism is that of the - in Saussure's terminology - 'arbitrary' relation between signifier and signified. For what this arbitrariness entails is that there can be no pre-determined, automatic, or natural transition from signifier to signified, from language to meaning, or from human behaviour to its 'psychological' significance. The bar between signifier and signified in Lacan's transcription of what he terms the Saussurian 'algorithm' - $(\frac{S}{s})$ - may therefore be described as 'a barrier resisting signification',[111] since it blocks the intuitive grasp of meaning which Lacan now associates with a misleading, imaginary identification with the other, and the attendant dangers for analytical practice. The Saussurian conception will also provide the basis for a newly-emphasised distinction between the 'signifier' and the 'sign'. For Lacan the sign belongs to a codified system in which meanings have been rigorously specified, or implies a natural or unalterable relation between indicator and indicated, such as exists - for example - between smoke and fire, or such as is exemplified by the 'language' of the bees.[112] As the vehicle of a stable meaning, the sign may be defined as 'representing something for someone'.[113] The signifier, such as a term of everyday language, by contrast, 'has no need to justify its existence in terms of any signification whatsoever'[114] since such signification is not its 'content' - as in the case of the code - but is determined by its relations to other signifiers. More paradoxically, it can be said that - as the title of a chapter of Lacan's third Seminar puts it - 'The signifier, as such, signifies nothing'[115] - the signifier in itself is simply a mark or a sound: it is only its location within the differential system of a language, rather than an intrinsic relation with an object or signified, which endows it with the capacity for signification, and only its actual use by a speaker which realizes this capacity.

Seen in terms of Lacan's earlier theoretical dilemma, the most important aspect of this dissociation - or arbitrary relation - between signifier and signified, is that it offers the possibility of an escape from the immersion in meaning implied by comprehension. If the link between language and meaning can be broken for the purposes of analysis - as appears to be the case in structural linguistics, with its masking out of semantics - then it becomes possible to study the structure of the signifier, and consequently the

determination of meaning - Lacan's original ambition - without becoming embroiled in the problems and dangers of interpretation. 'It is impossible to study how the phenomenon called language, and which is the most fundamental of interhuman relations, functions, if one does not distinguish from the start between signifier and signified. The signifier has its own laws, independently of the signified'.[116] In the chapter of the Third Seminar from which this remark comes Lacan explicitly connects this new conception of the signifier with the reversal of his previous subordination of explanation to understanding: 'You are acquainted with the so-called opposition between Erklären and Verstehen. In relation to it, we must maintain that there is no scientific structure except where there is Erklären. Verstehen is an invitation to all kinds of confusions. Erklären does not at all imply mechanical signification, or anything of that kind. The nature of Erklären is the recourse to the signifier was the sole foundation of any conceivable scientific structuration.'[117]

Although these developments in Lacan's thought would have been impossible without Saussure's division of the linguistic sign into signifier and signified, the general shift of theoretical outlook which they mark is more directly indebted to Lévi-Strauss. For it is Lévi-Strauss who claims most insistently that structuralist methodology has opened the possibility of a new, rigorously objective treatment of data in the human sciences. Not only does Lévi-Strauss argue that a society may be seen as 'an ensemble of symbolic systems, in the first rank of which would be language, marriage-rules, economic relations, art, science, religion',[118] he also suggests that in the analysis of such systems, significance - the lived experience of meaning - may be seen as a secondary and derivative phenomenon, that 'since meaning is always the result of a combination of elements which are not themselves significant ... behind all meaning there is a non-meaning.'[119] It is this belief in the reducibility of meaning to non-meaning which opens up the objectivist perspective of conventional structuralism, since it appears to permit the anthropologist to escape from a concern with the understanding of native experience, and therefore to eliminate the danger of an interpretation predetermined by the expectations of the investigator. 'For too long,' Lévi-Strauss complains, echoing the Lacanian critique of the imaginary relation of ego to ego, 'philosophy has succeeded in keeping the human sciences imprisoned in a

circle, in permitting them to perceive no object of study for consciousness other than consciousness itself'.[120]

In Lévi-Strauss's anthropological work, the doctrine that 'symbols are more real than what they symbolise, the signifier precedes and determines the signified',[121] broadens out into the view that social life is constituted and determined by a 'universe of rules'. According to such a view, explanations of social phenomena cannot have reference to individual or collective experience or affectivity, since the content of experience is itself determined by an unconscious system of shared categories. Thus, in his study of Totemism, Lévi-Strauss points out that the kind of explanation employed by Malinowski, in which magical ritual is seen as an attempt to ward off an anxiety produced by consciousness of risk, could just as easily be reversed: it could be argued that it is rather because an object is associated with magical ritual that it generates feelings of anxiety.[122] Lévi-Strauss's development of this separation between psychological and biological considerations and symbolic structure in his analysis of totemism is of particular relevance to the thought of Lacan, since the central phenomenon at issue is the 'identification' between social groups and an animal or other totemic object. Lévi-Strauss contends that any theory of totemism which takes this identification as primary, seeing it as the outcome of a particular physical dependence upon the natural environment, or as the expression of some putative primitive mentality, must remain within the circle of the 'totemic illusion'. This circularity can only be broken when it is appreciated that totemic systems do not consist of a sequence of one-to-one relations between terms (human groups and natural species), but rather of two parallel series of differences between terms.[123] Totemism, for Lévi-Strauss, is simply a symbolic articulation of social structure: any phenomena of affective identification with the totemic object are determined by this symbolic articulation, rather than being its foundation.

This Lévi-Straussian argument for the primacy of symbolic systems is central to the shift in Lacan's theoretical position which takes place during the early 1950s, and in which the problem of relation between the ego and intersubjectivity is reformulated as that of the relation between the imaginary and the new order which Lacan - following Lévi-Strauss - refers to as the 'Symbolic'. In explicating the concept of this order Lacan adopts almost without qualification the Lévi-Straussian account of the rules of matrimonial

exchange - circumventions of the incest taboo - as the foundation of human sociality, of the nature of all social systems as signifying systems, and of the paramount position of language as the paradigm and mediator of these systems. 'The primordial Law', Lacan argues, 'is therefore that which in regulating marriage ties superimposes the kingdom of culture on that of a nature abandoned to the law of mating ... This law, then, is clearly revealed as identical with an order of language. For without kinship nominations, no power is capable of instituting the order of preferences and taboos that bind and weave the yarn of lineage through succeeding generations'.[124] At the same time, a new sense of fatality enters Lacan's work, closely linked with the 'heteronomy' of a symbolic order which is 'irreducible to human experience' and which therefore 'cannot be conceived of as constituted by man, but as constituting him'.[125] The 'little freedom', the narrow but decisive leeway which the subject formerly possessed in adopting a stance towards his or her own past, thus making it possible to 're-order past contingencies by bestowing upon them the sense of necessities to come'[126] is now abolished. And in his or her relation to the signifier the subject is compared to 'the messenger-slave of ancient usage, who <although he> carries under his hair the codicil that condemns him to death knows neither the meaning of the text, nor in what language it is written, nor even that it had been tattooed on his shaven scalp as he slept'.[127]

At the same time as Lacan introduces this conception of the determination of the subject by the symbolic, he reveals a new enthusiasm for the apparently scientistic and reductionist aspects of Freud's work. He now argues that the ethos of 19th-century determinism and materialism which pervades Freud's work cannot be dismissed as simply the anachronistic clothing of the humanistic core of his thought. 'It is this very scientism,' Lacan suggests, 'if one wishes thus to designate his adherence to the ideals of a Brücke ... which lead Freud, as his writings show us, to open up the path which will forever bear his name'.[128] It is a token of this new sympathy that Lacan now offers a positive exegesis of the biologistic aspects of Freud's thought, and in particular of the concept of a 'death-drive', dismissed by the majority of post-Freudian analysts - with the notable exception of Melanie Klein - as hopelessly speculative. He argues that Freud's obstinate maintenance of a duality of instincts (in the form of Eros and the death-drive) at the point at which it was ceasing to be plausible to argue for a qualitative

distinction between ego- and sexual drives may be attributed to his intuitive grasp of the transcendent relation of a symbolic order which is 'irreducible to human experience'[129] to the human subject. In Lacan's view, one should 'recognise in the metaphor of the return of the inanimate (which Freud attaches to every living body) that margin beyond life that language gives to the human being by virtue of the fact that he speaks'.[130] More generally, if Freud continued throughout his work to emphasize the 'energetic function', this is because the 'energetic myth' was his means of evoking 'what is beyond the interhuman reference, what is properly speaking a symbolic beyond'.[131]

This association of the symbolic with what is 'beyond' the inter-human relation indicates what is perhaps the most important transformation which the new concept effects in Lacan's thought. Up to this point Lacan has logically traced language back to a 'pact of nomination' in which subjects agree to recognise - and to recognise each other as recognising - an object which had formerly been the focus of intersubjective rivalry. The notion of a pact of nomination therefore depends upon a coordination of intentions between a minimum of two subjects. What the encounter with the theory of the symbolic forces Lacan to recognize, however, is that any such coordination depends upon a prior understanding of language, since the major clue to what subjects intend is the meaning of what they say, as determined by the structure of language. Hence linguistic meaning cannot be founded in the prelinguistic intentions of speaking subjects.[132] For Lacan this does not entail, however, the abandoning of the concept of the subject altogether. From the very beginning, Lacan perceives clearly that the Lévi-Straussian and - in general - structuralist attempt to abolish the problem of the subject leads merely to the instatement of the symbolic system itself, self-enacting and self-perpetuating, as a kind of meta-subject. 'The symbolic function,' Lacan affirms, 'has absolutely nothing to do with a para-animal formation, a totality which would turn the whole of humanity into a kind of collective animal - because in the final analysis that is what the collective unconscious is.'[133] Lacan's difficulty, therefore, is to avoid the absorption of the individual human subject into a collective subject, without relying upon the assumption that social order is dependent upon a compact between individual subjects. He must find a means of theorizing the subject as dependent upon - but not reducible to an effect of - the social-symbolic order. It is in order to achieve

this aim that Lacan introduces the distinction between the 'Other' (le Grand Autre) and the 'other' of imaginary identification.

Lacan's distinction between the 'other' and the 'Other' is based on the assumption that, in the relation between subjects, each will attempt to discover a confirming image of his or her own ego in the response of the other. 'The subject always imposes on the other,' Lacan suggests, 'in the radical diversity of modes of relation, which range from the invocation of speech to the most immediate sympathy, an imaginary form which bears the seal, or the superimposed seals, of the experiences of powerlessness through which this form was modelled in the subject: and this form is nothing other than the ego'.[134] What this means is that the arbitrariness of the relation between signifier and signified - and here the signifier need not be linguistic, but can be any mode of human action or self-expression - makes inevitable a process of interpretation which is not simply a matter of 'reading off' meanings, and that - since this interpretation of _what_ is communicated is inseparable from the addressee's conception of _who_ is communicating - the 'message' of the subject with whom the addressee is in relation will have the form of the latter's ego imposed upon it: the 'other', in this sense, is an echo of the self. In the course of communication, we may come to realise that our construal of what is meant does not correspond with what the other subject truly intends, indeed the intersubjectivity of communication consists precisely in a continuous adjustment of assumptions about the partner in communication. But what Lacan wishes to signal by his distinction between the other and the 'Other' is that our preconceptions can never be replaced by a definitive grasp of who the other subject truly is. For any evidence of the other subject's authentic intentions is no less open to interpretation than what has preceded. 'What the subject says to me,' Lacan remarks, 'is always in a fundamental relation to a possible dissimulation, in which he sends me or I receive the message in an inverted form.'[135] Hence, 'The subject is separated from the Others, the true Others, by the wall of language.'[136]

By introducing the concept of the Other in this way, Lacan finally eliminates the belief of his earlier work in a possible coincidence of self-conception and intersubjective position, which would be realized by the mutual recognition of subjects in language. For in order for the dialectic of recognition to come to rest in such an equilibrium of acknowledgement, it

would be necessary for me to recognise the other as recognising me. But this, Lacan now suggests, is impossible. Certainly, I must recognise the other, since every act of speech implies a plea to be heard. Yet I can never be certain that this request has been acceded to, I can never be fully confident of my interpretation of the Other's reply or lack of reply. To illustrate this, Lacan returns to his favoured examples of the intersubjectivity of speech: 'You are my wife - but after all, what do you know about it? You are my master - but in fact, are you so sure? Precisely what determines the founding value of these words is the fact what is aimed at in the message, like what is manifest in dissimulation, is the fact that the other is there as absolute Other. Absolute, that is to say recognised (reconnu) but not known (connu).'[137] This irreparable dissociation of cognition and recognition, of knowledge and acknowledgment, now provides the basis for critique of Hegel's position, in which the inherent ambiguities of dialogue are ultimately resolved in the monologue of a reason which recognises itself to be universal. In Lacan's view, this ultimate reinstatement of consciousness, after its long historical 'decentering', simply repeats the error of the 'beautiful soul' - of the self-consciousness which mistakes its own immediacy for the universal - which Hegel denounces. The Hegelian dialectic, he now argues, 'cannot shake the delusion of the presumption to which Hegel applied it, remaining caught in the trap offered by the mirage of consciousness to the I infatuated with its feelings, which it erects into a law of the heart'.[138] The concept of Other indicates the point at which 'the recognition of desire is linked with the desire for recognition', but this point has now been removed to an unattainable 'beyond'.[139]

Yet if the concept of the Other finally stills the echoes of Hegelian reconciliation to be found in Lacan's early work, it proves to be a double-edged weapon, which can be turned just as effectively against the objectivist claims of structuralism. As we saw in our initial discussion of the dialectic of recognition, the meaning of speech cannot be seen as bestowed by the intentionality of the subject, but is dependent upon the response of the addressee, since it is this response which situates the subject in relation to its own speech. But since this response, despite the ego's attempt to frame it at the confirming reply of a fellow ego, in fact comes from the unattainable Other, the concept of the Other introduces a radical semantic uncertainty into language, and produces an endless reflexive movement of speech

endeavouring to grasp its own meaning. 'Language', Lacan remarks, 'is constituted in such a way as to found us in the Other, while radically preventing us from understanding him.'[140] Furthermore, since this Other, whom the subject takes to be absolute though unattainable, is in fact another subject 'founded in the Other', it is language itself, interposed between subjects as the 'locus of the treasure of the signifier',[141] which may be described as the absolute Other with which all subjects are confronted. Thus, although it may at first appear that the other subject is perpetually hidden 'behind' the wall of language, it becomes apparent that all subjects are on the same side of this wall, although they may only communicate by means of the echo of their speech upon it.[142]

This argument naturally leads to an unsparing critique of the claims of structuralism to produce a formalised and objective decoding of linguistic messages, a critique which is perhaps most ingeniously expressed in Lacan's 'Seminar on the "Purloined Letter"'. For in searching systematically and repeatedly through the Minister's apartment for the stolen missive, the police in Poe's story carry out what Lacan terms an 'undoubtedly theoretical exhaustion of space',[143] fully comparable to a structuralist dissection of a text into a system of differentially related elements. But, as the story makes clear, this neutral 'scanning' - as Lacan terms it elsewhere - bears no relation to what will be found or not be found. The object of the quest is in fact defined by the subjective expectations which are brought to the quest, and which the objectivity of structural analysis was believed to have excluded. In this case these expectations are determined by an imaginary identification with the 'criminal mind', which is assumed to have concealed the letter in the most unlikely and inaccessible hiding-place. The letter remains undiscovered therefore simply because, even as the police held it in their hands, it 'did not correspond to the description which they had' (ne répondait pas au signalement qu'ils en avait').[144] But as the embodiment of a reply which thwarts the expectations of the ego, in its 'oddness' which eludes the systematicity of the search, the letter clearly represents the non-objectifiable alterity of the Other. Like the signifier, which has no intrinsic meaning, the message contained in the letter is not known by the participants in Poe's story and it is precisely this mystery which constitutes its power: each invests it with an imaginary meaning which reflects his or her own fears and ambitions, whereas in fact 'In coming into possession of the letter - admirable ambiguity of

language - it is its meaning which possesses them'.[145] 'The meaning of
meaning in my practice,' says Lacan, 'can be grasped in the fact that it runs
away: in the sense of something leaking from a barrel, not of "making tracks".
It is because it runs away (in the barrel sense) that a discourse assumes a
meaning, in other words: by virtue of the fact that its effects are impossible
to calculate'.[146]

It has already appeared that Lacan differs from structuralists such as Lévi-
Strauss in his insistence on the ineliminability of the concept of the subject.
But we have still to make clear how Lacan's conception of the subject differs
from the self-conscious subject of phenomenology, against which the
structuralists and post-structuralists react. The fundamental point in this
respect is that Lacan does not equate subjectivity with self-consciousness, in
its supposed autonomy and unity. As we have seen, a consciousness of identity
does exist, indeed for Lacan consciousness is inseparable from this identity,
but since the immediacy of identity is imaginary - in the literal sense that it
depends upon identification with an image, originally the image of the body
perceived in reflection - it can be said that for Lacan the identity of the self
does not consist in its self-identity. The ego is always 'seen by the eyes of
another when it looks at itself, since without this other which is its own
image, it would not see itself seeing itself'.[147] Since, no matter how many
times the process of reflection is carried out, this inaugural alienation cannot
be overcome, but is simply repeated, Lacan denounces the 'inanity' of 'the
false recurrence to infinity of reflection that the mirage of consciousness
consists in'.[148] For Lacan consciousness is essentially superficial and inert, a
point which he makes in a virtuoso passage of The Freudian Thing by
demonstrating that all the characterizations of the ego in 'facile
phenomenology-psychiatry' could be applied with equal justice to a desk.[149]

Perhaps the best way to grasp how Lacan arrives at his conception of a
'true subject' distinct from the ego, is to recall two fundamental, yet
apparently irreconcilable tenets of his thought. Lacan insists on the
elementary point - forgotten in the temporary euphoria of structuralism - that
there can be no meaning, no relation of representation between signifier and
signified, except for a subject. In his early paper on 'Aggressivity in Psycho-
analysis' Lacan remarks that 'Only subject can understand a meaning;

conversely every phenomenon of meaning implies a subject'.[150] Thus, despite
the advance marked by structuralist thought in detaching the study of
language from any form of psychologism, Lacan perceives clearly that the
structuralist 'abolition' of the subject can only lead to the surreptitious
installation of an absolute subject, to guarantee the correspondence of
language and reality: 'By making language a function of the collective,' he
argues, 'we always end up supposing someone thanks to whom reality is
doubled up, by virtue of the fact that it is they who represent it to them-
selves, so that we need do no more than reproduce this doubling: in short we
are back in the wasps' nest of idealism.'[151] Yet, despite the impossibility of
abandoning the notion of the subject, any conception of the subject appears
to clash with a further tenet of Lacan's thought: that 'there is no language in
existence for which there is any question of its ability to cover the whole
field of the signified, it being an effect of its existence as language that it
necessarily answers all needs'.[152] For Lacan, any language, no matter how
impoverished, necessarily exhausts the totality of being, indeed it is only in so
far as things are brought within the precincts of the symbolic - here Lacan
follows Heidegger - that they can truly be said to be.[153] It is at this point,
however, that a paradox arises, for the subject for whom this totality of
signified being exists cannot itself be part of the being which is thus
signified, yet is at the same time the indispensable condition of its
emergence. The only solution to this paradox is to conceive of the subject not
as a further being, but as a lack of being, to envisage the relation of subject
to object is not a relation between 'a being which is subjective, but well and
truly real, and a being which is known to be',[154] but between being and what
Lacan terms - in his own translation - a 'want-to-be'. In contrast to the
imaginary plenitude of the ego, the subject becomes a gap, an incompletion,
that 'supposed backdrop of absence' (fond supposé d'absence) without which
nothing can emerge into the relief of existence.

A central clue to Lacan's understanding of the unconscious is provided
by this definition of the subject as a lack of being (manque-à-etre), since it
returns us to the Hegelian starting-point of his thought, where the emergence
of self-consciousness is grounded in an awareness of physical need in the form
of desire. Having arrived, by the early 1950s, at his conception of the human
subject as divided between ego and 'true subject', Lacan will begin to employ
a version of this Hegelian account in order to theorize the formation of the

unconscious, a version in which a stress on the Saussurian bar between signifier and signified ultimately 'subverts' the conclusions arrived at by Hegel. Like his philosophical mentor, Lacan begins from the experience of physical need (besoin), not in relation to the living organism in general, however, but specifically in relation to the child, who, because of the 'prematurity' of human birth, is for a long time dependent upon others for the satisfaction of its basic wants (this is a point which Lacan follows Freud in emphasising). Lacan argues that a crucial transformation takes place when the child's plea for satisfaction begins to be expressed in language, since the request for satisfaction is now accompanied by a plea for recognition as the subject of the need to be satisfied, which Lacan terms demande. It is at this point, however, that the subject encounters a paradox. For, however, sedulously its physical requirements are attended to, he or she can never be sure that this attention is the expression of the recognition which is craved, rather than simply a pacification, the quietening of speech treated merely as an intrusive signal of animal discomfort. 'In this way,' Lacan argues, 'demand annuls (aufhebt) the particularity of everything which can be granted by transmuting it into a proof of love, and the very satisfactions that it obtains for need are reduced (sich erniedrigt) to the level of being no more than the crushing of the demand for love'.[155] It is out of this process that there emerges what Lacan terms 'desire' (désir), which he understands as resulting from the gap between the unconditionality of demand, and the inadequate particularity of whatever is proferred in reply. Through the experience of the incapacity of the object of need to function as an unequivocal signifier of love, the subject is thrown back into the quest for an impossible particular object which would satisfy the universality of the demand made manifest in language. 'Thus desire,' Lacan argues, 'is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second, the phenomenon of their splitting (Spaltung).'[156] For Lacan it is through this splitting that the unconscious is formed. 'We must posit,' he writes, 'that 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.'[157]

One of the most important consequences of this account of the formation of the unconscious is that, for Lacan, 'The Unconscious is not a type defining within psychic reality the circle of that which does not possess

the attribute (or virtue) of consciousness'.[158] Initially, Lacan may here appear to be simply reiterating Freud's argument that it is not the absence of the quality of being conscious which defines a content as unconscious, but rather its belonging - under repression - to a specific psychical system. Lacan's position, however, is far less orthodox than this, since he goes on to suggest that 'the presence of the unconscious, being situated in the place of the Other, is to be sought in every discourse, in its enunciation.'[159] The import of this definition can best be understood by returning to Lacan's account of the relation between the subject and the Other. As we have seen, Lacan stresses that speech is not simply a conveyor of information, but establishes a relation between speaker and hearer; it is this duality, present from the beginnings of his work, which the later Lacan describes in terms of a distinction between 'statement' (énoncé) and 'utterance' (énonciation), between what is said and the fact that the speaker says it. It is the latter, the utterance of a particular statement in a particular situation, which reveals the position which the speaker wishes to take up in relation to the hearer, or - in other words - what the subject wishes the Other to recognise him or her as being, but the content of the desire for recognition conveyed by the utterance is not - for reasons we have already examined - determined by an intention of the speaker: it is only the response of the Other which determines what the situation is. But since this response is submitted to the same conditions as the original utterance, the desire for recognition which motivates speech is condemned to remain implicit, and therefore 'unconscious'. Or, to reverse the terms of this description, the specificity of desire is articulated through the intersubjectivity of language, but this intersubjectivity itself cannot be articulated. Hence the many passages in Lacan's work where he equates the unconscious with the transindividual dimension of language, suggesting that the unconscious is contained in the meaning which exceeds subjective intention.[160] For Lacan, the 'exteriority of the symbolic in relation to man is the very notion of the unconscious';[161] or, more famously and more aphoristically: 'The unconscious is the discourse of the Other.'

This conception of the unconscious as 'language which escapes the subject in its operation and in its effects'[162] makes clear why so many of Lacan's theoretical emphases, in relation to the unconscious, differ so sharply from those of Freud. For Lacan, the unconscious is 'a self (un soi-même) and not a series of disorganised drives, as a part of Freud's theoretical work

might lead one to think, when you read that within the psyche only the ego has an organization'.[163] Lacan repudiates any conception of the unconscious as linked with the instinctual, the archaic, or the regressive, as the 'place of the divinities of night'. For, although Lacan does not deny the reality of biologically-based needs, his contention is that such needs can only enter into communication as symbolized, and therefore as _symbolizing_. The instinctual foundations of the soul do not 'resonate in depth', he suggests 'except by reflecting back the echo of the signifier'.[164] Furthermore, and even more dramatically, Lacan denies that the unconscious possesses any determinate content, or that the unconscious is the 'real place of another discourse'.[165] For any expression of wishes, emotions, thoughts or drives must be treated by the analyst as a signifier, must be interpreted in its status as an utterance, an appeal to another subject, rather than as a revelation of the 'psycho-logical' condition of the speaker. Such an interpretation, in which the meaning of an utterance becomes the object of a statement, can of course be produced. But this interpreting statement will have its own dimension of utterance, and will therefore transform the intersubjective relation which it attempts to determine. This does not entail, it should be noted, that such attempts at determination are futile and should be abandoned, but it does require an appreciation of the paradox that to grasp the unconscious is, at the same time, to fail to grasp it. In The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis Lacan remarks that 'twice-lost Eurydice is the most striking image we can give, in terms of myth, of the relation between the analytic Orpheus and the unconscious'.[166]

Given the radicality of this reformulation of the Freudian unconscious, it is perhaps surprising that Lacan is able so loudly to proclaim his orthodoxy. For numerous 20th-century thinkers, most notably philosophers of the hermeneutic tradition stemming from Heidegger, to whom Lacan frequently refers, could agree that 'there is always on the level of language something which is beyond consciousness',[167] without being thereby committed to the other major concepts of Freudian theory, such as the Oedipus complex, and the castration complex. Paradoxically Lacan himself is only able to retain the full panoply of Freudian concepts, abandoned by other analysts, by reinterpreting them as a theorization of the ontological predicament of the subject - as a want-to-be - in its dependence on the signifier. The key to this reinterpretation is Lacan's

account of the phallus. In this context it is helpful to refer to a passage of 'Inhibitions, Symptoms, Anxiety', where Freud remarks that 'The high degree of narcissistic value which the penis possesses can appeal to the fact that the organ is a guarantee to its owner that he can be united with his mother - i.e. to a substitute for her - in the act of copulation.'[168] Lacan carries this interpretation one stage further by arguing that copulation with the mother is not the real aim of the subject, but is itself merely an image of fully mutual recognition. The phallus, which Lacan distinguishes from the physical organ, the penis, functions as the signifier of this recognition, and may therefore be described as 'the signifier intended to designate as a whole the signifieds as effects, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as signifier'.[169] Since the relation to the Other founded in language is radically uncertain, only a signifier outside the 'locus of the treasure of the signifier' could enable the subject to grasp the meaning of his or her own speech, by specifying how all the other signifiers produce their meaning. Such a signifier is, of course, impossible, so that the phallus is destined to appear to the subject as eternally lost. It is this loss which Lacan theorizes as castration.

Lacan suggests that it is through the realization of the mother's lack of the phallus that the child first confronts the reality of castration. It is only because of a prior symbolization, however, that a perception of the absence of the real organ can trigger the child's realization that the mother is not able to substantiate its being thought full recognition, since she herself has no such plenitude to bestow, is submitted to the 'scission' of the symbolic order. The child's initial response to this discovery is to attempt to become the adequate object of the mother's own unfulfilled desire, and it is the series of these attempts which characterize the Oedipus complex: 'The child ... experiences the phallus as the centre of the desire of the mother, and situates himself in different positions, through which he is led to deceive this desire: he can identify with the mother, identify with the phallus, identify with the mother as bearer of the phallus or present himself as the bearer of a phallus. He testifies to the mother that he can complete her, not only as a child but as regards what she lacks: he will be, as a totality, the metonymy of the phallus.'[170] Eventually, however, the child will be obliged to accept the paradoxical nature of these efforts, and to come to terms with its own symbolic castration, with the loss of the imaginary phallus. This castration, equivalent to full entry into the symbolic order, takes place by means of what

Lacan terms the 'paternal metaphor' or the 'Name-of-the-Father'. The function of this metaphor is not to be confused with the role of real father, since the paternal metaphor signifies the ultimate authority which upholds the symbolic order as a whole. 'In all strictness,' Lacan affirms,'the Symbolic father is to be conceived of as 'transcendent' - an irreducible given of the signifier. The symbolic father - he who is ultimately capable of pronouncing these words: "I am who I am" - can only be imperfectly incarnate in the real father.'[171] Lacan believes that the father is suited to play this role of 'author of the Law' (the symbolic order in its ineluctable, imperative aspect) by the fact that the relation of paternity does not possess the same biological obviousness as that of maternity. 'It requires a reversal,' Lacan remarks, 'in order for the human fact of copulating to receive the meaning which it really has, but to which no imaginary access is possible, that the child is really <the father's> as much as the mother's.'[172] Hence, to accept the Name-of-the-Father is to accept subordination to an order which cannot be grounded in experience, and to abandon a relation of imaginary complementarity with the mother, since it is the father who is the bearer of the phallus of which both mother and child are deprived.

This conception of the subject as able to enter the symbolic order only at the price of an irreparable loss, as split between the imaginary plenitude of the ego, which considers castration impossible, and a 'subject of the unconscious' which experiences this lack, but cannot articulate it, raises a major difficulty of which Lacan only becomes fully aware during the 1950s. For if the true subject is defined simply in terms of its lack-of-being, and therefore in terms of its non-identity with the identity of the ego, there appears to be no way in which any one subject could be differentiated from any other. Yet this is clearly not the case. Speaking subjects do possess a particularity, a uniqueness, since despite the fact that no signifier appears any more intrinsically apt to represent the 'non-being' of the subject than any other, human speech does not consist in a random sequence of utterances. The desire of the subject appears as consistently oriented at the level of enuncia-tion, suggesting a coherent thread which links the subject of the utterance to the subject of successive statements. The problem for Lacan, therefore, is how to deal theoretically with the uniqueness of the subject. For if this uniqueness is intrinsic, the subject cannot be the pure lack-of-being which he claims it to be; while if it is reflexively determined, it can only consist in the

identifications which constitute the ego, and the problem would remain of why the subject should perform precisely these identifications. It is in order to resolve this dilemma that, from the mid-1950s onwards, Lacan introduces a distinction between the other of imaginary identification and what he will come to term the objet petit a.

The purpose of this distinction can perhaps best be illustrated by means of a series of parallels and contrasts. The imaginary other - i(a) in Lacan's 'algebra' - continues to function as the specular image and support of the ego, and therefore to retain the characteristics of arbitrariness and reduplicability which Lacan has traditionally associated with this function. The objet a exemplifies a strikingly contrasted form of otherness: it is a 'paradoxical, unique, specified object',[173] non-specularisable and perpetually elusive. Developed from the notion of a 'part-object' introduced by Karl Abraham, the objet a is frequently defined by Lacan as a déchet, a piece of litter or waste, something which has fallen from the body of the subject, and which is therefore suited to reassure the subject that it does indeed possess an 'interior', despite the fact that this inwardness is repeatedly absorbed into the exteriority of language. In this sense the objet a functions to repair the loss symbolised by the absence of the phallus. 'Analytical experience', Lacan affirms, 'does not define the object in its generality as correlative of the subject, but in its singularities, as that which supports the subject at the moment when it has to confront its existence (in the radical sense of ec-sisting in the signifier), at the moment when, as subject, it must efface itself behind a signifier. At this panic point it clings to the object of desire.'[174] The structure which results from this process, notated in his 'algebra' as $\$\Diamond a$, is for Lacan the fundamental structure of phantasy.

Lacan's account of the relation of subject to object in phantasy is his solution to the problem of defining a non-reflexive form of interiority. In one sense the objet a is a reappearance of the object of intersubjective rivalry which Kojève had already described, desired merely because it is desired by the other, and therefore functioning symbolically as a guarantee of recognition. The objet a is that 'impossible' object, simultaneously particular and universal, which emerges from the disappointment of demand in the satisfaction of need, and becomes the absolute condition of desire. This emergence takes the form, Lacan often suggests, of a self-mutilation in which the subject entrusts its threatened being to a separated part of itself.[175]

Hence the object a is not external to the subject, while at the same time appearing in the guise of an external object. The losange, the screen of the imaginary, placed between the subject and the objet a 'registers the relations envelopment-development-conjunction-disjunction',[176] indicating that the desiring subject is in a relation to 'internal exclusion' to its object, since it is only the perpetual pursuit of this object which constitutes its being as a subject. In this respect the relation of the subject to the object in phantasy is - as Lacan points out - the reverse of that of the ego to the body image. Whereas the ego, in a process of self-reflection, mistakes its specular other for itself, the subject of desire mistakes itself for another, since it is unable to reflectively grasp the non-specularisable object a as part of itself, a limitation which Lacan indicates by the slanting bar which denotes the fading of the subject as it approaches the object of phantasy. Thus, for Lacan, the objet a can function as the '"stuff", or rather the lining (doublure), although not on this account the reverse, of the very subject who one takes to be the subject of consciousness'.[177] Because of its uniqueness, the objet a - the cause of desire - defines the individuality of each subject; it is only deducible, Lacan suggests, in accordance with the psychoanalysis of each individual. Indeed, the introduction of the objet a enables him to take up again the question of the termination of analysis, which had begun to appear insoluble after his abandonment, in the early 1950s, of the ideal of 'full speech'. Lacan increasingly argues that the end of analysis takes the form of a 'fall' or separation of the objet a from its transferential incarnation in the analyst.[178] In this way the subject learns to accept its own perpetual exile from being.

CHAPTER TWO

SECTION TWO

LACAN AND DERRIDA: LANGUAGE, THE SUBJECT, AND THE REAL

As the foregoing account will have made clear, there are numerous
convergences between Lacanian psychoanalysis and the thought of Derrida. At
first sight, this may appear surprising, since the two thinkers belong to entire
different intellectual generations. Lacan's philosophical roots are to be found
in the new French enthusiasm for Hegel of the 1930s: his contemporaries are
Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Hyppolite, Bataille. Derrida's first published article, by
contrast, dates from 1959, and is therefore contemporaneous with the initial
breakthrough of structuralism to wider public attention in France. The
convergences become less puzzling, however, if one considers that both bodies
of work are the product of a similar overlap between the phenomenological
currents of the immediate post-war period, and the theoretical innovations of
structuralism. Despite the fact that Lacan's major influences are Freud,
Hegel, Lévi-Strauss, while Derrida looks first to Heidegger, and then to
Husserl, Nietzsche, Saussure, it was the confluence of phenomenological and
structuralist modes of thought which enabled them both to develop a critique
of structuralism without returning to a philosophy of consciousness. It is no
accident that both Lacan and Derrida gained their first wide popular acclaim
just over half-way through the 1960s; Lacan with the publication of the Ecrits
in 1966, and Derrida with his first trilogy - Of Grammatology, Speech and
Phenomena, Writing and Difference - in 1967: the time was ripe for a philo-
sophically sophisticated response to the objectivist and positivist assaults of
the first half of the decade, yet a response which would not revive
'theoretical humanism', the philosophies of consciousness and freedom which
appeared to have been so thoroughly discredited.

Viewed from this perspective, numerous common themes can be seen to
run through the two oeuvres. At the most general level, both are centrally
concerned with the revision of traditional understandings of the relation
between language, meaning and consciousness. Since subjectivity is inconceiv-
able prior to language, the subject can no longer function as the intentional

bestower of meaning upon the otherwise empty shell of the signifier, and - in particular - the notion of a transcendental subject must be rejected. For Derrida, the 'movement of différance does not overtake a transcendental subject. It is what produces it',[1] while Lacan argues that, since the self-consciousness in which the ego assures itself of an incontestable existence is not immanent, but supported by a process of identification, 'the transcendental ego is relativised, implicated as it is in the méconnaissance in which the ego's identifications take root'.[2] Once subjectivity has been made dependent on language, then consciousness can no longer function as the self-identical support of the unity of signifier and signified: meaning itself becomes a transient 'effect' of the signifier rather than its ideal content.[3] Moreover, within this broad similarity of approach there are numerous parallels between Lacan and Derrida in the very metaphors in which the argument is played out. In both thinkers there is a constant emphasis on the relation between the anonymity of language and death: it is writing which threatens the living self-presence of speech, it is the signifier, always on loan from the Other, which reminds the subject of its own dependency and finitude. Similarly, in both bodies of work, the image of the dead father plays an important role. Derrida, in his analysis of Plato, shows how writing is experienced as parricidal, as the destroyer of the paternal Logos, while Lacan - via the theory of the 'paternal metaphor' and the Freudian mythology of Totem and Taboo - links the concept of the dead father - the unattainable author of the Law - with the debt paid by a castration which binds the subject to the Symbolic order.[4] At an even finer level of detail, both Lacan and Derrida attack the notion of a purely ideographic writing as symptomatic of nostalgia for a lost immediacy. 'A form of writing, like the dream itself, can be figurative, it is always - like language - symbolically articulated, that is to say no less phonematic than language, and in fact phonetic, from the moment that it is read:[5] Lacan's argument is paralleled at the many points in Derrida's work where the spatialized, diacritical nature of writing is emphasised, its resistance to any unitary act of perception, its irreducibility to an image.

Yet despite the fact that the breakdown of positivist structuralism was marked by the simultaneous rise to pre-eminence of both Lacan and Derrida in the late 1960s, and despite the fact that for the succeeding half-decade a good deal of theoretical work was produced which employed elements from

both thinkers,[6] by the mid-1970s it was becoming clear that Lacan's popularity – notwithstanding the increasing hermeticism of his seminars – was continuing from strength to strength, while Derrida's celebrity was already beginning to wane. This was not simply an external phenomenon of fashion. Lacan, now increasingly concerned with the elaboration of mathematical models of the unconscious, undoubtedly continued to innovate, even if he left successive waves of simultaneously mystified and disenchanted followers behind him as he did so. But Derrida's thought, after the hectic wordplay of Glas (1974), appeared in certain respects to flag, to settle back into the well-worn grooves of the French tradition of explication de texte from which it had clearly emerged. Even the new political initiative represented by the founding of GREPH (Groupe de Recherches sur l'Enseignement Philosophique),[7] in which Derrida played a central role, failed to halt the decline of public attention to his work: it can be no accident that it was about this time that Derrida published his major onslaught on his leading rival in Le Facteur de la Vérité (1975).[8] There is no doubt that significant work continued to be done by writers grouped around Derrida's perspectives, including a critical exposition of one of the Ecrits, Le Titre de la Lettre (1973).[9] But the enterprises embarked on under the Derridean aegis could not be compared in range and depth to the research – including the output of an entire university department at Vincennes – carried out within a fundamentally Lacanian framework, both inside and outside the Ecole Freudienne de Paris. It seemed for a while as though Lacan had realised the Freudian dream of gathering together researchers in a wide range of disciplines – philosophers, mathematicians, historians, linguists, theorists of film and literature – under the banner of psychoanalysis.

This greater amplitude and durability of Lacan's success, which persisted undiminished until his death in 1981, can perhaps partly be explained by the institutional – and, given the nature of the institution, affective – resources which were available to the head of a major psychoanalytical school: the charisma of Lacan's personality and the mesmeric power of his lecturing style had already become legendary. Yet it is difficult to escape the impression that such considerations cannot furnish the entire explanation. On closer comparison of the two bodies of work it becomes apparent that Lacan's theory is more nuanced and discerning in what are the central areas of their common concern: the relation of language to subjectivity and consciousness,

on the one hand, and to the referent or reality on the other. For whereas
Derrida is obliged to consign the concept of the subject to a kind of
theoretical limbo, able neither to make use of it, nor to 'abolish' it in the
structuralist fashion, and to sidestep the problem of the referent as due to an
inherent illusion of language, Lacan had been developing - ever since the
1950s - precisely what a public no longer satisifed with the philosophically
inadequate formulas structuralism would be looking for: above all a theory of
the subject which no longer took the form of a philosophy of consciousness,
but also an account of the real no longer based on a representational view of
language.

As we have seen, Derrida's critique of the Husserlian transcendental
ego - and, by implication, of the philosophical concept of the subject in
general - hinges on the incoherence of the notion of a consciousness which
could grasp its own self-identity prior to and independently of language.
There can be no domain of 'phenomenological silence' in which consciousness
would be directly acquainted with itself, since the determination of any
object of knowledge - including consciousness as an object for itself - must
always be mediated by the differentiating system of language. But since, in
Derrida's view, the concepts of self-identity and unmediated self-presence are
central to any philosophical account of subjectivity, Derrida - no less than his
structuralist contemporaries - has no alternative but to abandon the concept
of the subject. It is true that Derrida continues to refer to the 'subject' on
occasion; at the close of the discussion which followed the delivery of his
lecture on 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Human Sciences', he insists that
his aim is to 'situate' rather than 'destroy' the subject.[10] Yet since Derrida is
also adamant that the subject is entirely subjugated to the play of language,
that 'Subjectivity - like objectivity - is an effect of différance, an effect
inscribed in a system of différance',[11] the retention of the term 'subject'
alters nothing in the fact that the concept of the subject plays no autonomous
role in his thought. For Derrida, as for Foucault during the 1960s and 1970s,
despite their philosophical remoteness in other respects, the subject is purely
an effect of the text, a function of discourse.

However, this erasure of the subject as an operative concept in
Derrida's thought is not without its difficulties, as becomes apparent when
Derrida begins to formulate his own critique of structuralism. For if the

impossibility of applying a formal system to the decoding of texts results from the fact that linguistic terms - being diacritical and intertextual in their functioning - lack supralinguistic criteria of identity, and therefore cannot be endowed with a determinate, immutable meaning, Derrida must still provide some explanation of the movement of the signifier, of the incessant process of semantic displacement which he describes, and he must do so without recourse to notions of the initiative or creativity of speaking subjects. In the first step towards such an explanation, Derrida accepts the structuralist argument that language is not a function of the speaking subject. 'This implies,' Derrida argues, 'that the subject (self-identity or in some cases consciousness of self-identity, self-consciousness) is inscribed in language, is a "function" of language, only becomes a speaking subject by conforming its speech, even in so-called "creation", even in so-called "transgression", to the system of prescriptions of language as a system of differences'.[12] But at the same time, Derrida cannot accept this 'system of prescriptions' itself as determinate and immutably given, for this would be to revive the notion of semantic self-identity: the system of prescriptions must itself be historically transformed and reconstituted. In Saussure's work, this takes place through the dialectic of langue and parole; indeed, Saussure goes so far - in a passage which Derrida quotes - as to argue that 'historically, the fact of speech always takes precedence'.[13] But since Derrida has already described the role of the speaking subject as fully prescribed by langue, his only recourse is to make différance the name of an activity which is logically prior to and which generates the dialectic of speech and language as a whole. 'Retaining at least the schema,' says Derrida, 'if not the content of the exigence formulated by Saussure, we will designate by différance the movement in accordance with which language, or any code, any system of relays in general constitutes itself "historically" as a tissue of differences, "constitutes itself", "produces itself", "creates itself", "movement", "historically", etc., being understood beyond the metaphysical language in which they are caught up, along with all their implications.'[14].

The embarrassment which this proliferation of qualifications in Derrida's text betrays is not without foundation, as becomes clear if attention is paid not to Derrida's repeated denials of the 'metaphysical' implications of his own formulations, but, in accordance with Derrida's own recommendation, to the actual functioning of terms such as 'différance', 'dissemination', 'movement of

the signifier' within his texts. Such an examination points towards the
inescapable conclusion that différance indicates the activity of a speculative
meta-subject. Derrida's repeated references to the 'activity', the
'productivity' of différance, to the 'play of the trace', the 'movement of the
signifier', and the tell-tale use of reflexive verbal forms -'se constitue', 'se
produit' - which would be incomprehensible outside the notion of différance as
self-founding and self-transforming, and therefore in some sense as self-
acquainted - suggest that the concept of 'différance' has absorbed the
spontaneity and reflexivity which are the defining attributes of the subject in
the idealist tradition. Différance in Derrida arrogates to itself all those
initiatives and innovations which might otherwise be attributed to individual
speaking subjects (for Derrida any 'transgression' of a specific linguistics
system is nevertheless produced in conformity with 'the general law of
différance'),[15] yet at the same time - unlike the major systems of German
Idealism - it offers no key to the immanent logic of these transformations. In
his evocations of différance as the unconditioned, therefore, Derrida pays an
excessive price for his Aufhebung of the 'metaphysical' opposition between
language and speech, symbolic system and individual subject.[16]

Given Derrida's initial assumptions, however, the course of the
argument is ineluctable: if subjectivity is equated with the self-presence and
self-identity of consciousness, and if this identity is then shown to be
dependent upon the perpetual lack of self-identity in language, the only
recourse is to transfer the originating role of transcendental subjectivity to
the new and 'higher' principle of this lack. The characterisation of this
principle as non-self-identical makes no substantial alteration to its status,
since absolute difference - which is what Derrida's term 'différance' indicates
- is ultimately indistinguishable from absolute identity: différance is no less
inwardly unified, though historically deployed, than Heidegger's Sein or
Hegel's Geist. Furthermore, Derrida's abrupt ascent to the stratospheric levels
of historico-transcendental and speculative thought has deleterious effects
upon his more modest aim of providing a critique of traditional philosophical
conceptions of language. This can be seen in the fact that many of the
concepts which Lacan thoroughly investigates - the concepts of 'desire' of the
'law', of 'castration' - emerge at this level in Derrida's thought - but in a
desultory, inadequately theorized, way - in order to account for what Derrida

sees as the fundamental movement of occidental history: he suggests, for example, that the rupture marked by the questioning of the 'structurality of structure' reveals the need to 'think the law which governed, as it were, the desire for the centre in the constitution of structure and the process of signification prescribing its displacements and its substitutions for this law of the central presence'.[17] It is also apparent that the level of the individual utterance, Derrida's strict subordination of identity to non-identity leaves him deprived of any serious theoretical resources in order to cope with the multiplicity of questions which arise. What, for example, can be the status of the 'illusion' of expression, of the 'effect' of meaning in speech? Indeed, if the syntax of différance has always already outmanoeuvred semantic self-identity, how does meaning emerge at all? The problem is necessarily raised of the role of pre-linguistic intention in the determination of meaning. In relation to many of these questions Derrida frequently reserves judgement. He suggests, for example, that 'what we need is to determine differently (autrement), according to a differential system, the effects of ideality, of signification, of meaning, and of reference'[18] but in fact is unable to move beyond such programmatic statements in order to produce a theory of these 'effects' which would be beyond the 'closure of metaphysics'.

In the light of Lacan's work, it can be seen that many of Derrida's difficulties stem from his initial orientation towards Husserlian phenomenology, and his consequent automatic and incautious equation of subjectivity with the self-presence and self-identity of consciousness. In assuming this equivalence Derrida tends to overlook that other tradition of thought - deeply influenced by Hegel - in which the subject is theorized not in terms of self-presence or self-identity, but in terms of non-identity, lack, negativity, the tradition which includes Heidegger, Kojève, Sartre - and Lacan. Perhaps the most crucial divergence from Derrida which this approach to the problem of the subject makes possible is that, as in Lacan's thought, human beings remain the empirical bearers of a quasi-transcendental subjectivity. For Lacan, it is only the appearance of language-using beings which sets limits to any purely causal account of reality, and demands the supposition of a subject. 'A physics is conceivable,' he suggests, 'which would explain everything in the world, including its animated part. A subject only becomes unavoidable by virtue of the fact that there are in this world signifiers which have no meaning, and

are therefore to be deciphered.' Hence, 'No subject has any reason to appear in the real, except if there exist speaking beings.'[19] Furthermore, although Lacan stresses the priority of the symbolic order over the individual human being who enters into it, the distinction between langue and parole, between the 'treasure of the signifier' and the speaking subject, cannot be aufgehoben in the Derridean manner, making language itself the absolute subject. Rather, Lacan insists that the concepts of psychoanalysis must be reformulated in terms of the subject's encounter with the signifier - an encounter which would be unthinkable if subjectivity were a mere 'effect' of the text - to the extent that he can present the fact that 'language is not the speaking subject' as the very 'foundation' of his discourse.[20] As a result of this, Lacan is able to provide a theory of the relation between conscious intention, language and meaning as these are interlinked in the process of enunciation, while obviating the difficulties which Derrida rightly perceives in traditional philosophical theories of language.

Lacan's most complete exposition of this theory is to be found in 'Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire', where it takes the form of a commentary on a graph that introduced and elaborated in his Seminar for the year 1958-59 (see Figure 1). In Derrida's thought the terms espacement and temporalisation are employed to describe the fact that writing must be unfolded in space and time, and that the meaning conveyed by language cannot therefore be grasped in a single, unified moment of perception. But because, for Derrida, these processes are effects of différance, of a perpetual deferral of meaning, he is unable to explain how the experience of meaning is able to occur at all. Derrida offers no alternative between the illusory immediacy of speech and the endless delay of writing. Lacan's graph, however, takes account of the relation between intention and meaning, without assuming that, as in Husserl's classic phenomenological account, the meaning-bestowing intentionality of the subject takes the form of 'a certain sequence of psychic experiences which are associatively linked to the (verbal) expression'[21] - precisely the illusion which Derrida denounced in the philosophical valorization of speech. The line which passes from Signifier to Voice on Lacan's graph represents the utterance in its diachronic dimension, inescapably required by the fact that language consists in a system of differentially articulated elements. This 'vector of enunciation' is then portrayed as being bisected in a reverse direction by the line of intentionality
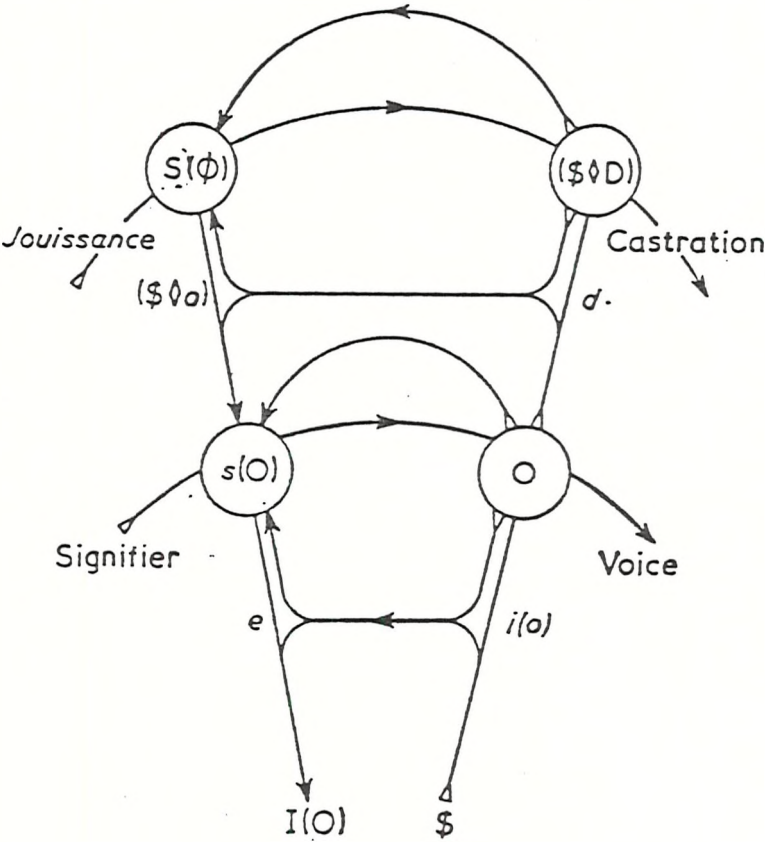
Figure 1

Lacan's Graph

which passes from the barred subject ($\cancel{\$}$) to the ego-ideal (I(O)). At the level of the signifier this line must pass through the Other (O), or the 'place of the code', since the subject is initially confronted with the battery of signifiers out of which it must attempt to forge a meaning. The resultant 'clinching of a signification by the retroactive effect of the signifiers on their antecedents in the chain'[22] occurs in the 'place of the message', where a signified is depicted as appearing in the domain of semantic uncertainty instituted by the Other (s(O)). No such 'punctuation in which the signification is constituted as a finished product'[23] could occur, however, were it not supported in the imaginary register, represented by the shorter circuit which runs from $\$$ to I(O) via the imaginary other and the ego. Every act of speech, Lacan suggests, must be supported by a self-conception of the subject, but this conception is merely an expectation, which will only be confirmed by what the subject discovers itself as 'having meant'. Lacan speaks of 'a retroversion effect by which the subject becomes at each stage what he was before and announces himself - he will have been - only in the future perfect tense.'[24] Thus the founding drama of the ego, whose 'internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation' is repeated in miniature as the imaginary dimension of every act of enunciation. 'In this "rear view",' Lacan remarks, 'all the subject can be certain of is the anticipated image coming to meet him that he catches of himself in the mirror.'[25] Even in order to reflect upon itself as 'having meant', however, the subject must bracket the intersubjective relation which in fact determines the meaning of its discourse. This _epoche_ is indicated by the symbol for the ego-ideal - I(O): an imaginary unbarred Other - which stands at the end of the vector of intentionality, as the imaginary point from which the ego could see itself as it would like to be seen.

At the moment in which the subject grasps its intended meaning, however, there takes place a process which Lacan describes as the 'fading' of the subject, a realization that whatever it represents itself as being will fail to capture its 'non-being'. The Lacanian subject is therefore confronted with a cruel dilemma, described in terms of a fundamental 'splitting' of the subject between the subject of the statement (sujet de l'énoncé) and the subject of the utterance (sujet de l'énonciation). For, before it begins to speak, the subject is simply a lack, a nothingness, which finds itself confronted with 'the given of the signifiers which cover it in an Other which is their transcendental place'.[26] In order to 'spring forth', in order to be recognized and therefore to

be at all, the subject must make use of these signifiers, yet none of them can adequately represent the subject as the subject who makes use of these signifiers in order to represent itself. 'The subject,' Lacan can therefore state, 'is the upsurge (surgissement) which, just before, as subject, was nothing, but which, scarcely having appeared, congeals into a signifier.'[27] This makes clear how remote the Lacanian subject is from the notions of self-presence and self-identity denounced by Derrida, since the desiring subject, the subject of the utterance, is eclipsed by the subject of each successive statement, each 'fading' becoming the occasion for a renewed attempt at self-representation. Lacan reserves some of his most evocative prose for this process: 'There where it was just now, there where it nearly was, between this extinction which still glows, and this blossoming forth which comes to grief, I can come to be by disappearing from what is said by me.'[28] As this description suggests, although the subject cannot be represented by any single signifier, it can make itself known obliquely in the succession of signifiers, since signifiers do not follow each other in a predetermined, calculable manner. It is this possibility which is indicated in the upper half of Lacan's graph, which represents the unconscious level of speech, as the lower half depicts the level of consciousness. In the imaginary register enunciation is guided by the relation between desire (d) and the object of the phantasy ($\lozenge$a), the fixity of this relation being made manifest in the signifying chain in the form of a demand of which the subject is unaware ($\lozenge$D), and which is persistently repeated, since the response to this demand reveals as the Other who could meet it as barred (S($\emptyset$)). In this way, Lacan is able to explain the consistency of the subject's discourse, while making clear that this is not the consistency of a self-conscious, self-identical subject.

The relation between subject and the signifier, parole and langue is not the only area in which Lacan's thought - while resembling that of Derrida in its stress on the perpetual elusiveness of meaning - is able to resist the dissolution of all dualities into the speculative play of différance. Just as Lacan argues that the concept of the subject is an indispensable one, and can be separated from the theme of the self-certainty of consciousness, so he suggests the necessity of a concept of the Real, to be distinguished from what the subject represents to itself as reality. Derrida, by contrast, suggests that the distinction between reality and representation is ultimately

metaphysical, that there is 'no pretext which is not already a text'.[29]
Derrida's arguments for this position are - for the most part - repetitions in a
linguistic register of considerations which are already to be found in Husserl.
In the Paris Lectures, Husserl affirms that: 'Every conceivable meaning, every
thinkable being - regardless of whether it is immanent or transcendent - falls
within the realm of transcendental subjectivity. ... To conceive of the
universe of true being as being something outside of the universe of possible
consciousness, of possible knowledge, and of possible evidence - with both
universes being related merely externally through an inflexible law - is sheer
nonsense.'[30] In the same manner, Derrida suggests that there can be no
'ultimate referent, no '"objective reality" absolutely anterior to any labour of
the mark':[31] any reality outside the text can itself only be determined within
the text, so that Derrida concludes - in one of his most well-known
formulations - that 'there is no outside of the text' (il n'y a pas de hors-
texte).[32] Like Husserl, Derrida insists that this abandonment of the concept of
an absolute outside does not entail the 'loss' or impoverishment of reality, but
rather the adequate comprehension of its status. For Husserl idealism 'is not
the construction of playful arguments; it is not as if we are engaged in a
dialectical struggle with realisms, where idealism is the prize that must be
won'. Rather 'Our idealism is nothing other than a consistently carried
through self-disclosure, that is, in the form of egological science, of any
meaning of being which makes sense to me, the ego. ... The proof of this
idealism is found in the active exercise of phenomenology itself.'[33] Similarly,
for Derrida, it is not a question of 'proving' that there cannot be a reality
external to language, but of showing that the apparently absolute exterior of
language can always be revealed as relative to language through an act of
reflection. Hence, Derrida argues that 'It is necessary ... to avoid an
indispensable critique of a certain naive relation to the signified, or to the
referent, to meaning or to the thing becoming fixed in a suspension, even in a
pure and simple suppression of meaning and of reference', while insisting that
'Nothing - no present and indifferent being - precedes difference and
spacing'.[34]

Although Lacan agrees with Derrida that there can be no definitive
metalanguage of interpretation, and therefore no conclusive determination of
reference, he does not argue that there is 'nothing outside the text'. Rather
he reverses Derrida's understanding of the elusiveness of the referent,

attributing this elusiveness not to the fact that what appears to be an
anchoring point in the real is in fact already linguistically mediated, but
rather to the fact that the real is that which precedes and eludes linguistic
mediation. In Encore Lacan suggests that 'What characterizes, at the level of
the signifier/signified distinction, the relation of the signified to what is
there as an indispensible third, namely the referent, is precisely the fact that
the signifier always misses it. The collimator doesn't work'[35] For Lacan the
real is what is 'outside signification', and this entails, firstly, that the real is
'identical with itself', in contrast to the perpetual non-identity of the
symbolic. In the second Seminar Lacan employs the image of the stars to
evoke this self-identity: 'The stars are real, integrally real, in principle there
is absolutely nothing in them which would be of the order of an otherness-
than-self, they are purely and simply what they are.'[36] Lacan associates this
self-identity with the notion of stability. The stars became the first object of
human science, he suggests, because of the fixity of their constellations, and
it is this fixity which becomes the second major characteristic of the
Lacanian real. Nothing can be missing from or change its place, Lacan argues,
except in a world which is already symbolically mediated, and in which
objects have already been allocated their 'proper' positions. 'One cannot
literally say that something is missing from its place', he writes, 'except
about something which can change it. As for the real, whatever upheaval one
might bring about in it, it is always and in every case in its place, it carries
it stuck to its heel, and knows nothing which could exile it from it.'[37] This
fixity in turn becomes the basis for a third characteristic of the real in
Lacan, its stubbornness, its resistance to erroneous interpretation. Not every
symbolization of the real is equally valid, since there are constraints on such
symbolization which are not themselves symbolically determined, and which
are revealed in the failure or impossibility of certain actions. In The Four
Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis Lacan remarks that 'The real is the
bump, it's the fact that things don't work out straight away, as the hand
which reaches towards external objects would like'.[38]

At first sight, this conception of the real would seem to lay Lacan open
to all the objections which Derrida formulates against the notion of a purely
extra-textual, and therefore self-identical reality: such a reality must take
the form of a 'transcendental signified', and as such must function as a point
of security and reassurance, a protection against the incessant dissemination

of language. But by defining of the real as the 'impossible', as that which
cannot be signified, Lacan avoids any suggestion that the relation of the
symbolic to the real is one of representation to represented. Lacan
distinguishes, in this context, between the real, and what he calls 'reality'.
The latter is constituted at the junction of the imaginary and the symbolic -
of intuition and concept - but, as such, remains essentially fragile, since the
real, as 'the domain of that which subsists outside of signification',[39] can
always threaten to disrupt the equilibrium which is thus installed. 'The real
does not wait', says Lacan, 'and in particular not for the subject, since it
expects nothing from speech. But it is there, identical with its existence, a
noise in which anything can be heard, and ready to burst in and submerge
what the 'reality principle' has constructed under the title of the 'external
world'.[40] It is clear, therefore, that what Lacan describes as the real is far
from providing the epistemological anchoring-point against which Derrida's
Nietzscheanism repugns. It is rather the constant possibility of disruption of
the self-confirming relation between the ego and its objects, distinguished
from a 'reality' which Lacan defines as the 'ready-to-wear of phantasy' by
the fact that 'there is no question of being able to recognise oneself in it' (il
n'y a pas question de s'y connaître).[41] By insisting on the irreducibility of the
real to either the imaginary or the symbolic, furthermore, Lacan is able to
allot an autonomous status to scientific knowledge, whereas Derrida is obliged
to take a sceptical attitude towards all empirical knowledge, and to consider
science as inherently 'metaphysical' in its belief in a language-independent
reality. For Lacan knowledge does not 'represent' the real in any straight-
forward sense, but it does stand in a relation to the real, whereas for Derrida
the prime illusion of knowledge is that it stands in relation to something
external to itself. Lacan has recourse to numerous metaphors to express this
relation, but at the heart of them all is the notion that, if knowledge is
largely determined by the 'diachronic set of concretely pronounced
discourses', by historical and cultural preconceptions, it must nevertheless
enter into some accommodation with the object of its investigations.
Knowledge is not purely conventional, must both encounter the resistance of
the real, and impose its stamp upon it. Thus, in Le Seminaire XI, Lacan
suggests that a fundamental concept (Grundbegriff) of a science - he is
referring to the concept of 'drive' - can be said to function 'if it traces its
own path in the real which it is a question of penetrating'.[42] A similar image
occurs in the Ecrits, where Lacan argues that 'the furrows opened up by the

signifier in the real world will seek out, in order to broaden them, the gaps which the real world offers, as existent, to the signifier, to such an extent that an ambiguity can persist in our attempts to grasp whether the signifier does not here follow the law of the signified'.[43] In elaborating this relation of knowledge to the real, Lacan draws a distinction between knowledge founded in acquaintance (connaissance) and theoretical knowledge (savoir). The former, he argues, is always imaginary: since it is based in the relation between the ego and its objects, connaissance must always be inseparable from the processes of identification in which these objects are constituted. The ego imagines itself to be simply the impartial mirror of the world - not itself implicated in what it reflects - whereas in fact it is the world of objects which is simply a misconstrued reflection of the ego: this is what Lacan, in his early work, terms 'paranoiac knowledge'.[44] Savoir can only emerge, therefore, through a process of purgation in which the imaginary resonances of the language in which connaissance is expressed are reduced to a minimum: it must offer no foothold for a - necessarily delusive - self-recognition. This is why, for Lacan, scientific knowledge must ultimately be expressible in a mathematical formula, 'by means of little letters', as he puts it, since only such a mathematisation of knowledge can remove every trace of lived experience. If the real is outside signification, it must be described as 'completely devoid of meaning', so that 'We can be satisfied, sure that we are dealing with something real only when it no longer has any meaning whatsoever. It has no meaning because it is not with words that we write the real. It is with little letters.'[45]

Lacan's concept of the real not only allows him to avoid Derrida's scepticism towards empirical knowledge, but also permits him to avoid the inconsistencies involved in stressing exclusively the 'transcendental' function of language. In Derrida's account of linguistic systems, 'Nothing, neither in the elements nor in the system is anywhere or ever simply present or absent. There are only, throughout, differences and traces of traces.'[44] In so far as the signifying element - since it is differentially defined - is neither purely sensible, nor purely intelligible, Derrida's argument can be accepted. What Derrida's position tends to obscure, however, is the fact that the trace must be present to perception, embodied in a material substratum, before it can be construed as a signifying element. Because, for Derrida, no such substratum could be anterior to the trace, he is obliged to portray the elements of any

empirical text as themselves 'effects' of a 'movement which produces difference', which 'does not depend on any sensible plenitude, audible or visual, phonic or graphic', and whose qualification as 'pure' betrays its absolute transcendentality.[47] Derrida is unable to conceive that language could play a quasi-transcendental role without being independent of all empirical conditions, since he has no means of theorizing the relation between material substratum, symbolic system and signification. Lacan's distinction between the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary offers such a means. In one of his clearest expositions of the difference between these three registers Lacan distinguishes between the physical perception of the colour red (the level at which we can enquire whether an individual is colour blind), an emotional reaction to the colour (the level at which the colour seems to bear in itself the expressive quality of anger, of 'seeing red'), and a conventional coding of the colour (the level at which red is opposed to black in a pack of playing cards).[48] One of the cornerstones of Lacan's thought, of course, is the argument that the apparent immediacy of emotional response is in fact mediated by symbolic relations of which the subject is unaware. Yet it is important to note that there could not even be such relations without a pre-existing real in which they could be embodied. Hence the order in which Lacan abbreviates his registers, in the title of the Seminar devoted to their interrelations is 'R.S.I.'[49] It is the real which provides the material for the articulation of symbolic differences, and these differences which govern the imaginary, although - as Lacan is well aware - the relations between these three registers cannot be reduced to a simple hierarchy of dependence. Thus Lacan is able to take full account of the constitutive status of language, on which so many 20th century philosophers have laid stress, without running aground on a linguistic idealism of the Derridean type. 'Speech is a gift of language,' runs a passage in the Discours de Rome, 'and language is not immaterial. It is a subtle body, but body it is'.[50]

CHAPTER THREE

JEAN-FRANCOIS LYOTARD: FROM PERCEPTION TO DESIRE

The history of French philosophy in the 1960s can be divided into two distinct phases. In the first, structuralist-dominated phase of the movement, many of the key themes were introduced (the suspicion of meaning, the 'decentering' - in effect, the erasure - of the subject, the reflexive concern with, and attempt to side-step, the traditional status of philosophical discourse), but this introduction took place within the framework of a naive scientism and objectivism inherited from the French positivist tradition. In the first phase of post-structuralism, inaugurated by the success of Derrida and Lacan, this positivism in turn becomes the target of a critique. But, at the same time, the initial themes are not abandoned: rather they are taken up and developed in a far more sophisticated way. This twinning of Lacan and Derrida should not, of course, be allowed to obscure the profound differences between the two. There is a crucial distinction between Lacan's argument that meaning is never where we take it to be and Derrida's <u>reduction</u> of meaning to an 'effect' of the ultra-transcendental structure of writing, just as there is between the Lacanian 'splitting' of the subject and its Derridean abolition as an effective reality. But, beyond these distinctions, both are united in an awareness of the inadequacy of the positivist response to the challenge of reflexive thought. And both conclude that this challenge can only be met by travelling much of the Hegelian road, yet - at the last moment - deflecting Hegel's argument so that the illusion of absolute knowledge is dissipated. In Derrida's case this effect is achieved by emphasizing the non-signifying gap between signifier and signifier to produce the shattered dialectic of <u>différance</u>, while in Lacan's work it is the supposition of a non-reflexive subject which jams the progress of consciousness towards absolute knowledge. In both cases, however, a form of theoretical discourse is produced which could only appear to die-hard adherents of structuralist method as a mystifying lapse into speculation and metaphysics. By the time he came to write the <u>Finale</u> of <u>Mythologiques</u> in 1971, Lévi-Strauss was already denouncing the belief in the possibility of a philosophy 'beyond' structuralism, and lamenting the emergence of a new 'metaphysics of desire'.[1]

Even as Lévi-Strauss was fighting this rearguard action, however, a
second stage of 'post-structuralism' was already beginning to emerge, and
would eventually necessitate a revision of the conception adopted by post-
structuralism of its relation to the immediate past. For despite their critique
of the objectivism of structuralist accounts of meaning, Derrida and Lacan
remain tied to the structuralist assumption of the primacy of the textual, the
discursive, the symbolic, understood in a minimal sense as the differentially
articulated. Indeed it is precisely their belief in this primacy which motivates
the critique of objectivism: a 'science of meaning' which lays unconditional
claim to objectivity must, of necessity, overlook its own linguistically-
mediated status. In both Derrida and Lacan, however, the argument presses on
ineluctably beyond this point. If not only semantic theory, but all knowledge
of a language-independent reality is linguistically mediated then there can be
no non-linguistic conditions of - although there may be non-linguistic
limitations on - linguistic mediation (Lacan), or perhaps even the very notion
of a language-independent reality is incoherent (Derrida). It is precisely
against this 'imperialism of the signifier' that the second phase of post-
structuralism turns. Attention begins to shift from language as all-embracing
medium to the determinations which bear upon language; discourse starts to
be seen as patterned and disrupted by non-discursive forces. As might be
expected, the nascent theorisations of this philosophical shift were inextric-
ably bound up with the political impact of the events of May '68 and their
aftermath. For what this rebellion had decisively brought to attention was
that social structures could not be viewed, in the naive structuralist manner,
as placid, self-perpetuating systems of 'communication' or 'symbolic
exchange'. What sustains or rebels against a given social structure cannot be
simply an effect of that structure itself. Social systems are both imposed by
force from above - they embody relations of <u>power</u> - and are adhered to or
rejected from below - they are invested or disinvested with <u>desire</u>.
Throughout the 1970s these two terms will become, increasingly, the focus of
philosophical debate.

It is perhaps the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard whose work
embodies most clearly the intimate relation between this second phase of
post-structuralism and political concerns. In Lyotard's case the interest - and
active engagement - in politics preceded by a considerable period his
emergence as one of the leading figures of post-structuralism. During the

1950s and early 1960s he had been a member of the small far-left group Socialisme ou Barbarie, whose most intellectually prominent members were Claude Lefort and Cornelius Castoriadis, and many of his earliest writings were political contributions to the organ of the group, rather than essays on philosophical topics. Although both Lefort and Castoriadis had Trotskyist backgrounds, Socialisme ou Barbarie distanced itself from orthodox Trotsky-ism, developing a state-capitalist theory of the USSR, a critique of Leninist forms of organisation, and a defining emphasis on the extension of the self-management principle to all domains of social life. In this way Socialisme ou Barbarie anticipated, and may even have directly influenced many of the key themes of the May student uprising. Having left S ou B in 1963, Lyotard, at that time a philosophy teacher at Nanterre, and therefore at the epicentre of the revolt, became active in the Mouvement du 22 Mars, the spontaneous, anti-authoritarian wing of the May movement. 'The Movement of '68', Lyotard wrote, in the introduction to his first anthology of essays, 'seemed to us to do and say on the grand scale what we had sketched out in words and actions in miniature and by anticipation ...'.[2] Nor was he slow to learn the anti-structuralist lessons of this political expeerience: 'an approach solely guided by the model of structural linguistics makes it impossible to understand the functioning of symbolic systems like those described by Mauss, or the appearance of ("revolutionary") events in a semantically "well-regulated" system like contemporary capitalism. In the first case, as in the second, there is a dimension of force which escapes the logic of the signifier.'[3] It is this insight which will lie at the heart of Lyotard's first major contribution to the post-structuralist debate: Discours, Figure.

Although it was only in 1971, with the publication of Discours, Figure, that Lyotard made his first significant impact, the roots of his philosophical opposition to the first wave of post-structuralism may be traced back as far as 1954, to his introductory monograph on phenomenology.[4] Here Lyotard argues that, because of its founding project of an intuitive capture of 'the things themselves' prior to all predication, phenomenology may be described as 'a combat of language with itself in its effort to attain the originary'.[5] The phenomenological project must be described as 'fundamentally contradictory', the effort of language to capture a prelinguistic world is foredoomed, since, 'as the designation of a pre-logical signified which is there in being itself, it

is forever incomplete, because referred back dialectically from being to meaning via intentional analysis'.[6] For Lyotard, however, the appreciation of this inherent contradiction leads to precisely the opposite conclusion from that which will be drawn to structuralism and early post-structuralism. Derrida's work probably offers both the most extreme and the most coherent version of this conclusion: since, in any attempt to capture a world prior to - or independent of - language is always already presupposed, there cannot be 'a truth or an origin escaping the play and the order of the sign',[7] indeed there can be 'nothing before the text ... no pretext which is not already a text'.[8] For Lyotard, however, there is an illicit jump in this argument: rather than revealing the ultimate illusoriness of any language-independent reality, why should not the impossibility of a linguistic grasping of the originary rather reveal the inherent limitations of language itself, its ultimate power-lessness when confronted with the non-linguistic? If 'the defeat of philosophy is certain',[9] this is not because philosophy remains shackled to an illusion of presence, but because philosophy is unable to acknowledge the world of sense in which it is immersed and from which it emerges, because 'the originary is no longer the originary in so far at is _is_ described'.[10] For Derrida, in other words, it is _différance_ as the transreflexive origin of reflexivity which cannot itself be reflexively grasped, whereas, for Lyotard, 'There is always a pre-reflexive, an unreflected, an ante-predicative upon which reflection, science must lean, and which it conjures away every time it wishes to justify itself'.[11]

Nearly two decades later, in the introduction to _Discours, Figure_, Lyotard will take up again on a broader front this defence of the world of perception against the imperialism of language. 'This book,' he writes on the opening page, 'protests: that the given is not a text, that there is within it a density, or rather a constitutive difference, which is not to be read, but to be seen: and that this difference, and the immobile mobility which reveals it, is what is continually forgotten in the process of signification.'[12] By this time, however, Lyotard's argument, though still rooted in phenomenology, has begun to acquire the overtones of Nietzsche's denunciation of the philosophers' obliteration of the world of sense. Lyotard declares his target to be: 'the penumbra which, after Plato, speech has thrown like a grey veil over the sensible, which has been constantly thematised as less-than-being, and whose side has very rarely truly been taken, taken in truth, since it was understood

that this was the side of falsity, of scepticism, of the rhetorician, the painter, the condottiere, the libertine, the materialist ...'.[13] One brief phrase summarizes the gulf between Lyotard's position and the orthodoxy of the 1960s: 'one does not at all break with metaphysics by putting language everywhere'.[14]

However, this continued defence of the distinction between language and the perceived world, between - as Lyotard will express it - 'the letter and the line', should not be taken to imply that Lyotard's understanding of language has remained at the phenomenological stage. Rather he admits that structuralism had made a decisive advance in its account of the system of language as a pattern of differential relations which precedes and makes possible the speech of the individual speaking subject. 'Within the anonymous system,' Lyotard suggests, 'there are intervals which maintain the terms at a constant distance from each other, so that this 'absolute object' is - so to speak - full of holes, and encloses within itself a dialectic which is immobile, and yet generative, and which causes the definition and value of a term to pass via the other terms with which it is in correlation.'[15] For Lyotard the crucial point is that the existence of this anonymous system renders inadequate any phenomenological attempt to ground linguistic meaning in a logically prior intentionality or gesture. Any 'dialectical' account of language in the Sartrian sense - as 'the inert depository of a power of speech which would be logically anterior to it' - is impossible, since it must be recognised that 'language precedes speech in as much as no speaker can claim, even modestly, to have founded the former, nor dream of instituting another, and ... any attempt to reform language comes up against the circle that it is our tool, the only tool we possess for the purposes of transforming it'.[16]

For Lyotard, however, the structuralist acquisition that _parole_ cannot be considered anterior to _langue_, as phenomenology in its diverse forms had always been tempted to claim, does not entitle us to dispense with a consideration of _parole_, of the specific dimension of language in use. While the view of language as an antonomous system of purely internal relations may be accepted as the basis of a structuralism which confines itself to its strictly scientific tasks, it becomes misleading when presented as a characterisation of language _tout court_. For what is omitted in the understanding of language as a closed system of signifiers doubled by a system of signifieds is any sense

of the referential dimension of language. 'There is a fact,' Lyotard suggests, 'which our experience of speech does not permit us to deny, the fact that every discourse is hurled in the direction of something which it seeks to seize hold of, that it is incomplete and open, somewhat as the visual field is partial, limited and extended by an horizon. How can we explain this almost visual property of speaking on the basis of this object closed in principle, shut up on itself in a self-sufficient totality, which is the system of langue?'[17] In Lyotard's view such an explanation is impossible. He argues that, in order to account for the fact that 'it is not signs which are given, but something to be signified',[18] we must consider language in use as characterised by two distinct forms of negativity. Saussure was undoubtedly correct to insist that, since the value of a linguistic term constituted by its differences with other terms, since what a term is is defined purely by what it is not, 'in language there are only differences'. But, at the same time, this negativity must be set in relation to what Lyotard calls the 'negativity of transcendence', the fact that 'the speaker is torn away from that of which he speaks, or this is torn away from him, and he continues to hold it at a distance in speaking, as the object of his discourse, in a "vision"'.[19] From this viewpoint both subject and object may be seen as 'fragments deriving from a primary deflagration of which language itself was the starting spark'.[20]

At this point it might appear open to a defender of a Derridean position to argue that Lyotard has misconstrued the post-structuralist case. Derrida does not deny that, in the speaking of language, we experience the dimensions of reference; he remarks, at one point in Positions, that we should avoid 'an indispensable critique of a certain naïve relation to the signified or to the referent, to meaning or to thing, becoming fixed in a suspension, or a pure and simple suppression of sense and reference'.[21] And yet, the logic of Derrida's position pushes him inevitably towards the conclusion that the referential can possess only a secondary and derivative status, for he immediately goes on to suggest that: 'What we need is to determine in another way, in accordance with a differential system, the effects of ideality, of signification, of meaning, of reference'.[22] Since Derrida is operating with a simple dichotomy between identity and difference, and since he argues that 'Nothing - no present and in-different entity - precedes spacing and différance',[23] he is obliged to consider the perceived world as being itself no more than a system of traces, or - alternatively - if perception is considered

as a subject-centred and unmediated form of awareness, to suggest that 'there is no perception'.[24]

Nothing obliges us, however, to accept Derrida's initial dichotomy between identity and difference. It is possible to argue that the perceived world does not possess the structure of a text, without accepting its being flattened out into the immediacy of sensation or the pure presence of entities. Thus Lyotard points out that the perceived does not possess the interchangeable relativity of the linguistic; that the relation between here and there, above and below, in front and behind, to the right and to the left, is not assimilable to the diacritical relation between terms within a linguistic system: 'the place indicated, the here, is grasped in a sensible field, without doubt as its focus, but not in such a way that its surroundings are eliminated, as is the case with the choices made by a speaker; they remain there, with the uncertain, undeniable, curvilinear presence of that which maintains itself on the borders of vision, a reference absolutely essential to the indication of place ... but whose nature marks a complete break with that of a linguistic operation: the latter refers back to a discontinuous inventory, sight to a topological space, the first is subordinated to the rule of the spoken chain which requires the uniqueness of the actual and the elimination of the virtual, the second determines a sensible field ruled by the quasi-actuality of the virtual, and the quasi-virtuality of the actual.'[25] If this distinction is accepted then any attempt to absorb the exteriority of the perceived world into the interiority of language - Lyotard's target is Hegel, but the argument applies equally to Derrida - must be seen as falling prey to a 'logophiliac pre-supposition'. 'It is all very well to affirm that everything is sayable,' suggests Lyotard, 'this is true; but what is not true is that the signification of discourse can gather up all the sense of the sayable. One can say that the tree is green, but the colour will not have been put into the sentence.'[26] Language may be seen as the phenomenological, but not as the ontological ground of the perceived world.[27]

Throughout Discours, Figure this awareness of an 'unsuppressible gap' between the sensible and the intelligible is expressed in terms of a contrast between the 'letter' and the 'line', between a graphic and a figural space. 'The letter,' Lyotard argues, 'is the support of a conventional, immaterial signification, in every respect identical with the presence of the phoneme.

And this support effaces itself behind what is supported: the letter only gives rise to rapid recognition, in the interests of signification.'[28] In Jacques Derrida's work, the return from the spoken to the written signifier is seen as a means of blocking this process of effacement, but since the letter is composed of a group of highly stereotyped traits which therefore tend towards the suppression of their own materiality and plasticity, the letter no less than the phoneme is intrinsically oriented towards intelligibility. It is only the line, by contrast, which thwarts easy recognition and assimilation - which obstructs the eye and forces it to linger. 'The manner in which meaning is present in the line (in any constituent of a figure),' affirms Lyotard, 'is felt as an opacity by the mind habituated to language. An almost endless effort is required in order for the eye to let itself be captured by the form, to receive the energy which it contains.'[29] In an interview dating from 1970, Lyotard explicitly turns this contrast against the all-engulfing Derridean concept of 'archi-writing', by means of a simple reference to the visual arts: 'One cannot at all say that the line which Klee's pencil traces on a sheet of paper is charged with effects of meaning in the same way as the letters which he writes under this line, and which say simply: "Fatal leap".'[30]

As Lyotard's phenomenological background would lead one to expect, the argument in these opening chapters of Discours, Figure is heavily indebted to the work of Merleau-Ponty. It is in the last writings of Merleau-Ponty that a philosophy may be found which attempts to move beyond the metaphysical categories of subject and object, not by a process of speculative sublation, but by returning below the subject-object relation to uncover 'our mute contact with things before they become things said'.[31] In Merleau-Ponty's late work the key notions of 'depth' and 'opacity' - applied to what is perceived and to the act of perceiving - are employed to suggest that perception can never entirely possess either its object or itself. The world upon which perception opens is not a domain of pure presences - and therefore, in structuralist terms, a domain of illusion - but 'an ambiguous field of horizons and distances',[32] an overlapping of the visible and the invisible. Throughout his career Merleau-Ponty remained stubbornly opposed to the view that whatever meaning the world possesses must be bestowed by language, but - because of the rootedness of his thought in phenomenology - he also resisted the possibility that there might be an unbridgeable hiatus between language

and the world. In Merleau-Ponty's thought there are meanings implicit, concealed in the world's dimension of depth which language does not determine, but brings to light, so that there is a spontaneous cooperation or affinity between the world of perception and that of language. 'To understand,' he suggests, 'is to translate into available significations a meaning initially captive in the thing and in the world itself.'[33] And again: 'language realises, in breaking the silence, that which silence wished for, yet could not obtain".[34]

This 'tenderness' towards the perceived world, a tenderness which lies at the heart of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, is clearly irreconcilable with structuralist and early post-structuralist thought, where there can be no doubt that, even granted the existence of a language-independent reality, it is language which segments and determines the meaning of this reality. But significantly, it is also the point at which Discours, Figure, which up to this point could almost have been read as a phenomenological critique of structuralism, begins to question the work of Merleau-Ponty, and therefore may be said to mark the shift into a form of post-structuralism in Lyotard's thought. Lyotard, as we have seen, cannot accept the structuralist view that saying is purely determined by linguistic structure: language cannot speak itself. But neither can he accept Merleau-Ponty's attempt to 'introduce the gesture, the mobility of the sensible directly into the invariance character-istic of the system of language, in order to say what is constitutive of saying, in order to restore the act which opens the possibility of speaking'.[35] If, as structuralism contends, the anonymous system of langue is irreducible to individual acts of speech, then neither the 'horizontal' nor the 'vertical' dimension of negativity can be reduced to its complement, and 'the gesture of speech which is assumed to create signification can never be seized in its constitutive function".[36]

Yet to abandon Merleau-Ponty's thought, in this way, as the 'last effort of a transcendental reflection', is not - for Lyotard - to dissolve the autonomy of the dimension of reference from which speech emerges. Lyotard's objection is principally to the notion that there exists a 'co-naturality', or elective affinity between language and the world. Perception is phenomeno-logically grounded in language, but language itself is a 'deflagration', a tearing asunder of our original unity with the world: the perceived object -

far from embodying a pristine presence - is inherently ambiguous and opaque, it can never be grasped as it is 'in itself'. Lyotard elaborates this argument through an exploration of Frege's work on sense and reference, pointing out that - for Frege, and in contrast to the structuralists - the opening of language onto the non-linguistic cannot be simply ignored or suspended. 'We expect a reference of the proposition itself,' says Frege, 'it is the striving for truth which drives us to advance toward the referent.'[37] Yet at this point a difficulty arises. For the result of advance toward the object, of moving from the ideality of meaning to the reality of things, is simply the production of another proposition, the presentation of the object from a new viewpoint, which will in turn require verification. Thus language, far from articulating the implicit meaning of the world, perpetually excludes what it seeks to possess. It is in the gap left by this exclusion, Lyotard suggests, that there emerges what we call 'desire'.

This argument marks the midstream transition in Discours, Figure from a phenomenological to a psychoanalytical vocabulary. But it should not be taken to imply a parallel between Lyotard's position and that of Lacan. For although Discours, Figure is a consciously fragmented work, broken between a 'before' and an 'after' of structuralism, there is nevertheless a deep continuity between its phenomenological and its Freudian argument. In his critique of the Hegelian (and not only Hegelian) absorption of seeing into saying, Lyotard had emphasized the contrast between the mobility of the referential 'eye which maintains itself on the edge of discourse', and the process of selection and combination in language, between the continuous and asymmetrical nature of the visual field, and the articulated and differential nature of langue. But he goes on to point out that, in a certain sense, this set of contrasts also lies at the heart of Freud's work: 'Freud's reflections are, from the beginning to the end of his career, from the Traumdeutung to Moses, centred on the relation of language and silence, of signification and meaning, of articulation and the image, of the commentary which interprets or constructs and the desire which figures.'[38] From this standpoint, the non-articulated, perpetually-shifting nature of the perceptual field may be taken as a kind of analogue for what Freud describes as the 'primary process', the mobility of cathexis in the unconscious. There is, Lyotard suggests, 'a radical connivance between the figural and desire'.[39] But just as the phenomeno-

logical argument of the first part of <u>Discours, Figure</u> had brought Lyotard into conflict with both structuralism and the philosophy of writing, so Lyotard's emphasis on the figural nature of desire leads him into conflict with the Lacanian interpretation of psychoanalysis as a 'logic of the signifier'. In the chapter entitled 'Le Travail du Rêve ne Pense Pas', this battle takes the explicit form of an elucidation of Freud's account of the 'dream-work' in <u>The Interpretation of Dreams.</u>

In order to appreciate the full import of Lyotard's argument, in an intellectual milieu largely dominated by the Lacanian account of the unconscious as 'structure like a language', we must first examine the manner in which Lacan himself characterises the four fundamental aspects of the dream-work - condensation, displacement, considerations of representability, and secondary elaboration - described by Freud in the sixth chapter of <u>The Interpretation of Dreams.</u> In the introduction to this chapter Freud compares the manifest content of the dream to a 'pictographic script', and - a few lines later - to a 'picture puzzle' or 'rebus'. He points out that if we attempt to make sense of an image of 'a house with a boat on its roof, a single letter of the alphabet, the figure of a running man whose head has been conjured away, and so on' as if it were a 'pictorial composition', then such a jumble of images is bound to appear 'nonsensical and worthless'. It is only if we 'try to replace each separate element by a syllable or word that can be presented by that element in some way or other' that we begin to discover meaning beneath the apparent chaos: 'The words put together in this way are no longer nonsensical, but may form a poetical phrase of the greatest beauty and significance.'[40] Lacan begins his most systematic commentary on the nature of the dream-work by arguing that these Freudian similes establish definitively 'the agency in the dream of that same literalising (in other words, phonematic) structure in accordance with which the signifier is analysed in discourse'.[41] Within the dream, in other words, the images or components of images have no figurative function whatsoever: the dream is composed - to employ Lyotard's distinction - of 'letters' rather than 'lines'. Lacan reinforces his point by an elaboration of the references to pictographic script made by Freud, remarking that - in deciphering hieroglyphs - 'it would be ludicrous to deduce from the frequency with which a vulture, which is an <u>aleph</u>, or a chicken, which is a <u>vau</u>, signify the form of the verb to be and the plural, that the text is in any way interested in these ornithological specimens'.[42]

Having established that, despite its visual, pictorial form, the dream is essentially a kind of writing, an organisation of signifiers, Lacan can then present his reformulation of the dream-work procedures discussed by Freud. The overall operation of 'disguise, necessitated by the censorship', which Freud refers to as Entstellung (distortion), is translated by Lacan as transposition, and is equated with 'the sliding of the signified under the signifier': the semantic instability which - for Lacan - is characteristic of all discourse because of the uncertainty of the position of the subject 'behind' it. Within this general process of transposition Lacan aligns the dream-work operations of Verdichtung (condensation) and Verschiebung (displacement) with the two fundamental axes of language discerned by Roman Jakobson, the axis of selection and the axis of combination, or 'metaphor' and 'metonymy'. There has been much puzzlement about the relation between Jakobson's theory of these two axes and the use made of this theory by Lacan. But in fact the manner in which Lacan's formulations both continue and diverge from those of Jakobson can be characterised fairly straightforwardly. Lacan takes up Jakobson's position in so far as he views metaphor and metonymy as two fundamental processes of all discourse (rather than two specific rhetorical figures - although these figures provide the most vivid illustration of these processes); but he goes beyond Jakobson in viewing metaphor as the mark of the relation of discourse to the subject, and metonymy as the mark of its relation to the object. Thus Lacan employs examples from poetry to illustrate his definition of metaphor as 'the substitution of one signifier for another, by which is produced an effect of signification which is of poetry or creation',[43] but the effect of creation to which he refers is in fact inherent in all discourse, since no appearance of a signifier can be automatically deduced from what has preceded. What this definition of metaphor points back to, therefore, is Lacan's insistence that langue, as a virtual system, cannot actualise itself, that discourse requires a speaking subject. But although each successive appearance of a signifier reveals the existence of a subject, the signifier which appears cannot be seen as an unambiguous expression of the subject, since its meaning will only be determined by the continuation of discourse. It is not until this signifier is interpreted, until another signifier is substituted for it, that an 'effect of signification' will be produced which suggests the place of the subject. But since this second signifier emerges under the same conditions as the first, there can be no absolute indication of

the place of the subject: each signifier is a 'metaphor of the subject', a representation of the subject mediated by another signifier.

Lacan's corresponding definition of metonymy is: 'the connection from signifier to signifier, which permits the elision through which the signifier installs a lack-of-being in the object-relation, by making use of the reference-value of signification to invest this relation with a desire aimed at the lack which it supports'.[44] Here Lacan is clearly moving in the same area which we have found Lyotard exploring by means of Frege's distinction between sense and reference. To attach a predicate to, or offer a description of, an object is always to present that object from a specific point of view. But since no single predicate or description can claim to exhaust the being of the object, and since there are a potential infinity of points of view, the attempt to grasp the object completely through language becomes an endless process, in which each description points towards further possibilities of description, but in which no description can grasp the object as it is 'in itself'. The relation between this conception and the traditional definition of a metonymy as a figure in which the part is taken for the whole is clear, as is the reason for Lacan's suggestion that, in metonymy, the bar between signifier and signified is not crossed. For the object always appears 'beyond' or 'on the other side of' discourse, as the underlying coherence of the sequence of signifieds which cannot itself be signified, whereas the place of the subject is interpreted by a 'crossing of the bar', in which one signifier becomes the referent of a further signifier. The relation between the metonymic process and the Lacanian notions of 'lack-of-being' and desire is equally evident: for Lacan desire is always the desire of a lost object which language is powerless to represent, since it is language itself which constitutes the object as lost.

Clearly, Lacan's reformulation of the Freudian concepts of condensation and displacement as metaphor and metonymy is intended to reinforce his argument that the dream is 'structured like a language'. In so far as the dream is distinguished from waking discourse by its incomprehensibility, this is not primarily because its signifiers have been transposed into a figurative form, but because the organisation of these signifiers itself has not yet been understood. 'A cryptogram,' Lacan suggests, 'takes on its full dimensions only when it is in a lost language.'[45] Perhaps the most uncompromising statement

of Lacan's view is to be found in an address contemporary with <u>The Agency of the Letter</u>, in which he enquires rhetorically: 'What is this new interpretation of dreams if not the referral of the oneiromancer back to the sole unquestionable foundation of any mantic, namely the battery of its material? We do not mean the material of the said battery, but its ordinal finitude. Sticks cast on the ground or illustrious cards of the tarot, simple game of odds and evens or supreme koua of the I-Ching, in you any possible destiny, any conceivable debt can be resumed, since nothing in you is valid except the combinatory, in which the giant of language regains his full height by being released from the gulliverian ties of signification'.[46] The most difficult hurdle for this view, however, appears to be presented precisely by the third factor in Freud's account of the dream-work <u>Rücksicht auf Darstellbarbarkeit</u> (considerations of representability). If what Freud terms 'the most striking psychological characteristic of the process of dreaming', the fact that 'a thought, and as a rule a thought of something that is wished, is objectified in the dream, is represented in a scene, or, as it seems to us experienced',[47] is as essential an aspect of the dream-work as condensation and displacement, then Lacan's argument for a purely 'literal' understanding of dreams appears to be undermined.

Lacan parries this possible attack, in <u>The Agency of the Letter</u>, by suggesting that what he calls 'regard for the means of staging' is a condition which 'constitutes a limitation operating <u>within</u> the system of writing'. He compares the dream with a game of charades, and suggests – by implication – that the attention of the analyst is properly directed towards the proverb which such a dumb-show is intended to convey, rather than towards the characteristic forms of mime and gesture by which participants in the game communicate their unspoken message. In so far as these forms – the 'material of the battery', rather than the 'battery of the material' – have any interest, the questions which they raise are of purely psychological interest. Elsewhere in the <u>Ecrits</u> Lacan offers a list of such problems – 'little work of value has been done on space and time in the dream, on whether one dreams in colour or black and white, or whether smell, taste and touch occur, or the sense of vertigo, of the turgid and the heavy'[48] – but immediately goes on to suggest that these questions are remote from Freud's concern, which is with 'the elaboration of the dream' in the sense of its 'linguistic structure'. Problems of interpretation are, for Lacan, entirely distinct from psychological problems of

genesis; mise-en-scène is not part of the dream-work (Lacan renders Arbeit by
the weaker elaboration); and the dream, if Lacan were consistent, can
therefore offer no special access, no 'royal road' to the unconscious, or any
privileged key to the nature of unconscious processes.

Whether rightly or wrongly, what Lacan's attempt to dismiss the visual nature
of dreams as a contingent, psychological question necessarily underplays is the
intimate relation - in Freud's work - between the dream, the visual and
unconscious phantasy. Freud's suggestion that at the heart of every dream
there may be found an infantile memory or phantasy - at this level the
distinction between the two becomes blurred - combines with his insistence
upon the scenic nature of such phantasies to provide an explanation of the
visual form of the dream. Freud's theory of the dream is inseparable from his
distinction between a secondary process - the process of logical, waking
thought - and a primary process which tends towards an immediate hallucin-
atory fulfillment. The value of the dream as the 'royal road to the
unconscious' is inseparable from its exemplification of the primary process,
from its status as 'a substitute for an infantile scene modified by being
transferred onto a recent experience'.[49] Part of Lacan's answer to this
difficulty is to distinguish between a 'wish' and 'desire'. In so far as the
dream is the embodiment of a wish, this wish is itself merely a signifier of
desire. A punishment dream - that is, the fulfillment of a wish for punishment
- 'may very well signify a desire for what the punishment represses'.[50] But,
by establishing this distinction, Lacan definitively excludes the possibility ofa
relation of figuration or 'dramatisation'[51] between the dream and unconscious
phantasy. This is not to suggest that Lacan denies the scenic quality of
phantasy, since he theorises phantasy as the imaginary relation of 'internal
exclusion' between the subject and the objet petit a. But for Lacan the
visuality of phantasy is not repressed by the symbolic. Rather the objet a is
the result of an act of self-mutilation, since the function of this object is to
symbolise the singular existence of the subject, at the 'panic point' when this
singularity is threatened by total absorption into the universal dimension of
language. In order to fulfill this role, to function as the support of the
'metonymic flight' of desire, the objet petit a must, like the subject, be
perpetually excluded from the order of the signifier. Since, for Lacan, the
dream is essentially a form of discourse like any other, no more than any

other sequence of signifiers can it embody or represent the object of
phantasy.

For Lyotard, this Lacanian position is fully in continuity with the
denegation or subordination in Western thought of the dimension of the
visible. If Merleau-Ponty was mistaken in assuming that language could be
opened up to and capture what was already implicit in the domain of the
sensible, Lacan is equally at fault for reducing the perceived world to the
status of the imaginary, of an immediacy which can only be grasped as
already-lost from the standpoint of the symbolic, and which therefore can
have no effect upon the symbolic. Certainly, there is a relation between the
entry of the subject into language and phantasy, but the object of phantasy
does not function merely as the impossible end-term of the metonymic chain
of any discourse. Rather the entry into language is a genuinely traumatic
event, a 'primal repression' which establishes an irrecoverable image in the
unconscious: this image will then seek to reveal itself by disrupting and over-
turning the order of language, rather than through operations which are
themselves linguistic, through metaphor and metonymy. 'The supposed doubling
of the pre-world <by language>', Lyotard suggests, 'does not simply open up
the distance in which the eye is installed on the edge of discourse. This
tearing-away produces in discourse effects of distortion. A figure is installed
in the depths of our speech, which operates as the matrix of these effects;
which attacks our words in order to make them into forms and images ... By
the Entzweiung the object is lost; by means of the phantasy it is
re-presented.'[52] For Lyotard the work of the dream is the clearest example
of such an irruption of the primary process into the secondary process, of the
manner in which a 'figure-matrix', by its twisting of the order of language,
traces - through the very distortions which it imposes - a figuration of the
unfigurable. 'The dream,' he suggests, 'is not the speech of desire, but its
work ... it results from the application of a force to a text. Desire does not
speak, it violates the order of speech'.[53]

Clearly, such a standpoint imposes a very different understanding of
what Freud means by 'condensation' and 'displacement' from that proposed by
Lacan. 'Condensation,' Lyotard argues, 'should be understood as a physical
process by which one or more objects occupying a given space are reduced to
inhabiting a smaller volume ... to crush the signifying or signified unities one

against the other, to confuse them, is to neglect the stable gaps which separate the letters, the words of a text, to disregard the invariant distinctive graphemes of which they are composed, ultimately to be indifferent to the space of discourse.'[54] In support of this argument, Lyotard points to some of the 'amusing and curious neologisms' which Freud reports in The Interpretation of Dreams (the adjective 'norekdal', for example, is decomposed into a parody of German superlatives such as 'kolossal' and 'pyramidal', and the names of two Ibsen characters - 'Nora' and 'Ekdal'),[55] or to the tangle of associations attached to the 'botanical monograph' in Freud's dream of the same name.[56] Despite the difficulties to which it eventually leads, Lyotard's interpretation is unquestionably closer to Freud than Lacan's attempt to transform condensation into the 'metaphorical' relation between a patent and a latent signifier. Lacan explicitly excludes the view of metaphor as 'the presentation of two images, that is, of two signifiers, equally actualised',[57] whereas in Freud's writings condensation frequently takes the form of an overlapping of disparate traits to form a single composite figure, as if - as Lyotard puts it - 'the place where one dreams (were) narrower than the place where one thinks'.[58]

The gulf between the views of Lyotard and Lacan is equally wide with respect to the concept of displacement. In The Interpretation of Dreams this concept refers to the manner in which, in the course of the formation of a dream, 'essential elements, charged, as they are, with intense interest, may be treated as though they were of small value, and their place taken in the dream by other elements, of whose small value in the dream thoughts there can be no question'.[59] In order to illustrate this aspect of the dream-work, Lyotard takes the example of a poster advertising a film of the Russian Revolution, on which the letters of the phrase 'Révolution D'Octobre' are written in an undulating manner, suggesting a banner blowing in the wind (see Figure 2). The process of displacement could then be represented as a reinforcement of certain areas of the text, so that - if the speed of the wind were to increase - only these strengthened sections would remain legible on the flapping banner. There could remain visible, for example, merely the letters: 'Révon D'Or, which could be interpreted as 'Rêvons d'or' ('let us dream of gold'). In this sense, displacement - as Freud suggests in his discussion of the topic - is a preliminary process which provides the conditions for condensation or overdetermination. Again, we find ourselves

Figure 2
Poster for the film Révolution D'Octobre

remote from Lacan's account of displacement as the metonymic circling of discourse around an object which it has itself excommunicated. For Lacan, the object of phantasy is merely the ungraspable cause of this metonymic sequence, and desire itself is nothing other than this sequence; desire cannot act upon language as the wind and the pattern of reinforcement act upon the text of the banner.

There remains only the fourth factor in Freud's account of the dream-work: secondary revision. Lacan deals with this factor extremely cursorily, pausing merely to suggest that the phantasies or day-dreams which are employed in secondary revision can be used either as signifying elements for the statement of unconscious thought, or in secondary revision in the true sense: this is a process which Lacan compares to the application of patches of whitewash to a stencil, in an effort to attenuate the rebarbative appearance of the rebus or hieroglyphs by transforming them into the semblance of a figurative painting. There are two remarkable features of this account. The first is that Lacan must deny any connection between the 'rebarbative' appearance of the stencilled forms and the nature of the unconscous, since he argues that the hieroglyphs or rebus are simply a form of writing whose visual pecularities are of merely psychological interest. The second is that Lacan affirms a strict disjunction ('ou bien/ou bien') between the function of phantasy and day-dreams as a signifier of unconscious thought within the text of the dream, and the cosmetic operation of secondary revision carried out upon the appearance of the dream's signifiers. Clearly, for Lacan, such an operation upon the signifiers cannot itself function as a signifier. But, for Freud, as Lyotard points out, no such disjunction can be said to apply. Lacan lays emphasis upon a quotation in which Freud suggests that the activity of secondary revision is not to be distinguished from waking thought. But in his introductory essay 'On Dreams' Freud argues that 'One would be mistaken in seeing in the facade of the dream merely such actually uncomprehending and apparently arbitrary reworkings of the dream-content by the conscious agency of our psychic life.'[60] Since the wish-phantasies which are employed in the manufacture of this facade of misinterpretation are of the same kind as unconscious phantasy, it can be argued that 'in many dreams the facade of the dream shows us directly the kernel of the dream, distorted through its mixture with other material.'[61] For Lyotard this ambiguous status, midway between the centre and the surface of the dream, is characteristic of

phantasy. Unlike Lacan, who sees the symbolic and the imaginary as two separable aspects of the same process, for Lyotard the discursive and the figural are two different levels which nevertheless interpenetrate. We can never attain either a purely discursive thought underlying the dream, nor a pure representation of the 'primal scene'. But this impossibility of grasping the figure-matrix 'in itself' does not abolish the heterogeneity of the discursive and the figural. The unconscious is not simply another discourse, but rather the other of discourse.

Although Lyotard's view of phantasy as 'a word lost in a hallucinatory scenography, an initial violence'[62] does not erase the distinction between conscious and unconscious, between primary and secondary process, it does prohibit any simple equation between the expression of phantasy and liberation from discursive constraints. There is an implicit conflict in Discours, Figure between desire as striving for fulfilment and as the forceful means of this fulfilment. Thus the book contains an extended discussion of Freud's paper on the phantasy 'A Child is being Beaten', in which Lyotard remarks that, despite its heterogeneity with the order of discourse, the phantasy is itself already a kind of '"writing", a repetitive configuration, a sieve within which will be caught and made to "signify" everything which chance encounters, the days residues, episodes from daily life, will bring the way of the subject'.[63] In his articles and interviews dating from the immediate post-'68 period, this static quality of phantasy, its ability to immobilise desire, begins to take on a political significance for Lyotard; he argues that, in many forms of cultural production - religion, advertising, cinema, political propaganda - the transgressions of the order of discourse required for the realisation of the figural nature of phantasy are subordinated to the aim of producing a representation within which desire can be captured and enticed to an illusory fulfillment. In waking life the excessive disorder of the dream would generate anxiety, and must therefore be mitigated by the imposition of a 'good form'; the work of desire is concealed by its product. On this basis Lyotard can suggest that the cooperation of the pleasure principle and the reality principle, of Eros and Logos, represents the fundamental operation of ideology, an operation in which desire is made to overlook its own disruptive radicality.

One of the central aims of Discours, Figure is to establish a theory of art which can take account of Freud's crucial insight into the relation between artistic creation and unconscious phantasy, while at the same time providing a means of demarcating the work of art from forms of ideological representation. To this end Lyotard introduces the concept of 'reversal' (renversement). His argument is that the work of art reveals its continuity with the dream in so far as it disjoints the discursive in order to embody the figural, but that - at the same time - the work of art has a 'critical' function which goes beyond such an embodiment. The invasion of the discursive by the figural in the dream does not pose a threat, since the subject is no longer 'on the side of consciousness', and can enjoy the representation of phantasy. The work of art, however, stresses the gap between the discursive and the figural, laying bare the disorder of the unconscious rather absorbing this disorder into an hallucinatory fulfillment. 'The artist,' Lyotard suggests, 'does not produce outside the systems of internal figures, but is someone who tries to struggle in order to deliver in the phantasy, in the matrix of figures of which he is the location and the inheritor, that which is in the proper sense primary process and not repetition "writing".'[64] The 'reversal' to which Lyotard refers therefore consists in the process whereby the work of art 'turns back' on the process of its own production and disrupts the world of illusion which it is its own deepest tendency to generate. 'Poetic reversal,' Lyotard writes, 'concerns both "form" and "content" ... while the phantasy fills the space of dispossession' - that is, the space in which the conscious subject is no longer in control - 'the work of art dispossesses the space of fulfillment. The phantasy makes opposition out of difference; poetics remakes difference with this opposition'.[65]

Clearly, this view of the work of art as constantly 'on the edge of its own rupture'[66] implies not only a critique of previous psychoanalytical approaches to art, in so far as these remain oriented towards the phantasy-content of the work, or lay stress upon its reconciliatory function; concomitantly, it implies a strongly normative conception of artistic activity, and in particular a fundamental commitment to the deconstructive techniques of modernism. In his writings of the late sixties and early seventies Lyotard backs up this commitment with a historical sketch of the transformed situation of the artist under capitalism. In traditional societies the function of art is 'religious' in the etymological sense: art belongs to the domain of the

sacred, of the symbolic expression of social integration, its forms and rhythms serve as a vehicle and reinforcement of the unquestioned understandings and beliefs which form the basis of collective existence. Since the consolidation of capitalism during the 19th century, however, the relentless expansion of commodity relations has deprived artistic expression of this collective foundation. Indeed, the artist now finds him- or herself in the contrary position of disrupting the illusion of integration, by refusing the attempt to constitute a pseudo-collectivity, even at the level of a stable artistic style, and of revealing the incompatibility between the social order and the disorder of desire. In Freudian terms, Lyotard expresses this position by denying that the modernist work achieves its critical task of reversal through a triumph of the secondary process over the primary process. Rather, in its denunciation of any complicity of Eros and Logos, of primary and secondary, the position of the modernist work can only be mapped with the aid of Freud's final theory of drives, in which the concept of the death-drive is introduced. In attempting to confront, to 'stare down' the chaos of the primary process - even at the cost of its own coherence, the critical work reveals the death-drive - the mark, in the final phase of Freud's work, according to Lyotard, of 'the limit of representation and of theory'[67] - as the fundamental tendency of every drive, of desire itself.

Although Discours, Figure is concerned almost exclusively with the elaboration of a figural-energetic theory of the unconscious, and its application to poetry and the visual arts, there is a sense - throughout the book - that political concerns are never far away. Lyotard wrote the work during a two-year period of political reclusion, between the collapse of the newspaper Pouvoir Ouvrier in 1966 and the student rebellion at Nanterre, feeling that 'it was necessary to start thinking afresh without knowing, hence to begin philosophy afresh';[68] yet its theoretical assumptions accurately foreshadow the political practice of the 22 March Movement. How a work of philosophical aesthetics could function in this way as 'a detour intended to lead to the practical critique of ideology'[69] will perhaps become clearer if we consider Lyotard's most extended discussion of Marx, in an article - written a year after the May Events - which attempts to reformulate Marx's theory in the light of the political practice of the 22 Mars. Like Althusser, Lyotard wishes to strip Marx's thought of its Hegelian residues, and in particular of the unacceptably

'dialectical' and historicist assumptions that the proletariat is the predestined grave-digger of capitalism, the locus of a negativity which brings the system to a critical consciousness of itself, and that Marxism itself is no more than the theoretical expression of this consciousness. Yet, at the same time, the motives of Althusser and Lyotard in their opposition to historicism are radically divergent. Althusser insists upon an ontological separation of knowledge and the real in order to preserve a positivist conception of Marxism as a science, but at the same time downgrades the lived experience of capitalism, so that a gulf opens up between the enlightened Marxist theoretician and the ideologically-ensnared proletariat. Lyotard, on the other hand, wishes to retain the concept of alienation, which Althusser discards, as forming the crucial hinge between the theoretical explanation and the 'lived experience' of capitalism, while equally rejecting the notion of Marxist theory as simply the recovery of the reality hidden within this alienation. In Lyotard's view 'Every dialectical philosophy of the relations of knowledge and experience provides the subject-matter for a bureaucracy of the spirit, which presents itself as the organ, both visible and mysterious, in whose name this dialectic operates.'[70] Thus Lyotard is seeking for a form of 'critical reversal' which will emphatically not be simply a 'negation of the negation', a theory which will describe the mechanisms behind the experience of capitalist alienation, rather than simply express the implicit truth of that experience, and a type of political intervention which will disrupt the very forms of political activity, rather than simply filling them with a new content.

It is the aesthetic reversal which Lyotard describes in <u>Discours, Figure</u> which provides the model for this political reversal. Lyotard's retrospective remark that 'the latent problematic of the <u>22 Mars</u>, after and with that of situationism, was the critique of representation, of the externalisation of activity and of the fruits of activity, of the <u>mise en spectacle</u> which places agents in the position of passive interpreters'[71] indicates how this parallelism will function. Just as, in the libidinal sphere, the illusory fulfillment made possible by representations of phantasy depends upon a binding of the energy of the primary process, so, in the social sphere, labour-power, creativity, individuality is absorbed into the ever-expanding circuits of the reproduction of capital. Indeed, for reasons we shall shortly discover, Lyotard increasingly tends to claim that the libidinal and the social are simply two dimensions of the same process. Just as the aesthetic reversal of modernism does not

attempt to replace a no-longer-viable phantasy-content with a more adequate form of fulfillment, but turns back to attack the collective function of art itself, so the forms of practical political intervention which Lyotard advocates eschew all mediation. When workers climb onto their own production line and travel along conversing with their workmates - visibly supplanting the product with the labour power through which it is produced - or when students invade a metro station to urge passengers not to have their tickets punched, these actions are not aimed towards a transformation or democratisation of political power: they reveal the factitious, constructed, 'secondary' nature of the social scene, but do not propose an alternative scene. What Lyotard, in an article on Nanterre, calls the 'attitude of the here-now' is not part of a strategy, a step towards a new system, but rather intends to provoke 'a mutation of desire in relation to the system',[72] to exacerbate rather than to heal the disjunction between ends and means, abstract and concrete, product and production. In this way Lyotard's Freudian aesthetic provides the basis for a theorisation 'from the inside' of what numerous commentators have noted as the fundamental characteristics of enragé politics: a determination to 'intensify contradictions rather than to resolve them' and the refusal of 'any knowledge which would permit (the movement) to say in advance what it wants and what will happen'.[73]

Inevitably, with the ebbing of the post-'68 upsurge, Lyotard quickly began to grasp the impasse of this form of political activity, an impasse which is identical with that of the modernist avant-gardes to which he looks for inspiration. As we have seen, the central attraction of Freud's thought for Lyotard is its anti-dialectical dualism, a dualism which is figured (rather than signified) in the very title 'Discours, Figure'. Since the primary process is not constitutive of the secondary process, but is revealed only privatively through its disruptions of the secondary process, any philosophy, aesthetics or politics of mediation and reconciliation is rendered impossible. But the consequence of this position in the aesthetic domain is that, since the 'critical' work of art is dependent for its impact upon the violation of an order, and since the repetition of such violations weakens the order and therefore the effect of the transgression, artistic activity must be caught up in a perpetual fuite en avant. Lyotard himself draws attention to this process - 'the "artists" are pushed forward, they are chased away from the deconstructed forms they propose, at a given moment they are literally chased out, and must continually

seek something different'[74] - but provides it with a favourable gloss: 'I
believe that there is no other motor for their research than that'.[75] In the
political domain, however, this problem cannot be so easily dispatched, since a
form of 'critical' political activity which is dependent for its effect upon the
order which it transgresses not only risks rapidly losing its effectivity, but
demonstrates an elementary kind of bad faith in refusing to outline any
intended alternative order. Lyotard's rejection of any determinate goal of
struggle ultimately confronts him with the prospect of an 'indefinite,
inexhaustible' 'task of demystification',[76] which is not so different from the
Derridean deconstruction which he initially opposed in the name of the
figural, non-discursive nature of desire. Lyotard's problem therefore becomes
one of how to avoid any Hegelian philosophy of mediation, without lapsing in
the tragic posture of finitude, irreconcileability, and the endless recession of
the desired termination. In the quest for a solution his 'drift away from Marx
and Freud' becomes a headlong race towards the characteristic 1970s terminus
of Nietzsche.

Lyotard's fundamental move is to transform the nature of the dualism
which had characterised his work around the time of Discours, Figure, and
whose roots may be traced back to the distinction of reflexive and pre-
reflexive, consciousness and world, which marked his Merleau-Pontyan account
of phenomenology. In Discours, Figure it is the discursive and the figural,
language and desire, which are ontologically opposed, and this opposition
provides the framework for Lyotard's political conclusions. Even here,
however, this opposition becomes more ramified on closer inspection. The
figuration of phantasy requires a disruption of the order of discourse, but this
disruption is not inherently critical, since desire invested in phantasy is
already held in thrall. The crucial opposition is therefore almost imperceptibly
displaced until - rather than contrasting language with desire - it contrasts
two aspects of desire: desire as a longing for the lost object represented in
phantasy, as 'forbidden in its very depths',[77] as negativity, and desire as the
positive energy which disrupts discourse in order to embody the figurality of
phantasy. Since, in Discours, Figure, Lyotard's primary target is the imperial-
ism of semiology, these two conceptions of desire are obliged to cohabit
uneasily. If 'desire does not speak' but 'violates the order of speech',[78] then
both the figural and the energetic are equally forms of this violation. But,
confronted with the impasse of his libidinal politics, Lyotard begins to stress

this dualism of desire as present in the work of Freud himself, as a way of avoiding the self-defeating orientation towards an impossible future: 'Desire thought under the category of lack, of the negative; and desire produced in words, sounds, colours, volumes, under the idea of positive processes. Desire as that which models in the void the double (phantasy, counterpart, replica, hologram) of that which it lacks, desire as work, metamorphosis without aim, play without memory. Both senses are there in Freud: the Wunsch, the primary process'.[79] From this standpoint the solution to Lyotard's dilemma appears to be simple; it is the solution attempted by Deleuze and Guattari in Anti-Oedipus: one abandons every negative, nostalgic manifestation of desire, and espouses only those forms of desire which are positive, affirmative and productive.

The difficulty with this position, as semiologists, deconstructionists, and Lacanians were quick to point out, is that it is founded upon a naïve naturalism. The desirants appear to be guilty of searching for a 'primaeval state where we could and would be ourselves, subjects ... unalienated and integral, prior to all fault and every prohibition', of attempting to relegate the reality principle 'to the obsolescent arsenal of the metaphysical police force'.[80] This critique, aimed by a Derridean at Lyotard, is in fact more appropriate to Deleuze and Guattari, since Lyotard had never claimed that one could reach the pre-reflexive, the figural, the primary process in itself, and in the early '70s rapidly abandons the residual, ambiguous naturalism which had marked his concepts of 'alienation' and of 'critique'. This is both because, where the natural is unattainable, critique turns into perpetual negativity, and because Lyotard comes increasingly to believe that any theory of alienation - of a unity, innocence, creativity dispersed in the fragmentation and indifference of capitalism - will lead to a totalitarian politics, an attempt to impose an illusory wholeness upon the social body. But if political action no longer expresses the return of the repressed, and no longer embodies the promise of a transformed future, then it ceases to possess any privileged status at all. The 'attitude of the here-now', the intensity which Lyotard had prized in the interventions of the 22 Mars, becomes a possible dimension of any action, any experience. It is no longer a matter of a political choice between discourse and figure or between two distinct systems of desire, but rather of an existential choice between two possible attitudes towards desire: desire 'thought under the category of lack', desire 'under the idea of positive

processes'. Lyotard's question now becomes a Nietzschean one: how must one imagine the world to be if pure affirmation is to be possible?

Nietzsche finds his answer to this question in the thought of the Eternal Return of the Same. His vision of cyclical time, his view of the world as 'a monster of energy without beginning, without end ... a play of forces and waves of forces'[81] enables him to reject any teleology, the notion of any moment being for the sake of another, and to open up a 'vertical' dimension of time in which every moment contains its own justification. In The Will to Power Nietzsche asks: 'Can we remove the idea of purpose from the process and still affirm the process? - That would be the case if something within the process were attained in every moment - and always the Same'.[82] In Economie Libidinale Lyotard presents his own attempt to 'remove the idea of purpose from the process and still affirm the process', to consecrate the singularity and intensity of the event, rather than subordinate it to some overall meaning or goal. Accordingly, the book opens with its own more modest - and more Freudian - version of the Eternal Return, with what Lyotard terms the 'grande pellicule éphémère', a labyrinthine ribbon composed by the continuous deployment - in the form of a moebius strip - of the surfaces, both inner and outer, of the body, and swept by incessantly mobile libidinal cathexes. Lyotard imagines the focus of cathexis as the continually-displaced centre of gravity of a bar which rotates in all three dimensions - thereby tracing out the libidinal band - and whose function, essential to consciousness and conceptual thought, is the separation of a 'this' from a 'not-this'. Like the gateway labelled 'Moment' in Nietzsche's Zarathustra, the rotating bar is therefore the contradiction of past and future, of exterior and interior, of self and other: a point of pure intensity.

On the basis of this vision, of this 'place which one must imagine without being able to conceive it',[83] Lyotard can now launch an attack on all those forms of thought which are dominated by the idea of absence, negativity, of an unattainable Other; most persistently - therefore - upon the thought of Lacan, since it is Lacan that the presuppositions of any semiology are most clearly articulated. The most crucial of these is the assumption that a mark can only become a sign, a vehicle of meaning, against a backdrop of absence. In the work of Saussure and the structural linguists this assumption takes the modest form of an argument for the differential nature of the sign,

but - as the first wave of post-structuralism was quick to point out - this characterisation leaves unanswered the question of the origin of difference itself. In a sense, as Derrida tirelessly repeats, there cannot be an 'origin' of difference, since difference is the ground of all determinate meaning and therefore - for Derrida - of all determinate being. But this train of thought leaves difference in the position of a first principle, and achieves no more than a draining of the realm of signs of any stable meaning, so that even the compensations of 'scientific' semiology are lost. Lacan resolves this dilemma, and brings the argument to its conclusion, by suggesting that it is precisely the perpetual flight of meaning which convinces us that différance - in the form of the Other - speaks to us in everything which we say. He therefore reveals that semiology is a 'religious science because haunted by the hypothesis that someone is talking to us in what is given and, at the same time, that their language, their competence, or any event their performance ability, transcends us'.[84] The question which arises, however, is whether the here-now, the intensity and singularity of the given, must inevitably be transmuted into the pale token of a perpetually absent meaning, must be absorbed into what Lyotard terms the 'great totalising Zero'. 'The real question,' Lyotard suggests, 'which Lacan avoids on account of his Hegelianism, is that of knowing why it is necessary for the drives scattered across the polymorphic body to unite themselves in an object.'[85] Why must the mirror reflect back the prototypical image of an identity rather than its surface remaining a patchwork of intensities?

Fundamentally, the difference between Lyotard and Lacan concerns the status of consciousness. To be conscious of an object is to be conscious - even if implicitly - of consciousness itself as consciousness of that object. Hence a notion of distance from the object of representation is built into the very concept of consciousness. Consciousness presupposes an initial distinction between a this and a not-this, and an appearance of the this to the not-this. Naturally, Lyotard does not wish to deny the experience of self-consciousness, but he does wish to oppose its primacy, the suggestion that there is, from the very beginning, a 'great totalising Zero' into which the intensity of the moment is absorbed. In defending this position Lyotard returns to the Nietzschean - and Freudian - view that consciousness itself is already a form of exclusion and repression. 'Theatricality and representation,' Lyotard writes, far from having the status of a libidinal - and a fortiori - metaphysical given,

results from a certain labour carried out on the moebian and labyrinthian band, a labour which imprints these special creases and folds whose effect is a box closed in on itself, filtering impulses, and only allowing to appear on the stage those which, arriving from what will now be called the exterior, satisfy the conditions of interiority. The representative chamber is an energetic system.'[86] In this connexion Lyotard recalls the mirror-animals of Borges, banished back to their mirrors by the Yellow Emperor, as punishment for their revolt, and condemned to 'the task of repeating, as in a kind of dream, all the acts of men'.[87] In Borges' story, Lyotard argues, the surface of the mirror cannot be equated with the Lacanian bar between signifier and signified, with the gap which is 'an effect of the Signifier, of the Father or the Name-of-the-Father, of the No, of writing, of language as a power of retreat and staging'.[88] Desire, in Lacan, is not <u>held in check</u> by language, and a system of representation is therefore not a system of power. Borges, however, 'imagines these beings as forces, and this bar as a barrier; he imagines that the Emperor, the Despot in general, can only maintain his position on condition that he represses these monsters and keeps them on the other side of the transparent wall. The existence of the subject depends entirely on this wall, on the subjugation of these fluid and lethal powers repressed on the other side, on the function which represents them'.[89]

However, as has already been suggested, Lyotard's response to this situation is not to advocate a 'revolt of things represented' which would be 'a world without mirrors, without theatre and without painting'.[90] One of the persistent themes of <u>Economie Libidinale</u> is the impossibility of simply abolishing or jumping outside of the domain of signs, representations and meanings. The belief in such a possibility would still remain too close to a philosophy of alienation, a position which Lyotard now wishes to replace with a theory of 'dissimulation' in which there would be 'no notable difference between a discursive and libidinal formation'.[91] In the elaboration of this standpoint, Lyotard makes frequent reference to the new dualism introduced by Freud in <u>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</u>, and which persists throughout the last phase of his work. With the new opposition of Eros and the death-drive, Lyotard contends, Freud himself becomes conscious of and attempts to theorise the relation between 'negative' desire - desire as wish, as lack, as striving - and 'positive' desire - desire as energy, libido, primary process - which had been left unconsidered in his earlier work. Eros is the force which

strives to maintain the unity and narcissistic uniqueness of the individual, which is concerned with homeostasis, the conservation of order, and the constitution of ever more complex wholes. The death-drive, by contrast, is energy in his disruptive, unbound, anxiety-generating state: its ultimate aim - in a sense, the fundamental aim of every drive - is a total discharge of energy, a rejection of the tension and complexity of life itself in favour of the peace of the inorganic. For Lyotard the crucial aspect of this new dualism is that it does not at all operate like Freud's former dualism of ego-drives and object-drives, which in fact continues to be central to his aetiology of the neuroses. This is because, as Freud himself stresses, the task of determining that which is the work of Eros and that which expresses the death-drive is a highly problematic one, comparable to juggling with 'an equation with two unknown quantities'.[92] In the case of the celebrated fort/da game with which Beyond the Pleasure Principle opens, Freud admits that the compulsive repetition of the throwing away of the bobbin cannot be interpreted unequivocally as exemplifying an inertia counter to the pleasure principle; the purpose of the game could equally be to master the experience of the loss of the mother, and even to enact a symbolic revenge against her. And, in general, throughout his late work, Freud argues that 'there can be no question of confining one or other of the fundamental drives to one of the provinces of the psyche. They must both be discoverable everywhere'.[93]

The dissimulation of the death-drive in the activity of Eros, the persistence of its 'unobtrusive work' beneath the clamour of life, provides Lyotard with his model of the relation between 'sign' and 'tensor', idea and affect, during the phase of his work dominated by the notion of a libidinal economy. He now concludes that there is 'no need for declarations, manifestoes, organisations, provocations, not even any need for examplary actions',[94] since 'disorder, deconstruction, the figure do not offer any guarantee of good conduction (of intensities)'.[95] Indeed, Lyotard now goes so far as to suggest that - as in the case of the No Theatre - coldness, classicism, order may function as an incitement to, rather than as a brake on, intensity. Even the sign can function as such a spur if it is taken as the proper name of a singularity. In itself, perhaps, this search for the incandescence of the moment, without origin, without purpose, without intention, could be dismissed as an unconvincing and self-defeating attempt to revive the ecstatic vision of Nietzsche: Economie Libidinale would be of interest chiefly as a case

study, as the reductio ad absurdum of the concern of post-structuralism with the ineffably singular. But what gives the book its weight is its historical and political dimension, its treatment of the problem of the appropriate reaction to the erosion of the traditional, the meaningful, sacred, entailed by the incessant expansion of capitalist economic relations. It raises the question of how one should respond to the anonymity, exchangeability, and indifference implied by the commodity form. Lyotard's answer to this question is now unequivocal: 'there is no exteriority, no other of Kapital, which would be Nature, Socialism, Carnival, or what have you ...'.[96] Indeed, any attempt to restore a new sense of wholeness, a new relation of nature, a new collective meaning beyond the social fragmentation of capitalism betrays a 'furious concentrationary impulse'.[97] The world of capitalism, therefore, is not an alienated world. Rather, the cynicism and polymorphous perversity of an economy which can absorb any object, any capacity, any experience into the circuit of commodity exchange parallels the aimless voyage of intensities on the libidinal band, indeed - at a certain level - is indistinguishable from the great ephemeral pellicule itself. Admittedly, in this respect capitalism, like every system of signification and exchange, dissimulates. The capitalist is concerned not with the product as such, but only with the constant argumentation of production, so that capital as a whole functions as a 'great totalising Zero' which neutralises the singularity of the object into the indifferently exchangeable sign of a value. Yet an almost imperceptible shift can transform this 'return to the Eternal' into an Eternal Return, into a 'production as consumption, consumption as production, that is to say a metamorphosis without end and without aim'.[98] The moment in which this shift is inaugurated would be the moment in which the anomymity and indifference of the commodity form is itself employed as an intensifier of pleasure, in which the 'bar of disjunction' which traces the libidinal ribbon is made to turn upon itself. Such a 'libidinal economy' may be found, Lyotard suggests, in the 'dandyism' of Baudelaire, or in the work of the neo-realist painter Jacques Monory, where the romanticism of theme and motif is both held in check and heightened by the fragmentation of the picture space and the impersonality of the painting technique. Economie Libidinale concludes with the attempt to adopt a similar position: 'Our fear of the system of signs, and thus our investment in it, must still be immense if we continue to seek for these positions of purity ... What would be interesting would be to stay where we are, but at the same time silently to seize every opportunity to function as good conductors of intensities.'[99]

CHAPTER FOUR

SECTION ONE

MICHEL FOUCAULT: POWER AND SUBJECTIVITY

The 'philosophy of desire' developed by Jean-François Lyotard and Gilles Deleuze in the period from the late 1960s to the mid-70s can be seen as the attempt, within post-structuralism, to affirm the independent force of an 'inner nature' - that 'transitivism of a spontaneous aesthetic' to which Discours, Figure refers[1] - against the assumption of both classical structuralism and Lacanian psychoanalysis that no genuine struggle is required, involving the repression of corporeal impulses and drives, in order for linguistic and social rules to be established and perpetuated. This line of argument, and the aestheticized conception of politics which accompanied it, evidently stands in a close relation to the flowering of self-expression, the assertion of physical and erotic spontaneity against the ascetic routines of the modern working world, which characterized the events of May '68. But this revelation of the potentially explosive force of individual 'desire' was not the only way in which the May revolt represented a fundamental challenge to the view of the social as consisting in systems of communication or symbolic exchange upon which the structuralism of the early 1960s had relied. It also made clear that symbolic structures, far from unfolding in accordance with an immanent logic, were determined by and served to mask relations of power. Theoretically, the concepts of desire and power, each considered as a 'dimension of force which escapes the logic of the signifier',[2] imply one another. Lyotard's or Deleuze's account of the production of the self-conscious subject through the containment of libidinal energy requires a theory of the power which enforces this containment, since without this, as the evolution of their thought demonstrates, desire comes to be seen as self-repressing and the basis of political critique is undermined.[3] Correspondingly, a theory of power with radical intent requires an account of that which power dominates or represses, since without such an account relations of power must cease to appear objectionable.

It is Michel Foucault who, during the 1970s, turns away from the more narrowly methodological concerns whichpreoccupied him during the late 1960s, and begins to develop the theory of power which disillusionment with the political inadequacy of structuralism required. It would be a mistake, however, to understand Foucault's concern with the problem of power during the '70s simply as the theoretical complement to the philosophy of desire developed by Deleuze and Lyotard. It is true that Foucault often appears to be producing theoretical generalizations about the nature of power. But, in a manner which has no parallel in the work of the désirants, Foucault's thought is rooted in a highly individual historical vision, which centres on the transition from traditional to modern, industrial societies, and is specifically concerned with the forms of knowledge and modes of social organization characteristic of capitalist modernity; his theoretical formulations on the nature of power can often only be fully comprehended when set in the context of this vision. Indeed, it can be argued that it is the persistence with which Foucault has held to and elaborated his understanding of the historical foundations of the modern West, and the strikingness of the image and allegory through which he has expressed his stance towards the process of modernisation, which have been central to his force and his appeal, rather than his modishly fluctuating, and often inconsistent, theoretical and philosophical pronouncements. A consideration of Foucault's historical views is therefore an essential preliminary for an examination of his account of power.

From the very beginnings of his work, although more explicitly at some periods than at others, Foucault has been concerned with the emergence, expansion and consolidation of apparatuses of administrative intervention in, and control over, the social world, with what he has more recently termed 'pastoral power'.[4] This theme is first broached - in a manner which sets the tone for many of Foucault's later discussions - in the chapter of Madness and Civilization devoted to the 'Great Confinement', where Foucault describes the springing up of institutions of segregation and forced labour, the workhouse, Zuchthaus, and Hôpital Général, across Europe during the 17th century. Foucault suggests that these institutions mark a qualitative transformation in the relations between the state and its citizens: madness, along with poverty, unemployment and the inability to work, is for the first time perceived as a 'social problem' which falls within the ambit of responsibility of the state.

Foucault does not deny the economic dimension of the process of confinement, as a measure intended to reduce social pressures during a period of inflation and unemployment, but is far more concerned with the effects and implications of what he considers to be a new conception of the state as preserver and augmenter of the general welfare, and with the manner in which this conception intersects with a project of homogenization and moralization of the populace. The workhouses, whose task of instilling a new 'ethical consciousness of labour' - Foucault suggests - was more fundamental than their contradictory economic role, testify to 'the bourgeoisie's great dream and great preoccupation of the Classical Age: the laws of the state and the laws of the heart are at last identical'.[5] This account of the Great Confinement will then provide the model for Foucault's discussion of the emergence of 'humanitarian' attitudes towards the insane at the end of the 18th century. The opening of Tuke's York Retreat and Pinel's liberation of the insane at Bicêtre are portrayed as leading to a 'gigantic moral imprisonment'[6] which is more oppressive than the former practices of brute incarceration, since it operates on the mind rather than merely on the body. Modern forms of public provision and welfare, Foucault implies, are inseparable from even tighter forms of social and psychological control.

A distinctive facet of Foucault's approach to historical analysis, which Madness and Civilization clearly introduces, is his tendency to condense a general historical argument into a tracing of the emergence of specific institutions. In Foucault's next historical work this concentration becomes even more evident, indeed is made explicit in the title of the book: The Birth of the Clinic. At the same time, however, Foucault's analysis of the debates on the status of medicine and on appropriate forms of medical provision which took place at the height of the French Revolution, and his presentation of the policies which ensued, make clearer the broad foundations of his account of modernity. The Birth of the Clinic can be seen as an oblique polemic against the Marxist view that - under triumphant capitalism - the role of the bourgeois state was characteristically limited to upholding the order of private law which secures economic activity and providing corresponding general guarantees of order. According to this view, the bourgeois state has been driven into increasing intervention by the functional inadequacies of the market, whereas Foucault wishes to show that - from the very beginning - intervention and administrative control have defined the modern state. In the

debates which Foucault follows, the dictates of economic liberalism, which would have entailed an entirely deregulated, freelance status for medicine, are shown to have been defeated by the demand for surveillance of the health of the nation, a demand which had already made itself felt before the Revolution in the setting up of the Société Royale de Médecine to function as 'a point of centralization of knowledge, an authority for the recording and assessment of all medical activity'.[7] From this perspective the 'birth of the clinic' may be explained as resulting from the need for a type of medical institution which would make possible a systematic observation of the nation's health, achieving the compromise of assigning to medicine 'a closed domain reserved for it alone, without either resorting to the corporate structures of the ancien régime, or lapsing into forms of state control reminiscent of the period of the convention'.[8] The 'medical gaze' referred to in the subtitle of the book is formed by the new, untrammelled type of observation made possible for the doctor at the bedside of the hospitalized patient intersecting with a system of monitoring of health and hygiene established at the level of the state. Thus, although Foucault's concern is here with physical rather than moral disorder, The Birth of the Clinic reiterates the view, already expressed in Madness and Civilization, that supervision of, and intervention in, the social domain by agencies of welfare and control is a more fundamental characteristic of modern societies than an economy released from directly political relations of domination.

In Foucault's two subsequent books, The Order of Things and The Archaeology of Knowledge, this concern with the emergence of modern forms of administration of the social world is barely present at all, and Foucault's attention shifts almost entirely towards the internal structure of scientific discourses, in particular the discourse of the 'human sciences', whose origins he believes to be closely intertwined with these forms of administration. In this respect Foucault may be said to have been moving away during the 1960s, in accordance with the objectivism of the structuralist movement as a whole, from any form of politically-oriented analysis. Already, in the preface to The Birth of the Clinic, Foucault had proclaimed: 'This book has not been written in favour of one kind of medicine as against another kind of medicine, or against medicine and in favour of an absence of medicine. It is a structural study that sets out to disentangle the conditions of its history from the density of discourse, as do others of my works.'[9] There was, nevertheless, an

evident overlap between the political question of institutions of social control, which was given a new immediacy by the events of May '68, and Foucault's longstanding concern with procedures of surveillance and confinement, so that although - in common with the other prominent figures associated with structuralism - Foucault played no direct part in the uprising, it was a comparatively simple matter for him to rejig his position and to emerge as a major theoretician of gauchisme around the turn of the decade.[10] During the early '70s Foucault was active in various far-left debates and interventions, the most publicized of which was his participation in the setting up of a Group for Information on Prisons (GIP) after a hunger strike which began amongst leftist detainees in 1971. And in 1975, after a gap of six years since his previous book, this experience of political militancy bore theoretical fruit in the form of Discipline and Punish, a history of the emergence of the modern prison system.

Discipline and Punish clearly take up again the historical analysis begun by Foucault in Madness and Civilization and The Birth of the Clinic, and partially abandoned during the structuralist euphoria of the mid-60s. Like its predecessors, it employs the organizational device of focussing on the emergence of a specific institution. Yet it is also the work in which Foucault introduces and begins to elaborate his theory of power, thereby taking his distance from many of his basic theoretical assumptions of the 1960s. The introduction of the concept of power enables Foucault to formulate far more systematically than hitherto his view of the transformation in forms of social organization and relations of domination which characterises the transition from the ancien régime to the post-revolutionary society of the 19th century, a transformation which he describes, in a concise formula, as a 'reversal of the political axis of individualization'.[11] Under a feudal and monarchical system, Foucault suggests, individualization is greatest at the summit of society. Power is visibly embodied in the person of the king, yet in its operation it forms 'a discontinuous, rambling, global system with little hold on detail'.[12] Under this type of regime the notion of crime is still not fully distinguished from that of sacrilege, so that punishment takes the form of a ritual intended not to 'reform' the offender but to express and restore the sanctity of the law which has been broken, a principle spectacularly illustrated by the description of the execution of the regicide Damiens with which Discipline and Punish begins. Such forms of retribution, Foucault

suggests, are intended to make manifest the unlimited, incomparable power (surpuissance) of the king over a more or less anonymous body of subjects. In modern societies, however, the agencies of punishment become part of a pervasive, impersonal system of surveillance and correction which pays an ever-increasing attention to the idiosyncrasies of the particular case, and above all to the 'psychology' of the individual, since intention rather than transgression now becomes the central criterion of culpability. In general, power in feudal societies tends to be haphazard and imprecise, whereas in modern societies effects of power 'circulate through progressively finer channels, gaining access to individuals themselves, to their bodies, their gestures, and all their daily actions'.[13]

With his characteristic flair for the arresting image, Foucault summarizes this transformation in the 'economy of power' in his description of the Panopticon, an architectural device advocated by Bentham towards the end of the 18th century. The device consists of a central elevated watch-tower surrounded by a circular disposition of cells, each of which traverses the entire thickness of the building, and thereby permits its single inmate to be caught, silhouetted, in the light which passes through the cell from the outside. This arrangement makes it possible for a lone observer in the central tower to supervise a multitude of individuals, each of whom is cut off from any lateral contact with his or her fellow inmates. Furthermore, since the guard, although unable literally to observe every inmate at once, cannot be perceived from outside the tower, an effect of constant, omniscient surveillance is obtained. Since no prisoner can be certain of when he or she is not being observed, the prisoners are obliged constantly to police their own behaviour for fear of possible detection: the Panopticon makes possible a new, radically more effective exercise of power, 'without any physical constraint other than architecture and geometry'.[14] As Foucault's references, in Discipline and Punish, to 'this panoptic society of which incarceration is the omnipresent armature'[15] suggests, the description of the Panopticon is intended as far more than an account of one form of the exercise of power. It not only condenses the argument of Discipline and Punish, but may be seen as a summation of the analysis of modern forms of social administration which Foucault has been conducting ever since Madness and Civilization, combining the themes of a centralization, and increasing efficiency of power with the theme of the replacement of overt violence by moralization. Power in modern

societies is portrayed as essentially oriented towards the production of regimented, isolated, and self-policing subjects.

As Foucault himself has recently noted, a historical-philosophical analysis in some respects very close to his own may be found – despite the evident disparity of intellectual traditions – in the work of the Frankfurt School.[16] Although the attention of Critical Theory is not directed as exclusively as that of Foucault towards modern systems of administration of the social world, and even less towards the genesis of specific institutions, the tendency of Critical Theory, both in the 'classical' phase represented by the thought of Horkheimer and Adorno, and in the work of its leading contemporary representative, Jürgen Habermas, has been to shift the emphasis away from the relations of production as the determining institutional framework of modern capitalist societies and, under the influence of Weber, to analyse the capitalist economy as merely one form of the unleashing of the autonomous dynamic of a means-end rationality. This makes possible not only an unprecedented increase in the forces of production, and therefore in the domination of external nature, but also in the domination of human beings, who are adapted to the system of production through social engineering and psychological manipulation. In Weber's original formulation of the theory of 'rationalization', the structures of consciousness which made possible modern bureaucratic forms of administration and the systematic profit-seeking of the capitalist enterprise are progressively set loose from the 'protestant ethic' which had nurtured them and given them their transcendent meaning. Regularity, asceticism, and relentlessly self-interested calculation are trans-formed into an 'iron cage', a system of behaviour to which individuals are now obliged to adapt in order to survive. In the thought of Horkheimer and Adorno these developments are transformed into a world-historical process of reifica-tion, in which the calculating, instrumental rationality required of the subject in its struggle to gain independence from the overwhelming powers of external nature requires a corresponding repression of the spontaneity of inner nature. The culmination of this process is an empty, adapted subjectivity which has lost that very autonomy for whose sake the conquest of nature was initiated.

It has already been suggested that what, in Foucault's work, often appear as abstract generalizations on the nature of power, are best under-stood if related back to his account of the transition from traditional to

modern societies. A comparison with the Weber-Frankfurt School tradition tends to confirm this suggestion, since it reveals characteristics which Foucault attributes to power per se as historically specific. During the 1970s Foucault lays considerable stress on a critique of conceptions of power as fundamentally prohibitive, arguing that 'We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes", it "represses", it "censors', it "abstracts", it "masks", it "conceals". In fact power produces; it produces realities; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth.'[17] As commentators have been quick to point out, such formulations ignore many all-too-evident features of the exercise of power in contemporary societies, features which Foucault himself has on other occasions noted.[18] The argument becomes acceptable, however, if Foucault is taken as describing not power tout court, but the productivity and efficiency of those purposive-rational forms of organization which Weber detected in modern bureaucracies and in the capitalist organization of the labour process. Similarly, Foucault's repeated denials that power can be considered as a possession of groups or individuals becomes comprehensible in the light of Weber's account of the transition from 'charismatic' and 'traditional' to 'legal-rational' forms of domination: in modern societies power does not depend upon the prowess and prestige of individuals but is exercised through an impersonal administrative machinery operating in accordance with abstract rules. Foucault's juxta-position of a spectacular public execution and the timetable of a 'House for young prisoners in Paris' at the beginning of Discipline and Punish highlights precisely this transition. This concern with the anonymity of modern forms of administration also helps to explain Foucault's neglect of class domination, and his presentation of power as 'a machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power just as much as those over whom it is exercised'.[19] For Weber, as for the classical Frankfurt School, it is the social forms engendered by purposive or instrumental rationality, with their indifference to personal ties, and their crushing of idiosyncrasy and spontaneity, which represent a profounder threat to human freedom than the class oppressionn specific to capitalist society.

Although it cannot be doubted that Foucault is attempting to theorize historical developments which were also a central concern of Weber and of the Frankfurt School, the framework within which he has carried out his analyses - summarized, during the 1970s, by the Nietzschean term 'genealogy'

- is constituted by a very different set of philosophical assumptions. The differences centre on contrasting conceptions of the human subject, since in modern philosophy it is a view of the status and capacities of the subject which defines the content of concepts of domination and freedom. In the thought of the classical Frankfurt School the forging of a self-identical subject capable of restraining the spontaneity of impulse and acting in accordance with rational calculations of utility is not an arbitrary event, but is a necessary outcome of the drive for self-preservation, the need of human beings for control over the threatening, uncomprehended powers of nature which initially appear in mythical form. Yet, under capitalism, the rise of instrumental reason culminates in a social order which thwarts its own original purpose, the preservation of the subject. 'Through the mediation of the total society which embraces all relations and emotions, men are once again made to be that against which the evolutionary laws of society, the principle of self, had turned: mere species beings, exactly like one another through isolation in the forcibly united collectivity.'[20] Yet, despite this fateful dialectic, in which 'the subjective moment becomes, as it were, enclosed by the objective, is itself, as a limit imposed upon the subject, objective',[21] classical Critical Theory firmly refuses the conclusion that subjectivity itself must be denounced as a principle of domination. The conditions of material coercion and struggle under which the identical self was formed have necessarily led to this identity taking on a compulsive character, yet these conditions could not be overcome by a simple renunciation of self-identity. In one of his last essays Adorno reminded his readers that 'the undifferentiated state before the subject's formation was the dread of the blind web of nature, of myth'; that 'if the subject were liquidated rather than sublated in a higher form, the effect would be regression - not just of consciousness, but a regression to real barbarism'.[22] For Adorno, such a sublation could only be actualized by breaking through the façade of identity to a mode of subjectivity which would preserve the reflective unity of the self in a form no longer inimical to the diffuseness and spontaneity of impulse. His fundamental philosophical assumptions, however, debar him from formulating such a transformation theoretically: a future state of 'reconciliation' - of difference without domination and affinity without identity - can only be evoked through a virtuoso exploration of the aporias of 'identity-thinking'.

In the contemporary Critical Theory of Habermas this dialectical impasse of the classical Frankfurt School is no longer considered inevitable, but is rather attributed to the failure of Horkheimer and Adorno fully to break with the presuppositions of modern philosophies of consciousness. The fundamental concepts of the theory of consciousness as developed from Descartes to Kant, Habermas suggests, do not permit the notion of reconciliation to be formulated at all, while in the concepts of objective idealism, from Spinoza and Leibniz to Schelling and Hegel, the notion can only be expressed in an extravagant form.[23] Habermas's innovative break with the earlier Frankfurt School tradition consists in his argument that the cognitive and instrumental relation between subject and object, and the accompanying form of rationality, which have been a central preoccupation of modern philosophy, must be seen as embedded in a broader communicative reason which is implicit in the intersubjectivity of dialogue, and to which subjects must conform in order to achieve mutual understanding and coordinate courses of action. Instrumental rationality cannot be pragmatically reduced to a moment in the cycle of self-preservation, but involves claims for the validity of cognitions and the effectivity of actions which can ultimately only be settled through intersubjective debate and testing.[24] In addition, Habermas's shift from a philosophy centred on consciousness to a communicatively- broadened philosophy of language allows him to argue that there are forms of rationality besides that which governs the cognitive-instrumental relation between subject and object. This type of rationality is related to the cognitive dimension of language, which is brought to the fore in constative speech-acts. But every speech-act also possesses an interactive and an expressive dimension - it establishes a relation between speaking subjects, and reveals an intention of the speaker. These distinct 'modes of communication' can also be highlighted in 'regulative' and 'representative' speech-acts, and form the foundation of types of rationality which Habermas terms the 'moral-practical' and 'aesthetic-practical'. This expanded conception of rationality implies that it is possible to raise claims to normative rightness and subjective sincerity which are no less capable of discursive thematization than are cognitive claims, although Habermas admits that, in the latter case, conclusive judgments cannot be reached purely through argument, but only by observing the continuing course of interaction.[25]

By means of this theory Habermas aspires to continue the critique of the primacy of instrumental reason while avoiding the blind alley into which Horkheimer and Adorno were led by their conflation of instrumental reason and domination. Instrumental reason cannot be transformed into the agent of a world-historical process of reification, whose origins are projected back before the beginnings of capitalist modernization into pre-history. The failure of Adorno and Horkheimer, Habermas suggests, consists in not distinguishing between the rationalization of the social life-world, and the particular, pathological form of the process of capitalist modernization which, despite its non-class-specific effects, must ultimately be rooted in the dynamics of class conflict.[26] By the 'rationalization of the life-world' Habermas understands the process in which claims to cognitive truth, to normative rightness, and to expressive sincerity cease to be inextricably interwoven in the fabric of religious and metaphysical world-views, and become increasingly separated out into three distinct spheres of value: science, morality and art. From this standpoint, the phenomena which Horkheimer and Adorno denounced as the seamless domination of technical reason cannot be simply attributed to the fact that, in the modern period, the rationality of cognition and effective action is no longer interwoven with moral and aesthetic considerations. What Horkheimer and Adorno perceive as a 'totalized purposive-rationality' is better characterized as a 'colonization' of this rationalized life-world by economic and administrative systems guided by purely functional imperatives, which can themselves only emerge on the basis of a rationalized life-world, and yet which impede the unfolding of the full potential of its communicative infrastructure. In contrast to Adorno's evocation of a state of reconciliation, the idea of which 'forbids irreconcilably its affirmation in the concept',[27] Habermas can point to possibilities of self-expression and collective self-determination which are ravaged by the hypertrophy of a one-sided instrumental rationality, and yet remain implicit in our cultural modernity.

Habermas's theory naturally implies a different attitude towards the modern subject from that of Horkheimer and Adorno. In the thought of the classical Frankfurt School even the space for individual responsibility and initiative which was opened during the early phases of capitalism is now closed off by the administered society. If, in the era of free enterprise, 'the idea of individuality seemed to shake itself loose from metaphysical trappings and to become merely a synthesis of the individual's material interests',[28] the

immanent logic of a society based upon the pursuit of private interest leads to the totalitarian extinction of that very individuality which originally sets this logic in motion. For Habermas, however, the liberation of purposive rationality from the braking context of traditional norms, and its embodiment in the 'norm-free sociality' of the market, is only one dimension in which post-traditional structures of consciousness reveal themselves. Habermas characterizes this transition as a whole as one from 'role-identity' to 'ego-identity', understanding by the latter a form of personal identity which is no longer determined by contents unreflectively inherited from the cultural tradition, but is defined by the mastery of procedures of critical examination and argumentative grounding employed in the acquisition of cognitive and moral beliefs. From this standpoint Adorno's argument - parallel to that of the désirants - that the very form of the identical self represents a repression of the spontaneity of 'inner nature' can be seen as mesmerized by a Kantian conception of the moral subject as divided between an autonomous - but impersonally rational - and an individual - but heteronomous - self. Adorno overlooks the possibility that the culturally predetermined interpretations of human needs on which moral norms are based could be opened up to revision in the medium of norm- and value-building communication. In this way the contents of the cultural tradition need no longer function as a pattern imposed upon needs, but could offer expressive resources for needs in search of their appropriate formulation, thereby retrieving aesthetic experience from the marginalized position it occupies in bourgeois culture. Thus, although Habermas would dissent from Adorno's view that 'the diffuseness of nature ... resembles the lineaments of an intelligible creature, of that self which would be delivered from the ego',[29] since he believes that it is only the increasing formalism of modern identity which makes possible its greater richness of content, he does argue that inner nature could be rendered 'communicatively fluid and transparent' in a non-repressive form of ego-identity.[30] The possibility of a form of selfhood which would combine the cognitive, moral and aesthetic dimensions of rationality in more equal measure, and allow their less constrained interaction, can be theoretically formulated, and need not be merely negatively evoked in terms of a quasi-eschatological 'reconciliation'.

If Habermas's work represents a shift towards a more optimistic evaluation of the potential of modern subjectivity than is to be found in the work of the

first-generation Frankfurt School, then Foucault - in common with the majority of post-structuralists - moves in the opposite direction, to a position which eliminates the dialectical character of Enlightenment altogether, and proposes that subjects are entirely constituted by the operation of power. Foucault's philosophical model for this process is to be found in the second essay of On the Genealogy of Morals, where Nietzsche recounts 'the long story of how responsibility originated'. Nietzsche's central argument is that a reflexive relation to self, and in particular an internalized moral control of behaviour, can only be inculcated through threats and violence. In order for the breeding of 'an animal with the right to make promises' - and therefore able to guarantee the constancy of its own future conduct - to take place, the coercive task must be carried out of 'rendering man up to a certain point regular, uniform, equal among equals, calculable'.[31] This task is accomplished by enforcing a block on the spontaneous expression of instinct, since 'all instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly turn inward - this is what I call the internalization of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his "soul"'.[32] The energy of the reversed instinct is transformed into the hostility towards self which is the foundation of moral consciousness, the torment of which Nietzsche contrasts unfavourably with the 'naive joy and innocence of the animal': 'This instinct for freedom forcibly made latent ... pushed back and repressed, incarcerated within and finally able to discharge and vent itself only on itself: that, and that alone, is what bad conscience is in its beginnings.'[33]

In Foucault's first major work, Madness and Civilization, his account of the procedures employed in the early asylums becomes the occasion for the description of a similar process of the repression of spontaneity and the introversion of impulse. The notion of madness functions throughout the book to suggest a fusion of the super- and the infra-human: it evokes those mythological powers of an untamed nature, whose disappearance Horkheimer and Adorno ambiguously lament in Dialectic of Enlightenment, but it also implies something of Nietzsche's arch equation of liberation with the untrammelled expression of instinct. If, up till the time of the Renaissance, madness had functioned as 'the sign of another world' to the consciousness of the Classical Age, Foucault argues, it 'revealed a freedom raging in the monstrous forms of animality'.[34] Like Nietzsche, Foucault analyses the transition from a state of overt violence and brutality to a condition of internalized restraint, although

in his version this process is not projected into an imaginary past, but concerns the replacement of the bedlam and the prison by the prototypes of the modern asylum. And like Nietzsche, he reverses the conventional 'humanist' verdict on this transition. The central suggestion of his chapter on 'The Birth of the Asylum' is that the directly physical confinement and repression characteristic of the Classical Age left a greater power and freedom to madness than modern methods of treatment which aim to transform the consciousness of the insane. 'In classical confinement,' Foucault argues, 'the madman was also vulnerable to observation, but such observation did not, basically, involve him; it involved only his monstrous surface, his visible animality; and it included at least one form of reciprocity, since the sane man could read in the madman, as in a mirror, the imminent movement of his own downfall.'[35] By contrast, in the establishments of Tuke and Pinel, bodily constraint is no longer the principal means of control, but this 'liberation' is more than offset by the 'internalization of the juridical instance': where formerly there had been the 'free terror of madness', there now reigns the 'stifling anguish of responsibility'.[36] The philosophical resonances of Foucault's account make clear that his fundamental target is not the specific regime of the modern asylum, but modern self-reflective subjectivity as such: 'Freed from the chains that made it purely an observed object, madness lost, paradoxically, the essence of its freedom, which was solitary exaltation; it became responsible for what it knew of its truth; it imprisoned itself in an infinitely self-referring observation; it was finally chained to the humiliation of being its own object.'[37]

Although Foucault shares the Nietzschean critique of bad conscience - the asylum institutes 'a trial which has no outcome but in a perpetual recommencement in the internalized form of remorse'[38] - he differs from Nietzsche in his understanding of the fact that a reflexive relation to self cannot be produced simply through the limitation and introversion of instinct. Simple violence, as we have seen, fails to conquer madness for Foucault, who is closer to Sartre than Nietzsche in suggesting that it is only concrete exposure to the gaze of the other which makes possible the corresponding self-surveillance. In his account of the asylum Foucault repeatedly stresses that it is a regime of incessant observation and judgement which forms the condition for the internalization of morality. 'At the Retreat,' he writes, 'the partial suppression of physical constraints was part of an ensemble of which

the essential element was the constitution of a self-restraint in which the freedom of the sick person, engaged in work and in the gaze of others, is continually threatened by the recognition of guilt.'[39] Again Foucault draws up a balance unfavourable to the modern age, introducing a contrast - which echoes through is later work - between the semi-protective darkness of the 'unenlightened' bedlam or dungeon, and in ineluctable surveillance which becomes more detailed as its source becomes ever more remote: 'The proximity instituted by the asylum, an intimacy neither chains nor bars would ever violate again, does not allow reciprocity: only the nearness of observation that watches, that spies, that comes closer in order to see better, but moves farther away, since it accepts and acknowledges only the values of the Stranger.'[40]

In The Birth of the Clinic the process of moralization does not figure, since Foucault is here concerned with the regulation of bodies rather than the control of minds. Nevertheless, the image of the gaze is central to the structure of the book, to the extent of featuring in its subtitle: 'Une archéologie du regard médical'. Here, however - although it does not lose its implications of surveillance - the predominant function of the gaze is epistemic. Foucault perceives a convergence between the institutional pre-conditions for the formation of a new mode of medical knowledge - modern clinical medicine - and for a centralized monitoring of the health of the nation, in the form of the new teaching hospital. He suggests an internal link between the 'implicit geometry' of the theme of pristine observation as the support of medical knowledge and the 'social space dreamt of by the Revolution' ('a space of free communication in which the relatinship of the parts to the whole was always transposable and reversible'),[41] and argues that both are fundamentally illusory or ideological, since the apparent purity and transparency of the gaze can in fact only be established within new institutional structures which are,, if anything, more confining than those which preceded them. 'The medical gaze,' Foucault suggests, will be 'given its technological structure in the clinical organization';[42] the Revolutionary theme of the 'majestic violence of light', which 'brings to an end the bounded, dark kingdom of privileged knowledge', is seen to lead to an intensified administration of individuals.[43]

The depth at which the image of the gaze is implanted in Foucault's work is revealed by its return, nearly a decade and a half after Madness and Civilization, in the discussion of 'Panopticism' in Discipline and Punish. In this work Foucault unites the three functions of the gaze which we have so far distinguished: the moral, the epistemic and the political. In terms more explicitly Nietzschean than those of Madness and Civilization, Foucault now highlights his concern with the formulation of the modern subject, with a 'genealogy of the modern soul', and – like Nietzsche – he presents the constitution of 'psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness' as the result of 'methods of punishment, supervision and constraint'.[44] Even more paradigmatically than the asylum or the hospital, the panoptic system institutes a unidirectional gaze whose effect is to generate morally self-monitoring subjects: 'The efficiency of power, its constraining force have, in a sense, passed over to the other side – to the surface of its application. He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the contraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself, he inscribes himself in a power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection.'[45] Discipline and Punish also lays greater stress than earlier works on the manner in which the epistemic function of the gaze interweaves with its moralizing function. Panoptic power isolates and individualizes, transforming its targets into possible objects of cognition. 'The moment when the sciences of men became impossible,' Foucault suggests, 'is the moment when a new technology of power and a new political anatomy of the body were implemented.'[46] Lastly the notion of panoptic power is generalized to provide an account of the overall structuring of social relations in modern societies. The unidirectional link which the gaze establishes between the unity of the observer and the multiplicity of the observed provides a metaphor for the anonymous centralisation of modern power.

If both Madness and Civilization and Discipline and Punish, despite the chronological and theoretical gap which separates them, are in part concerned with the formation of the moral-practical relation to self which Habermas – contesting the primacy of the epistemic subject – sees as the central dimension of modern self-critical subjectivity,[47] then Foucault's next book, The History of Sexuality, may be seen as concerned with the formation of Habermas's third dimension: the aesthetic relation to the inner world of

passion and impulse. In <u>The History of Sexuality</u> Foucault draws attention to the dissolution of the forms of group-identity characteristic of traditional societies, and their replacement by a form of identity which depends increasingly upon the capacity of the individual to reflect upon and articulate the domain of private experience, suggesting that this transition is epitomizd by the change in meaning of the word <u>avowal</u>: 'For a long time, the individual was vouched for by the reference to others and the demonstration of his ties to the commonweal (family, allegiance, protection); then he was authenticated by the discourse of truth he was obliged to pronounce concerning himself.'[48] Foucault correlates this transition with the shift from epic narrative to the modern literature of introspection, and with the rise of philosophies of consciousness, 'the long discussions concerning the possibility of constituting a science of the subject, the validity of introspection, lived experience as evidence of the presence of consciousness to itself'.[49] Yet, as is the case with his account of the formation of moral consciousness, Foucault wishes to suggest - in genealogical fashion - that our broadened access to an 'inner world' distinct from the external worlds of both nature and the social is the result of a forgotten coercion: 'One confesses - or is forced to confess. When it is not spontaneous or dictated by some internal imperative, the confession is wrung from a person by violence or threat; it is driven from its hiding place in the soul or extracted from the body.'[50] By linking the capacity for avowal to the inquisitions of the confessional, Foucault is able to argue that 'the obligation to confess is now relayed through so many different points, is so deeply ingrained in us, that we no longer perceive it as the effect of a power which constrains us; on the contrary, it seems to us that truth, lodged in our most secret nature, "demands" only to surface'.[51]

There can be no doubt that the central intention of this form of genealogy, as it is developed in Foucault's work from <u>Madness and Civilization</u> to <u>The History of Sexuality</u>, is to dissolve the philosophical link - inherited by the Marxist tradition from German Idealism - between consciousness, self-reflection and freedom, and to deny that there remains any progressive political potential in the ideal of the autonomous subject. Moving beyond Horkheimer and Adorno's reluctant deciphering of the paradox of an autonomy which leads to its own abolition, Foucault seeks to establish a direct, unequivocal relation between 'subjectification' and 'subjection'. During the 1970s he spells out the political implications of this argument in terms of

the relations between the operation of 'discipline' and the principle of 'sovereignty'. In Foucault's view, the use of the concept of sovereignty implies the assumption that power resides essentially in the capacity to enact and enforce legislation, the theory of sovereignty being concerned with the justification of possession of this capacity. He then points out that, in the transition from feudal or absolutist monarchy to the modern bourgeois state, the concept of sovereignty itself is not abandoned. 'It is this same theory of sovereignty,' Foucault writes, 're-activated through the doctrine of Roman Law, that we find in Rousseau and his contemporaries ... now it is concerned with the construction, in opposition to the administrative, authoritarian and absolutist monarchies, of an alternative model, that of parliamentary democracy.'[52] Yet this continued concern with the problem of sovereignty, Foucault argues, serves only to mask the real transformation in the operation of power which takes place with the emergence of the bourgeois state: it conceals the expansion and consolidation of a disciplinary power, of an ever-tightening coercive control of the body and of normalizing 'technologies of behaviour'.

It should not be assumed that Foucault is here simply pointing - in quasi-Marxist fashion - to the discrepancy between bourgeois principles of juridical equality and democratic sovereignty, and the continued material inequality and oppression of class rule, between 'the general juridical form that guaranteed a system of rights that were egalitarian in principle' and 'all those systems of micro-power that are essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetrical that we call disciplines'.[53] For such a critique functions by counterposing to the limitations of existing democratic sovereignty a more adequate conception of collective self-determination which would promote the elimination of these discrepancies, whereas Foucault's argument is that any theory of sovereignty or self-determination must be abandoned, since the 'free subject' upon which such theories rely is in fact intrinsically heteronomous, constituted by power. For Foucault the 'real, corporeal disciplines' do not constitute a limitation on, but rather the 'foundation of the formal, juridical liberties,[54] so that Discipline and Punish repeatedly returns to the contrast between the illusion of a social order grounded in the will of all, and the grim reality of a technology of power which constantly enforces conformity to norms and secures 'the submission of forces and bodies'. Furthermore in contrast to the Frankfurt School, for whom this contradiction between the

illusory autonomy of the subject and its real enslavement betrays 'a preponderance of the objectified in subjects which prevents them from becoming subjects',[55] for Foucault it suggests the desirability of a 'destruction of the subject as pseudo-sovereign'.[56] 'The man described for us,' he writes, 'whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself.'[57]

Foucault's genealogy of the modern soul evidently raises a series of political problems. As we have seen, during the 1970s Foucault's inclination is to play down the repressive and negative aspects of power and to present the operation of power as primarily positive and productive. This is a matter not simply of stressing - in Weberian fashion - the efficiency of modern forms of economic and administrative organization, but of underlining that fact that power constitutes the individuals on whom and through whom it subsequently operates. 'The individual,' Foucault writes, 'is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus, a primitive atom, a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals.'[58] Yet, if the concept of power is to have any critical political import, there must be some principle, force or entity which power 'crushes' or 'subdues', and whose release from this repression is considered desirable. A purely positive account of power would no longer be an account of power at all, but simply of the constitutive operation of social systems. At many points, Foucault appears to believe it possible to adopt such a neutral stance - indeed this may be described as his standard fall-back position - while at others he continues to use the concept of power in a critical sense. His work must therefore contain, even if only implicitly, an account of that which modern power, and hence the self-reflexive subject formed by such power, represses.

In Madness and Civilization this role is played by the notion of 'madness'. Despite its initiation of Foucault's enquiries into systems of confinement and social control, it can be argued that Madness and Civilization is as much concerned with the plight of everyday consciousness in the modern world as with the specific fate of those labelled insane. The real

object of Foucault's investigation, as he states in the 'Preface' to the original
French edition, is the moment of partition, the point at which the reciprocal,
participatory relation between reason and folly was severed, ultimately
leaving on one side a rational certainty of self closed off from any experience
of the numinous or the transcendent, and on the other such an experience
trivialized as illness, reduced to the mechanisms of a psychological determin-
ism.[59]   The fundamental theme of Madness and Civilization, therefore, is
'disenchantment' in the Weberian sense, and the elegiac ground-bass of the
book places Foucault implicitly but insistently in the camp of the critics of
Enlightenment. For Foucault it is not the freedom of the rational self which
is impaired by the irruption of madness, but rather madness which is stripped
of its 'powers and prestige' through the formation of rational awareness:
'Instead of submitting to a simple negative operation that loosened bonds and
delivered one's deepest nature from madness, it must be recognized that one
was in the grip of a positive operation that confined madness in a system of
rewards and punishments, and included it in the movement of moral conscious-
ness.'[60]   Hence the importance taken on in this work by writers such as
Nietzsche and Artaud, prepared to pursue the critique of modern conscious-
ness even at the cost of their own lapse into silence, who give madness 'for
the first time an expression, a droit de cité, and a hold on Western culture
which makes all contestations, and total contestation,
possible.'[61]

Foucault never entirely abandons his concern with the dissolution of
rational consciousness. Even during the late '60s, when Foucault was at his
most 'structuralist', it returns in a discussion of the counter-cultural use of
mind-bending drugs.[62] But during the 1970s, when he takes up again the
political - as opposed to the structuralist-methodological - critique of the
subject, he shifts the emphasis from the disenchanted nature of modern
consciousness, to the processes of corporeal regulation and control by means
of which a stable self is produced. In his discussion of the emergence of
disciplinary power in Discipline and Punish, Foucault suggests that new
techniques of a minute parcellization and ordering of time, space and gesture
which originated in a military context were progressive transferred to the
process of production. This transfer involves the elaboration of new types of
knowledge of human behaviour which mould the 'objects' to which they are
applied, so that the soul may be seen as 'the present correlative of a certain

technology of power over the body', indeed as the 'prison of the body'.[63] Yet, despite this verbal insistence, the notion of the body remains little more than a cipher in Foucault's work of this period. Although it is logically required in order for Foucault to restage - in more readily identifiable period costume - the drama of the production of interiority recounted by Nietzsche in On the Genealogy of Morals, Foucault's discussions of the body are curiously anodyne, devoid of any hint of Nietzsche's celebration of the 'strength, joy and terribleness' of the 'old instincts' which were cripped by the emergence of self-consciousness - a celebration on which the critique of bad conscience is dependent for its polemical charge. Without some evocation of the intrinsic forces of the body, however, without some theory which makes the corporeal more than a malleable tabula rasa, it is impossible to reckon the costs imposed by 'an infinitesimal power over the active body', or the sacrifice involved in the 'individualizing fragmentation of labour power'.[64]

Foucault's caution in this respect, his reluctance to participate in the wilder celebrations of unleashed libido engaged in by his contemporaries, should not be taken to imply his possession of a more adequate framework for the theorization of the relations between power, subjectivity and the control of the body. Foucault's lack of any theory of drives - undoubtedly conditioned by his hostility to psychoanalysis - is a lacuna in, not a virtue of, his work, since in his recorded political discussions of the 1970s he gravitates towards a position in which the very aim of political action appears to be the abrogation of reflection and the cancellation of self-consciousness. Since the autonomous subject is, for Foucault, already the product of subjection to power, the aim of political actions cannot be to enhance or expand this autonomy. Indeed, he goes so far as to suggest that 'political struggle in the class warfare' can function as a '"desubjectification" of the will-to-power', and that 'consciousness as the basis of subjectivity is a prerogative of the bourgeoisie'.[65] Even when expressed less extravagantly, Foucault's position implies at the very least an extreme spontaneism, exemplified by his argument, in a debate with Maoists, that 'popular justice' should take the form of on-the-spot retribution without the mediation of a court, or even of a revolutionary tribunal.[66] In many of these discussions, furthermore, two perspectives overlap in a never adequately clarified way. On the one hand Foucault continues to speak as if political struggle were a matter of a contest between classes and social groups with irreconcilable aims and interests. On the other, his theoretically

unelaborated notion of 'resistance', a corporeally-grounded opposition to the power which - at the most fundamental level - moulds human beings into self-identical subjects, implies a hostilityto any form of conscious formulation of aims or strategic calculation. This incoherence did not pass unnoticed, since in a discussion of Bentham's Panopticon one interlocutor pertinently enquired: 'Are resistances to power, then, essentially physical in character? What about the contents of struggles, the aspirations that manifest themselves in them?'[67] In his reply, Foucault took refuge in a series of evasions.

In a sense, Foucault's political embarrassment was resolved for him by the ebbing of the post-'68 wave of militancy. Discipline and Punish remains very much the testament of Foucault's gauchisme, its argument buoyed up by an indignation whose complement is a belief - however tenuous - in the positive value of rebellion. By the second half of the 1970s, however, the momentum of gauchisme was largely spent, and spontaneist doctrines of liberation began to appear increasingly ingenuous, if not positively dangerous. Foucault's work, after Discipline and Punish, reflects this shift in political consciousness. He begins to take his distance from the gauchiste celebration of madness, childhood, delinquency, sexuality, retreating once more into an Olympian objectivity: 'It is necessary to pass over to the other side - the other side from the "good side" - in order to try to free oneself from these mechanisms which make two sides appear, in order to dissolve the false unity of this other side whose part one has taken. That's where the real work begins, the work of the historian of the present.'[68] Foucault's engagement in this work, in The History of Sexuality, takes the form of an attack upon what he calls the 'repressive hypothesis', the assumption that the asceticism and work-discipline of bourgeois society demanded a repression of sexuality, culminating in the 19th century, from which we are still struggling to emerge. Foucault does not deny that there may have been a Victorian puritanism which enforced a deeper reticence and a stricter decorum in the discussion of sexual matters, and in certain areas of sexual life, but he suggests that such puritanism must be seen as 'a digression, a refinement, a tactical diversion' within what was in fact an incessant expansion in the 'great process of transforming sex into discourse'.[69] The fundamental argument of the book is that sexuality is not a natural reality, but the product of a dispositif, a system of discourses and practices which forms part of the intensifying surveillance and control of the

individual which is Foucault's central historical theme. From this standpoint
the notion of sex as a 'rebellious energy', as a 'specific and irreducible urge',
which had formed the basis of theories of sexual liberation from D.H.
Lawrence to Wilhelm Reich, can be seen as 'the most speculative, most ideal,
and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power'.[70]
The very notion of such a liberation is part of our system of servitude.

There is an unmistakable parallel between the shift in the position of
Foucault - the leading theorist of power - after Discipline and Punish, and the
evolution of the thought of Jean-François Lyotard - one of the two
'philosophers of desire' - during the first half of the 1970s. In Lyotard's work
the process of social modernization is viewed entirely in terms of the
expansion of the market economy, to the extent that he is obliged to present
even such obviously interventionist remedying of the functional inadequacies
of the market as universal compulsory education - although utterly implausibly
- as a form of capitalist enterprise.[71] Initially, Lyotard portrays
commodification as an ambivalent, double-edged process. Because it
continuously overthrows and desacralizes tradition, the expansion of the
commodity form has a liberating, 'revolutionary' effect, which for Lyotard is
most tangible in the ceaseless experimentation of modernist art. Yet the
capitalist labour process also abstracts from the living individual, absorbing
libidinal energy into the indifferent circuits of commodity exchange. If
Lyotard's historical account were less lopsided, if he possessed a theory of
power as well as a theory of desire, he would be able to explain what is
oppressive about this process, what is pathological in this abstraction from
the sensuous self. Without such a theory, he is ultimately obliged to abandon
the supposition that this abstraction is enforced at all. In an essay on the
painter Jacques Monory, Lyotard begins to argue that culture, and in
particular the postponement of satisfaction demanded by the labour process,
functions as an intensification - rather than demanding the renunciation - of
pleasure.[72] By the time of Economie Libidinale (1974) there is no longer any
conflict between the discursive and the figural sign and tensor,
exchange-value and use-value, since the sign - whether word or commodity -
is portrayed as always already invested with libido. Thus, just as Foucault
concludes that liberation is a form of servitude, since our apparently 'natural'
sexuality is in fact a product of power, so Lyotard discovers that servitude is

a form of liberation, since even the anonymity and indifference of the commodity form can function as a conductor of libidinal 'intensity'.

If Lyotard places an exclusive emphasis on the revolutionizing effects of the 'norm-free sociality' of the market in his account of capitalist modernity, then Foucault's work espouses an equally one-sided view, in its unrelenting stress on the expansion of rationalized systems of administration and social control. Foucault has no difficulty, therefore, in describing the functioning of modern societies as determined by systems of power, but he does have difficulty in defining what this power operates against, since - unlike the désirants - he has no positive theory of the libidinal body. The result of this simplification, however, is that power, like the desire of the désirants, having nothing determinate to which it could be opposed, loses all explanatory content and becomes a ubiquitous, metaphysical principle. For only if we can produce a counterfactual, specifying how a situation would change if an operation of power were cancelled or a repressed desire made conscious, can these concepts be empirically applied. In the chapter on 'Method' in The History of Sexuality, Foucault excludes the possibility of such a counterfactual since he speaks of an 'omnipresence of power: not because it would have the privilege of gathering everything under its invincible unity, but because it is produced at every moment, at every point, or rather in every relation between points. Power is everywhere; not because it englobes everything, but because it comes from everywhere. And "power", in so far as it is repetitive, inert, self-reproducing, is merely the general effect which is outlined on the basis of all these mobilities, the concatenation which is based on each of them and which seeks in turn to fix them."[73] This image of an originary, all-pervading force which reacts back on itself and regiments itself could apply equally well to the desire of the désirants as to Foucault's 'power'. Just as desire turns back on itself from above, so power filters up from below: the adoption of a monism of one 'dimension of force which escapes the logic of the signifier' dissolves the link between power and oppression and desire and liberation, and therefore the political content of the concepts themselves.

However, just as Lyotard, around the time of Economie Libidinale, cannot entirely relinquish the idea that there might be privileged aesthetic and political sites of intensity, and continues to advocate an assault upon the

self-identity of the subject as a means of liberating the disorder of the drives, so Foucault cannot rest content with his critique of naturalism, his attempt to transcend the notion that there are 'two sides'. The History of Sexuality is concerned, as we have seen, to debunk the notion of sexuality as 'a stubborn drive, by nature alien and of necessity disobedient to power, which exhausts itself trying to subdue it and often fails to control it entirely.'[74] Foucault suggests, on the contrary, that 'sex' - as the core of sexuality - must be viewed as the product of an apparatus or dispositif, as the illusory vanishing point of a system of discourses and practices, thereby apparently overcoming the naturalism which he believes to have vitiated his earlier works. In fact, this achievement is only apparent. Foucault mocks the notion of sex as 'an unbearable, too hazardous truth',[75] not primarily because of its naturalism, but because of the role which he believes sexuality to play in determining the concrete identity of modern subjects. Yet in order for his account of such identity as coercive to succeed, Foucault cannot avoid invoking his own 'unbearable, too hazardous truth' which sexuality itself occludes: the 'repressive hypothesis', therefore, is not abolished, but simply displaced. This is made clear by Foucault's persistent though unfocussed references, throughout The History of Sexuality, to 'the body and its pleasures' and to an ars erotica which would be fundamentally opposed to occidental rationality and its scientia sexualis, an art in which 'pleasure is not considered in relation to an absolute law of the permitted and the forbidden, nor by reference to a criterion of utility, but first and foremost in relation to itself.'[76] Foucault is here clearly gesturing towards that experience of intensity, hostile both to the calculations of purposive rationality and to moral deliberation, which Lyotard seeks to evoke in Economie Libidinale, and Deleuze and Guattari in Anti-Oedipus. As is the case with Lyotard's account of the 'labyrinthine libidinal band', or Deleuze and Guattari's theory of 'desiring machines', Foucault's argument depends upon an implicit rejection of the Lacanian view that the 'fragmented body' is no more than a retrospective mirage, a phantasy which expresses the fear of losing an identity already acquired. For Foucault, as for the désirants, self-identity is only formed through the coercive unification of the fragmented body. It is the 'deployment of sexuality', Foucault maintains, which generates the illusion that there exists 'something other than bodies, organs, somatic localisation functions, anatomo-physiological systems, sensations and pleasures'.[77] Thus the theoretical outcome of The History of Sexuality is not a refutation of

naturalism, or the dissipation of the illusion of liberation. It is rather a restatement of the fundamental post-structuralist critique of the prison of self-identity and of the concomitant repression of the corporeal other.

This interpretation is confirmed by Foucault's 'Introduction' to the memoirs of Herculine Barbin, which appeared two years after The History of Sexuality. Here Foucault evokes the 'happy limbo of non-identity' in which his hermaphrodite hero-heroine dwelled before the brutal, classificatory intervention of the medical authorities, and suggests that modern Western societies have 'obstinately brought into play this question of a "true sex" in an order of things where one might have imagined that all that counted was the reality of the body and the intensity of its pleasures.'[78] Yet because Foucault is also sensitive to the difficulties of appealing to any supposedly natural force as the basis of resistance to power, even the covert instatement of 'the reality of the body and the intensity of its pleasures' as the 'repressed' of the dispositif of sexuality cannot be allowed to pass entirely unqualified. There are passages of The History of Sexuality which appear to repeat the pattern of the philosophies of desire, since the 'pleasure' - which elsewhere Foucault opposes to sex and sexuality - is portrayed as turning back on itself in the form of the dispositif of sexuality. The operations of power are themselves eroticized, so that the opposition which Foucault requires in order for his account to function as a theory of power at all, is once more dissolved: 'The power which thus took charge of sexuality set about contacting bodies, caressing them with its eyes, intensifying areas, electrifying surfaces, dramatizing troubled moments. It wrapped the sexual body in its embrace ... Pleasure spread to the power that harried it; power anchored the pleasure it uncovered.'[79] Thus the 'perpetual spirals of power and pleasure' which Foucault detects are matched by the theoretical spirals of his own work, torn - as it is - between the political necessity of some form of naturalism, of an appeal to a 'general economy of pleasure not based on sexual norms',[80] and an awareness that even the apparatus of sexuality must be grounded in a 'positive economy of the body and of pleasure'.[81]

CHAPTER FOUR

SECTION TWO

MICHEL FOUCAULT: POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

As is the case with the general theory of power, it is in Foucault's work of
the 1970s that the relation between forms of power and forms of knowledge,
the functioning of what he terms 'regimes of truth', is most explicitly
proposed as an object of enquiry. But again, as with the general theory of
power, the apparent level of abstraction of Foucault's discussions of what is
frequently fused together as a single entity, 'power-knowledge', belies the
extent to which his work is concerned with the status of scientific discourse,
and in particular the administrative role of the human sciences, in modern
industrial societies. In this regard, also, comparison with the Weber-Frankfurt
School tradition can prove illuminating. Already, in Economy and Society,
Weber had noted that 'Bureaucratic administration means fundamentally the
exercise of control on the basis of knowledge. This is the feature which
makes it specifically rational.'[1] Weber's epistemology, however, does not
allow for an intrinsic relation between knowledge and power. It is only in the
work of the Frankfurt School that the connection between scientific
knowledge and the capacity for technical intervention and control, first over
nature, then over society, and lastly even over inner nature, becomes a
central philosophical theme. Indeed, the first generation of Critical Theorists
is often tempted by the view that, to employ a phrase of Marcuse's, the
'political content of technical reason' is - intrinsically - domination. This is a
theme which came very much alive during the student protests of the late
1960s. One of the major detonators of the French student uprising - as
Foucault himself has noted[2] - was the transformation of the university from a
site for the transmission of liberal culture to a self-perpetuating élite to a
'mass-university' producing the scientists and social engineers required by an
advanced capitalist society. The rebellion was directed not only against the
antiquated and hierarchical structure and teaching practices of the university,
but also against the content of what was taught: there was a pervasive
awareness amongst the protesters that, as students of psychology, sociology,
political science, they were being trained for menial tasks of information-

gathering and social control. In a pamphlet called 'Why sociologists?' a number of student militants, including Daniel Cohn-Bendit, argued that 'The practice of organising capitalism creates a mass of contradictions; and for each particular case a sociologist is put to work. One studies juvenile delinquency, another racism, a third slums. Each seeks an explanation of his partial problem and elaborates a "theory" proposing solutions to the limited conflict he is studying. Thus, while serving as a "watchdog" our sociologist will at the same time make his contribution to the mosaic of sociological "theories".'[3]

It seems unlikely that these arguments were influenced by structuralism in its positivist phase, or by the work of Foucault who, during the mid '60s, adopted an apolitical and even technocratic stance; the Frankfurt School, via the thought of Marcuse, plus the native influence of Socialisme ou Barbarie and of the veteran Marxist Henry Lefebvre - then teaching at Nanterre - probably played a greater role in their elaboration. Yet Foucault could claim, in retrospect, and not without justification, that there existed a considerable overlap between the concern of his earlier work with the politics of psychiatry and medicine and the themes of May '68, and that the Evènements gave a new stimulus to his own investigations. Yet despite the fact that both the Frankfurt School and Foucault have addressed themselves to the same socio-historical developments, the gulf between their theoretical approaches remains immense. Horkheimer and Adorno envisage a genuine dialectic of Enlightenment: the ability to co-ordinate means and ends with a view to the maximum efficiency of action does indeed characterise one type of reason, and the development of this ability is rooted in the ineluctable demands of self-preservation. The immense increase in human power both over nature and over other human beings which takes place under capitalism - and the correlative decline of belief in an intrinsically meaningful world order - must therefore be attributed to a cognitive process which - although disastrously one-sided - cannot be considered as reversible or contingent. 'The transition from objective to subjective reason was not accident,' Horkheimer notes, 'and the process of development of ideas cannot arbitrarily at any given moment be reversed.'[4] There is an element in Foucault's work of the 1970s, as we have seen, which stresses the contrast between the haphazard and costly nature of feudal power, its extravagance and excess, and the 'productivity' and systematicity of disciplinary power, 'the gentle efficacy of total

surveillance'.[5] <u>Discipline and Punish</u> draws an explicit parallel between the emergence of technologies of power and other contemporary technical innovations, and argues for the interdependence of 'the economic take-off of the West' and 'a political take-off in relation to the traditional, ritual, costly, violent forms of power, which soon fell into disuse and were superseded by a subtle, calculated technology of subjection'.[6] Yet Foucault is unwilling to attribute this economic and administrative take-off to an advance in rationality: the notion of the progress of reason has always been one of the prime targets of Foucault's historiography of the sciences. Yet, by taking the view that rationality and cognitive validity are always relative to a historically specific system of discourses and practices, Foucault deprives himself of the most obvious means of accounting for the connection between power and knowledge: that modern scientific knowledge enhances the effectiveness of action, and in so doing more adequately fulfills one of the aims with which knowledge has always been elaborated. In <u>Discipline and Punish</u> Foucault explicitly distances himself from this view, suggesting that if 'power produces knowledge' this is 'not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful'.[7] The problem is raised, therefore, of what relation - other than instrumental - Foucault perceives between knowledge and power.

Foucault's most straightforward answer to this question is limited to the human sciences, and presents power as a precondition of knowledge, rather than knowledge as a precondition of power. In <u>Madness and Civilization</u> Foucault is concerned with a transformation of the 'fundamental structures of experience' through which human beings become able to think of themselves as the subjects of a purely procedural rationality of enquiry, and to consider other 'irrational' human beings as the possible objects of such an enquiry. This transformation involves a severing of the reciprocal, participatory relation between reason and unreason which remained in force, so Foucault believes, up to the time of the Renaissance, and the installation of self-certainty as the foundation of all knowledge, a process which is summarised in Foucault's well-known analysis of a passage from Descartes' first <u>Meditation</u>.[8] Already in <u>Madness and Civilization</u>, the effect of Nietzsche's allegorical materialism upon Foucault is evident, however, since the book argues that the separating-out of the subject and object of the science of madness is not the result merely of a transformation of consciousness, but requires institutional -

and even specifically architectural - preconditions. During the Classical Age, Foucault suggests, the subjective certainty of not being mad stood in a tense and criss-cross relation to a system of confinement which still tended not to discriminate between madness and other forms of disorder. It is only with the emergence of the asylum, where 'a system of social protection' could be 'interiorised in the forms of consciousness' and a recognition of the specificity of madness could be made manifest 'on the surface of institutions',[9] that the new science of psychiatry became possible. If 'the knowledge of madness presupposes, in the one who possesses it, the ability to escape from its grasp, to disengage oneself from its perils and prestige', then 'this disengagement was in fact only made possible by a whole architecture of protection, designed and constructed successively by Colombier, Tenon, Cabanis, Bellart ...'.[10] To make human beings available as potential objects of science, Foucault suggests, presupposes a system of procedures for their confinement and control.

In The Birth of the Clinic a similar stress is laid upon the institutional, and political, preconditions for the elaboration of a form of knowledge, although in this case the science in question is one of the body rather than of the mind. Foucault argues that it was on the basis of what he terms - after describing the abstract space of the classificatory table, and the concrete space of the perceived body - the 'tertiary spatialisation' of disease ('all the gestures by which, in a given society, disease is circumscribed, medically invested, isolated, divided up into closed, privileged regions, or distributed throughout cure centres, arranged in the most favourable way'[11]) that 'the whole of medical experience was overturned and defined for its most concrete perceptions new dimensions and a new foundation'.[12] With the construction of the new teaching hospitals, the outcome of the Revolutionary debates on medical reform, an institutional space was created in which disease could be exposed to the systematic, unimpeded gaze of the physician. A new knowledge of illness was made possible, no longer clouded by the opaque lore of feudal corporatism, but grounded in the pellucid evidence of observation: 'In the hospital disease meets, as it were, the forced residence of its truth.'[13] The internal link between constraint and the veridical sealed by this final phrase may be said to form one of the fundamental themes of Foucault's work as a whole. Even in the later 1960s, when Foucault's concern is primarily with immanent rules of formation of scientific discourse, he does not entirely

neglect the institutional preconditions of knowledge, although not yet - and no longer - prepared to suggest that these preconditions form a system of power. Thus The Archaeology of Knowledge refers to objects of knowledge as only emerging 'under the positive conditions of a complex bundle of relations. These relations are established between institutions, economic and social processes, forms of behaviour, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of characterisation.'[14]

It is in Discipline and Punish that the delineations of the connection between procedures of confinement and control and the emergence of the human sciences to be found in Foucault's earlier works achieve their definitive expression. It is true that, in the opening chapter of the book, Foucault argues that there exists a relation of mutual dependence and reinforcement between power and knowledge, that 'power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations'.[15] Yet even this formulation appears to attribute a certain ontological priority to power, and this priority is confirmed by Foucault's central image of the Panopticon, where an architectural mechanism which renders human beings available to continuous observation forms the precondition for the elaboration of knowledge. Many other statements by Foucault, both in Discipline and Punish and in essays and interviews from around the same period, suggest that the relation between power and knowledge which he has in mind concerns the repressive institutions which make the formation of certain kinds of knowledge possible: 'If it has been possible to constitute a knowledge of the body, this has been by way of an ensemble of military and educational disciplines. It was on the basis of power over the body that a physiological, organic knowledge of it became possible';[16] 'The archaeology of the human sciences has to be established through studying the mechanisms of power which have invested human bodies, acts and forms of behaviour. And this investigation enables us to rediscover one of the conditions of the emergence of the human sciences: the great 19th-century effort in discipline and normalisation';[17] 'that moment when the sciences of man become possible is the moment when a new technology of power and a new political anatomy of the body were implemented'.[18]

Despite its frequency in Foucault's writings of the 1970s, this argument based on the institutional preconditions of forms of knowledge does not establish the intimacy of relation between power and knowledge which Foucault requires. Foucault's fundamental contention is that knowledge and power cannot - even analytically - be separated, that 'it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.'[19] It is perfectly possible, however, to take account of social and institutional preconditions of knowledge without denying that knowledge also possesses its own immanent, rational historicity, as is made clear by the work of Foucault's former teacher, philosopher and historian of science Georges Canguilhem. In his essay on 'L'Objet de l'Histoire des Sciences', Canguilhem points out that 'biometry and psychometry can only be constituted by Quêtelet, Galton, Catell and Binet when non-scientific practices have had the effect of providing to observation a homogeneous subject-matter capable of mathematical treatment. The stature of human beings, Quêtelet's object of study, presupposes the institution of national armies and of conscription, and an interest in criteria of reform. Intellectual aptitudes, Binet's object of study, presupposes the institution of obligatory primary education, and an interest in criteria of backwardness.'[20] For Canguilhem, however, the question of scientific truth cannot be reduced to the question of the preconditions of, and interests served by, scientific knowledge: the history of science is a history of concepts and their transformations, of questions and answers, and not simply of powers and social practices.[21] One result of this view is that, though a form of knowledge may presuppose a coercive relation between subject and object, this knowledge itself is not intrinsically coercive, but may be appropriated for a critical purpose. Information on the relative stature of members of different social classes - to continue Canguilhem's example - may become part of a critique of social inequalities. The fact that Foucault implicitly denies such a possibility, arguing that struggles do not take place between power and resistance over the use of knowledge, but traverse 'power-knowledge' itself, suggests that his reasons for portraying an intrinsic relation between power and knowledge lie deeper than any consideration of institutional and social preconditions. For Foucault, the mere fact of becoming an object of knowledge represents a kind of enslavement. Knowledge constitutes, and thereby dominates, its object. But

in order to follow the ramifications of this argument in Foucault's work, we must first return to its origins in Nietzsche.

From the very beginning of his work Nietzsche is concerned to combat conceptions of knowledge as the disinterested reproduction of an objective reality, believing that such conceptions impose an unacceptable limitation upon the range of human thought and experience. The argument is already central to The Birth of Tragedy, where Nietzsche draws an unfavourable contrast between Greek tragedy at the height of its powers, a form of artistic creation which – through its blending of Dionysiac insight and Apollonian order – was able to confront the chaos and horror of existence, and yet draw an affirmative conclusion from this confrontation, and the Socratic dialectic – and its scientific offspring – with its naïvely optimistic belief that reality can be exhaustively grasped in concepts. The Birth of Tragedy is directed against 'the illusion that thought, guided by the thread of causation, might plumb the furthest abysses of being, and even correct it.'[22] Throughout his work Nietzsche will stress the aversion of the human intellect to chaos, its fear of unmediated intuition, and its resultant attempts to simplify the world by reducing diversity to identity. There is, however, an equally strong pragmatic tendency in Nietzsche, which suggests that this process of ordering and simplification takes place not simply because of an 'existential' need for security, but in the interests of sheer survival: 'In order for a particular species to maintain itself and increase its power, its conception of reality must comprehend enough of the calculable and constant for it to base a scheme of behaviour on it. The utility of preservation – not some abstract-theoretical need not to be deceived – stands as the motive behind the development of the organs of knowledge. ...'[23] It is on such considerations that Nietzsche bases his many paradoxical pronouncements on the nature of knowledge and truth: that truth is 'a kind of error without which a certain species could not live'; that knowledge is merely 'a measuring of earlier and later errors by one another".[24]

Many commentators have attempted to moderate the perplexing and scandalous effect of these formulations by suggesting that Nietzsche has two kinds of truth in mind. His attack is directed against 'correspondence' theories of truth, the failure to consider the extent to which our language and our

concepts shape our world, but does not exclude a deeper kind of insight into the nature of reality which would merit the title 'truth'.[25] Such elucidations are not without textual support, but they also have a tendency to overlook the extent to which Nietzsche's paradoxical formulations betray a genuine dilemma in his thought. For there is a strong positivist element in Nietzsche's outlook, which sees modern science as having decisively undermined the validity of any specifically philosophical enquiry, or the possibility of any non-scientific path to truth. One important consequence of this viewpoint is a denial that there could be a philosophical assessment of the adequacy of knowledge, since this would presuppose access to a reality beyond knowledge. 'The intellect cannot criticise itself,' Nietzsche writes in The Will to Power, simply because it cannot be compared with other species of intellect and because its capacity to know would be revealed only in the presence of "true reality".... This presupposes that, distinct from every perspective kind of outlook or sensual spiritual appropriation, something exists, an "in-itself". - But the psychological derivation of the belief in things forbids us to speak of "things-in-themselves".'[26] Yet, despite his own strictures, from The Birth of Tragedy onward, where he contrasts the shallow optimism of science to an alternative Dionysiac insight into the nature of things, Nietzsche will repeatedly counterpose a vision of ultimate reality to accepted truths. Indeed, in The Birth of Tragedy, he employs the Kantian concept of a noumenal world to illustrate precisely this opposition: 'The contrast of this authentic nature-truth and the lies of culture which present themselves as the sole reality is similar to that between the eternal core of things, the thing-in-itself and the entire world of appearances.'[27] Nietzsche's critique of philosophy, therefore, of the 'knowledge of knowledge' drives him towards a perspectivism which equates what is real with what is given in a form of knowledge, while his critique of all perspectives which do not see through their own 'illusory' nature pushes him towards a reinstatement of the distinction between appearance and reality.

This oscillation continues throughout Nietzsche's thought, even into the final phase, where he begins to move towards a more systematic metaphysics. Aware of the circle involved in proposing a naturalistic, biological or psychological, theory of the drives which lie behind the formation of human knowledge, Nietzsche transforms his pragmatic theory into a theory of evaluations, a 'perspective theory of affects', which are seen as ramifications of a

single underlying principle, the will to power. According to this view, knowledge no longer primarily functions as a means of survival; the process of ordering characteristic of knowledge is an expression of a more fundamental principle: 'To impose upon becoming the character of being', Nietzsche remarks, 'that is the supreme will to power.'[28] Even this formulation, however, betrays the dilemma at the heart of Nietzsche's thought. On the one hand Nietzsche, by means of his perspectivism, wishes to attack the denigration of the world of the senses by priests and philosophers, a denigration which relies on the positing of a 'true' world of static purity beyond the realm of flux and change. 'The "real world",' Nietzsche writes, 'however one has hitherto conceived it - it has always been the apparent world once again.'[29] Yet, if there are indeed nothing but appearances determined by perspectives, then the viewpoint of the 'backworldsmen' which posits a real world behind appearances would be no less valid than any other perspective. Hence Nietzsche is obliged to develop his own conception of ultimate reality in order to possess a means of judging the adequacy of perspectives. It is the doctrine of the 'eternal return of the same' which fulfills this task in Nietzsche's later thought. 'The antithesis of this phenomenal world,' Nietzsche argues, 'is not "the true world", but the formless unformulable world of the chaos of sensations - another kind of phenomenal world, a kind "unknowable" for us.'[30] Nietzsche would not admit, of course, that the eternal return is simply another version of the true world, but this is because he assumes that the 'true world' must necessarily possess the characteristics of ideality and immutability, as is made clear by his evocation of the 'character of the world in a state of becoming as "false", as "self-contradictory".'[31] Nietzsche's confession of its unknowability, bizarrely clashing with his stress on its phenomenality, reveals that the world of incessant flux and becoming, upon which the will to power imposes the identity of being, is no less a true world beyond appearances than any other. For it is only in the light of this definitive vision of the world as 'a monster of energy, without beginning, without end',[32] that Nietzsche is able to criticize the illusions of perspectives which posit a stable being, despite the fact that the possibility of such a vision has already contradicted his argument that perspectives are constitutive of reality. Thus, not only does Nietzsche's work oscillate between the need for a critical reflection of knowledge and a disbelief in the possibility of such reflection: it culminates in two opposed and irreconcileable metaphysical

principles – the perspectivism of the will to power, and the true world of the eternal return – which canonize this very oscillation.

Despite the fact that all the major thinkers of post-structuralism – with the significant exception of Lacan – owe a considerable intellectual debt to Nietzsche, it is arguable that Foucault's relation to his 19th-century mentor is more intimate than that of any of his contemporaries. For, throughout the 1960s and '70s, Foucault's thought, rather than simply taking up Nietzschean themes or adopting a Nietzschean stance, can be seen as repeatedly re-enacting the tensions, dilemmas and inconsistencies of Nietzsche's work. As with Nietzsche, there is a strong positivist strand in Foucault's thought, inherited – via structuralism – from Comte and Durkheim. Because of this heritage, Foucault has persistently shied away from the disreputably philosophical enterprise of developing a normative conception of knowledge, and has adopted the view that cognitive validity is always relative to a specific system of discourses and practices, and that therefore the history of knowledge can be nothing other than the history of what has been taken for knowledge in any particular epoch. This assumption of the impossibility of distinguishing between the greater or lesser rationality or validity of different epistemic frameworks is accompanied by the view that the constitution of such frameworks must in all cases be susceptible to the same type of explana-tion. In Nietzsche's case, one major type of explanation employed tends towards naturalism and pragmatism, while another views the will-to-truth as the result of the asceticism of a moral imperative which eventually sees through itself as incapable of any ultimate justification. By contrast, Foucault eschews naturalism or psychologism. In his early work, the emergence of forms of scientific knowledge is explained in historical and political terms; in his writings of the later 1960s this dimension is screened out in favour of an immanent systematicity of discursive formations; while in the 1970s Foucault's adopts an explanation in terms of strategies of power. Like the modes of experience or discursive formations which Foucault had earlier discussed, the 'regimes of truth' of the 1970s are not susceptible – as their name implies – to any external assessment of their truth or falsity. '"Truth",' Foucault suggests, 'is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements.'[33]

From the very beginning, however, the positivism of Foucault's work - just like that of Nietzsche - has vied with an equally strong conviction that forms of knowledge do not simply constitute, but can also obscure and obliterate reality. In Foucault's first book, Maladie Mentale et Psychologie, there is an explicit reflection on the relative adequacy of different cognitive frameworks: Foucault argues that forms of psychiatry which model their conception of mental illness on that of physical illness generate a 'préjugé d'essence', the assumption that there is some pathogenic agency which lies behind the multiplicity of symptoms and which defines the fundamental nature of the disorder.[34] In this early work, published in 1955, Foucault suggests that Freudian psychoanalysis and - to a greater extent - existential psycho-analysis may offer a more adequate account of the nature of mental disorder. By the time of Madness and Civilization, however, despite a continued, qualified preference for Freud over conventional psychiatry, the whole of Foucault's argument has radically shifted. As the original Preface unequivoc-ally suggests ('the tragic structure on the basis of which the history of the Western world takes place is nothing other than the refusal, the forgetfulness, the lapse into silence of tragedy'[35]), the intellectual groundplan of Madness and Civilization is provided by Nietzsche's The Birth of Tragedy; Foucault's subject is the loss of a sense of horror and the mystery of existence, its obliteration by the neutrality of the concept and the naïve optimism of science. Up until the time of Shakespeare and Cervantes, Foucault suggests, reason and unreason were relatively permeable to each other: reason remained conscious of its precariousness and dependency, while folly continued to harbour the possibility of a sagacity beyond the wisdom of the wise. Even during the Classical Age the very rigidity and ferocity with which the separa-tion between sanity and madness was maintained suggests a continued sense of the awesome powers of unreason, which was perceived as 'a subterranean danger', as 'the threatening space of an absolute freedom'.[36] From this historical standpoint, the coercion implicit in the new science of psychiatry no longer consists primarily in the fact that human beings must be confined and exposed to surveillance in order for psychiatric knowledge to be produced. Rather it consists in the fact that any modern scientific account of madness robs the phenomenon of its grandeur and tragic force, of its capacity to contest suddenly and without recourse everything which is most essential in man and truest in truth.[37]

The elevation of madness to this status of contestant of truth itself, however, now raises for Foucault the difficulties and dilemmas which we have already encountered in Nietzsche. If there is indeed 'an experience of unreason which it has been the function of psychology in the modern world to mask',[38] then Foucault cannot be simply a perspectivist, for whom each viewpoint generates its own truth, and cannot therefore be assessed by any external standard. Indeed, beneath the ostensible claim of Madness and Civilization that the history of madness consists simply in a sequence of 'fundamental structures of experience', none of which is closer to the ultimate truth about madness than any other, lies the story of an increasing obliteration of the experience of unreason, a progressive stripping away of its significance. In his chapter on 'Doctors and Patients', for example, Foucault describes, and implicitly laments, 'the impoverishment of the meanings which had richly sustained the therapeutic methods throughout the entire classical period'.[39] During the Classical Age the therapeutic use of movement had involved horse-riding, sea-voyages, walks in the country, it sought to restore the patient, locked-up in the non-being of his or her own subjectivity, to 'the plenitude of the exterior world, the solid truthof being'.[40] There are overtones here, which Foucault clearly finds attractive, of re-integration with an objective cosmic order. After the advent of the new psychiatry, however, with its 'rotatory machines' which subjected patients to violent artificial motion, 'movement no longer aimed at restoring the invalid to the truth of the external world, but only at producing a series of internal effects, purely mechanical and purely psychological. It was no longer the presence of the truth which determined the cure, but a functional norm'.[41] Although he is here describing what Horkheimer refers to as the transition from objective to subjective reason, Foucault does not believe that the objectification of human beings, and the attendant withering of the symbolic content of therapy, was the inevitable result of cognitive progress, but rather the reverse. There are many passages in Madness and Civilization where modern psychiatry is denounced unequivocally as ideology. 'The objectivity of psychiatry', Foucault affirms, is 'from the beginning a reification of a magical kind'; 'What we call psychiatric practice is a certain moral tactic contemporary with the end of the eighteenth century, preserved in the rites of asylum life, and overlaid with the myths of positivism.'[42]

To denounce positivist psychiatry as a myth, however, implies a contrast between this myth and the reality which it conceals. And it is here that Foucault's difficulties begin, since such a contrast implies the possibility of access to madness as it is in itself, or at least of a more adequate standpoint, even if located in the past, which would clash with Foucault's fundamental commitment to a Nietzschean relativism. Foucault cannot go so far as to claim that there _is_ no madness 'in itself', for then the force of his denunciation would be lost, but - at the same time - he must assert that no perspective can be anything more than _one_ perspective, and that any such perspective will be an imposition of reason upon unreason, that 'the freedom of madness can only be understood from the heights of the fortress which holds it prisoner',[43] just as, for Nietzsche, the world of becoming can only be grasped in the clumsy categories of being. However, to be obliged to criticize a form of knowledge - modern psychiatry - from the standpoint of a reality which cannot itself be known is clearly an uncomfortable position to be forced into, too close to the kind of metaphysics which Foucault's relativism and historical objectivism are an attempt to escape. It is in order to avoid this dilemma that Foucault suggests: 'To write the history of madness therefore means: to carry out a structural study of the historical ensemble - notions, institutions, police and juridical measures, scientific concepts - which hold captive a madness whose wild state can never be restored in itself'.[44] Foucault, as if worried by this stipulation, immediately goes on to suggest that the aim of such a 'structural study' would be 'to return towards the decision which links and separates at the same time reason and madness', but he also admits that the 'perpetual exchange, the obscure common root' of the two can never be attained,[45] so that the very notion of a 'wild state' of madness beings to appear chimerical. Hence, under the impact of structuralism in the early 1960s, Foucault was led increasingly to pursue the concrete and apparently objective type of investigation presaged by his notion of an historical ensemble, and to dismiss the pursuit of a reality beyond the objects of knowledge constructed by specific historical ensembles - and the critical standpoint supported by this pursuit - as fruitless. For the 'structuralist' Foucault the notion of an object which is not constructed by the 'discursive formation' in which it is identified and described becomes practically and theoretically redundant.

It is important to bear in mind that the doctrine that there are no naturally constituted objects of knowledge and no experience which is not entirely pre-formed by discourse, and that therefore the epistemological or political appeal to a reality or principle outside discourse cannot be upheld, is not simply a theoretical ploy on Foucault's part. This viewpoint follows inevitably from Foucault's conviction that it is impossible to 'climb outside' of discourse in order to compare discursive representations with something other than themselves; for Foucault, as for Nietzsche, knowledge can be said to consist in 'a measuring of earlier and later errors by one another'.[46] The earnestness with which Foucault adopts this position during the 1960s can be gauged by the entire consistent position which he takes up on questions of technocracy and politics. Having rejected the notion of the human subject as central to the theory of knowledge, and therefore unable - from this positivist-structuralist position - to appeal to the capacity of the human subject to reflect critically on its own cognitive activity, Foucault has no recourse but to adopt positions which are an impeccable embodiment of that technocratic functionalism which Marxist critics had accused structuralism of reflecting. Thus, when Foucault is queried, in an interview given after the publication of The Order of Things, about the political aims of his critique of humanism (in the name of who or what is the concept of Man criticised, if not of a more adequate conception of Man?), he replies: 'I believe it is possible to define an optional social functioning, to be obtained by means of a certain relation between demographic increase, consumer goods, individual freedom, possibilities of happiness given to each person without ever making use of the idea of man: an optimal functioning can be defined in an internal manner, without it being possible to say 'for whom it is better that things should be thus'.[47] In another interview from around the same period Foucault expresses a similar position: 'It is humanism which is abstract! All these heartfelt cries, all these claims for the human person and for existence are abstract: that is to say cut off from the scientific and technical world which is our real world.'[48] Foucault's positivism, combined with the abandonment of his attempts to evoke a reality beyond the reach of positive knowledge, leads him to endorse the nightmare of administration against which his earlier thought had rebelled.

Even during the heyday of structuralism, however, Foucault can never bring himself - despite the inconsistency - entirely to abandon the notion of a

reality which is not constituted by the *episteme* or discursive formation. The 'blank region of self-implication where nothing is said'[49] haunts the margins of the discourse of reason. In the 'Preface' to The Order of Things Foucault explicitly describes his intellectual itinerary as a move from the 'history of the Other - of that which, for a culture, is simultaneously interior and alien', to a 'history of the Same - of that which is, for a culture, both dispersed and related, thus to be distinguished by marks and gathered up into identities,'[50] and accordingly continues occasionally to evoke, although to no theoretical effect, 'the confused, indefinite, faceless, as if indifferent, backdrop of differences'[51] upon which the order of *episteme* is imposed. In The Archaeology of Knowledge, however, Foucault appears entirely to drop the notion that the identity of objects of knowledge is not only discursively constituted, but imposed upon a primal non-identity, to the extent of repudiating his own position in Madness and Civilization: 'We are not trying to reconstitute what madness itself might be, in the form in which it first presented itself to some primitive, fundamental, mute, scarcely articulated experience, and in the form in which it was later organised (translated, deformed, travestied, perhaps even repressed) by discourses, and the oblique, often twisted play of their operations'.[52] Yet, symptomatically, straight after this declaration, and in a work largely devoted to the critique of the notion of prediscursive experience, Foucault goes on to remark: 'Such a history of the referent is no doubt possible; and I have no wish to exclude at the outset any effort to uncover and free these 'prediscursive' experiences from the tyranny of the text'.[53] Foucault's dilemma is evident: his theoretical premises render unavoidable the assumption that modes of experience, systems of meaning and objects of knowledge are entirely determined by 'rules of formation' or - later - by operations of power. Yet, in order to function as a political critique of these rules or operations, Foucault's work must appeal to some form of experience, meaning or knowledge which is not so determined. The result - as in Nietzsche - is a perpetual oscillation. In an interview dating from 1969, for example, Foucault suggests that one of the fundamental distinctions between his own philosophical generation and its immediate predecessor consisted in the rejection of 'the Husserlian idea that there is meaning before anything else, which surrounds us and invests us even before we begin to open our eyes and to speak' in favour of an analysis of the 'formal conditions of appearance of meaning'.[54] Yet, within a few paragraphs, he is suggesting - as in his comparison of classical and modern

therapies - that it is the formation of scientific objects which is subject to formal conditions, and which blots out an original meaning: 'In order for madness and illness to cease to be immediate significations and to become objects of a rational knowledge a certain number of conditions were necessary, which I have tried to analyze. It was a question, so to speak, of the 'interruption' between meaning and the object of science, in sum of the formal conditions of appearance of an object in a context of meaning'.[55] When asked if this does not contradict his initial statement, Foucault simply affirms that he cannot be considered a structuralist, since he is concerned with 'the manner in which meaning disappeared, as if eclipsed, with the constitution of the object'.[56]

As this brief review of Foucault's itinerary in the 1960s makes clear, the oscillations characteristic of Nietzsche's view of knowledge are already well established in Foucault's work before the explicit introduction of a notion of 'knowledge-power'. Fundamentally, as both Foucault's work of the '60s and his later use of Nietzsche would lead one to expect, the domination implied by knowledge does not reside in its instrumental value, or in the coercive institutions which form the precondition for its elaboration, but rather simply in the fact that it imposes an order on disorder, reduces non-identity to identity. On closer inspection, it appears that Foucault has always laid the greatest stress on the classificatory function of knowledge. Already, in Madness and Civilization, he remarks that 'The science of mental disease, as it would develop in the asylum, would always be only of the order of observation and classification.'[57] And a similar point is made in Discipline and Punish, where Foucault stresses that the 'notions which have circulated between medicine and jurisprudence' - 'monsters', 'psychical anomalies', 'perverts', 'maladjusted' - are not primarily means of 'explaining an action', but are 'ways of defining an individual':[58] the danger of the human sciences is that their objects - human beings - are pinned down within an ever-more-tightly defined identity. Furthermore, like Nietzsche, Foucault suggests that this imposition of order is motivated, at the most fundamental level, by a fear of the chaotic and the unclassifiable. This motif appears perhaps most clearly at the beginning of the chapter on Panopticism in Discipline and Punish, where Foucault describes the plague regulations which he believes constitute a 'compact model of the disciplinary mechanism'. 'The plague as a form, at once real and imaginary, of

disorder,' Foucault writes, 'had as its medical and political correlative
discipline. Behind the disciplinary mechanisms can be read the haunting
memory of "contagions", of the plague, of rebellions, crimes, vagabondage,
desertions, people who appear and disappear, live and die in disorder.'[59]
Because of his commitment to relativism, Foucault does not wish - as
Nietzsche clearly does - to link the imposition of a conceptual order on
reality with increasing efficiency of control, since this would imply a certain
- even if only instrumental - adequacy or appropriateness of concepts. Hence
his only recourse is to propose the sheer imposition of order as the irreducible
motivation of modern power-knowledge, a proposal often accompanied by
fleeting evocations of a prior state of felicitous confusion. In an introduction
dating from 1980 Foucault writes that 'Biological theories of sexuality,
juridical conceptions of the individual, forms of administrative control in
modern nations, led little by little to rejecting the idea of a mixture of the
two sexes in a single body, and consequently limiting the free choice of
indeterminate individuals. Henceforth everybody was to have one and only one
sex.'[60]

The proximity of Foucault's account of power-knowledge to the
Nietzschean conception of knowledge as a form of the will to power is
revealed in a second important way during the 1970s. During the previous
decade Foucault - in so far as he possessed a theory of the social at all -
tended to portray the social as constituted by systems independent of human
consciousness and agency, but did not link these systems specifically with the
concept of power. In the 'Introduction' to The Archaeology of Knowledge, for
example, Foucault writes that 'the researches of psychoanalysis, of linguistics,
of ethnology, have decentred the subject in relation to the laws of his desire,
the forms of his language, the rules of his action, or the play of his mythical
or fabulous discourses.'[61] Here determination is not associated with coercion.
In the 1970s, however, it is the concept of power which takes over this
constitutive function. The shift to this concept has the advantage of
introducing a greater mobility into Foucault's conception of the social, of
dissolving any strict determinism, and of allowing him to reintroduce notions
of strategy and intentionality into historical analysis, although attached to
power itself rather than to individual subjects. 'Relations of power,' Foucault
writes in The History of Sexuality, 'are both intentional and non-subjective.
If, in fact, they are intelligible, it is not because they are the effect, in

terms of causality, of another instance which would explain them, but, because they are entirely traversed by calculation.'[62] Yet this use of the concept of power also has a major drawback. Because Foucault has argued for the intrinsic relation of knowledge and power, he is under a constant temptation to equate his socially constitutive power with Nietzsche's perspectival will to power, with a cognitive force which 'forms, simplifies, shapes, invents',[63] and this implicit equation produces the impression that forms of knowledge entirely constitute the social reality which they describe and analyze. On the model of the 'grandiose subjectivism' of Nietzsche's later work, power - often spoken of in the singular - becomes something like a constitutive subject in the Kantian or Husserlian sense, with the social as its constituted object.[64]

This is not, of course, a theory of society which Foucault formally develops or would consciously defend: there is no such theory in his work. Yet it is suggested by his work of the 1970s because there is no other constitutive principle which would provide the social domain with dynamic analytically separable from that of power. This inadequacy is repeatedly indicated in the commonest criticisms of Foucault's historiography, and of that of his followers. In a discussion of Discipline and Punish, for example, Jacques Léonard notes that Foucault 'exaggerates the rationalisation and normalisation of French society in the first half of the nineteenth century. He minimises, in several domains, the resistance of customs inherited from the past, he under-estimates the importance of disorder, of tolerance, of the jungle, in sum of common confusion.'[65] Similarly, in a perceptive critique of Foucault and Foucauldian historiography, Gianna Pomata has noted a 'fairly serious limitation' of works such as Donzelot's La Police des Familles: 'The tutelary "police" is here reconstructed and analysed through its "knowledge", that is to say, the texts of doctors and philanthropists; but the book lacks, by contrast, a reconstruction of the other "knowledges" which this police encountered and with it came into conflict, above all the knowledge of popular traditions. In this manner the book privileges the image of social processes and of relations of power which emerges from texts linked to the "police", in relation to other possible images, other points of view. It limits its viewpoint to the image which the "police" provides of its own self-realisation without taking account of other social processes with which it intersected.'[66] In reply Foucault could, of course, point to his concept of resistance. Yet, as we have seen,

Foucault cannot attribute to resistance determinate aims and intentions, or even portray it as capable of forming such intentions. It is as though the whole capacity for strategy and calculation has passed over to the side of power, as if power-knowledge had become the sole embodiment of that instrumental rationality which Foucault neglects in his accounts of the formation of the modern subject, while resistance can only confront this power as pure spontaneity, a spontaneity in which Foucault himself can scarcely believe.

This is the dilemma which we have already observed in examining The History of Sexuality. But, having traced the Nietzschean origins of Foucault's theory of knowledge-power, we can see that Foucault's political dilemma over naturalism is also an epistemological dilemma. For if objects of knowledge are always constituted within a specific form of power-knowledge, there cannot be 'other possible images', 'other points of view' - to employ Pomata's terms - on the same historical and social processes. Foucault's doctrine that it is only within a form of power-knowledge that statements can be candidates for truth or falsity has the paradoxical consequence that any critique of a form of power-knowledge as misrepresentation must already have accepted its fundamental assumptions: it is only within the dispositif of sexuality that arguments about the adequate representation of sexuality can take place. On the other hand, to argue that the concept of sexuality masks 'the reality of the body and the intensity of its pleasures' is to suggest that the concept of sexuality has an ideological as well as an epistemological function, but Foucault wishes to abandon the concept of ideology, since he believes it to imply an unjustifiable claim to possess a privileged access to truth on the part of the critic. Hence, as was already apparent in Madness and Civilization, Foucault's relativism clashes with his political commitments. To deny that political critique possesses an epistemological dimension is to be condemned either to a self-defeating acceptance of the 'truth' of the contested perspective, or to resort to an appeal - of whose vulnerability Foucault is well aware - to some 'prediscursive experience', or natural reality outside all perspectives.

Perhaps the most consistent response to these difficulties, a response which Foucault frequently adopts, is to retreat from any political commitment, and simply to conduct an historical enquiry into the 'correlative formation of domains, of objects, and of verifiable and falsifiable discourses related to them'.[67] For, to the extent that Foucault wishes to take up a political

position, he often finds himself obliged to dissolve the connection between power and knowledge, both by presenting power as supported by an illusory knowledge, and by describing a genuine knowledge which is on the side of resistance, rather than of power. Already, in Madness and Civilization, Foucault writes: 'It is thought that Tuke and Pinel opened the asylum to medical knowledge. They did not introduce science, but only a personality, whose powers borrowed from science only their disguise, or at most their justification.'[68] Similar remarks, indicating that a claim to scientific knowledge is in fact merely a pretext for a claim to authority are to be found throughout Foucault's work. In a discussion of Discipline and Punish he enquires: 'Have you ever read any criminological texts? They are staggering ... I fail to comprehend how the discourse of criminology has been able to go on at this level. One has the impression that it is of such utility, is needed so urgently and rendered so vital for the working of the system, that it does not even need to seek a theoretical justification for itself, or even a coherent framework.'[69] It is clear from this statement that the application of the title 'knowledge' to criminology would be purely honorific. What Foucault here describes could more properly be described as ideology: a set of concepts and representations which are 'vital for the working' of a system, and yet can be shown to be epistemologically incoherent. Foucault avoids the concept of ideology because 'like it or not, it always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth', it requires 'drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientificity or truth and that which comes under some other category'.[70] Yet the result of this avoidance is that Foucault is simply obliged to draw the same distinction surreptitiously, by means of qualifications and sceptical inverted commas, remarking at the end of Discipline and Punish, for example, that 'the supervision of normality was firmly encased in a medicine or a psychiatry which provided it with a sort of "scientificity"'.[71]

If Foucault breaks the link between power and knowledge by suggesting that forms of science which support relations of domination are - in some cases at least - merely pseudo-sciences, he also breaks the link in the other direction by theorizing forms of knowledge which are not forms of power. In a lecture dating from 1976 Foucault develops an account of what he terms 'subjugated knowledges'. There is, he suggests, 'a whole set of knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or

scientificity ... it is through the re-emergence of these low-ranking knowledges (such as that of the psychiatric patient, of the ill person, of the nurse, of the doctor - parallel and marginal as they are to the knowledge of medicine - that of the delinquent etc.), and which involve what I would call popular knowledge ... that criticism performs its work.'[72] This evocation of an 'insurrection of knowledges' also permits Foucault to tackle the difficult problem of the status of his own discourse. For if, as Foucault claims, 'there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time relations of power',[73] it appears that Foucault's own genealogies - as a form of knowledge - must be intertwined with relations of power. Nietzsche, faced with a similar theoretical situation, is prepared to admit this impication, since he employs the concept of power in an affirmative rather than a critical sense. For Nietzsche the genealogical philosopher strives to impose a perspective on reality whose 'truth' is dependent only on the vigour with which it is affirmed and enforced. Foucault, however, wishes to detach his genealogy from power, by portraying it as a combination of 'specialised areas of erudition' with 'disqualified popular knowledge', as entertaining the 'claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges'.[74] This separation-out from the supposedly unbreakable unity of power-knowledge of a false knowledge linked to power and authentic knowledge linked to resistance seems to imply the reinstatement of some kind of Ideologiekritik. But such is the depth of Foucault's commitment to Nietzsche that this logically-required realignment does not take place. The critique of power-knowledge continues to lack an epistemological dimension: the experience of the oppressed, both directly expressed and relayed by genealogy, is not allowed to reveal the inadequacy of the representation of the social disseminated by power. Insurrectionary knowledges, Foucault suggests, 'are opposed primarily not to the contents, methods or concepts of a science, but to the effects of the centralising powers which are linked to the institution and functioning of an organised scientific discourse within a society such as ours.'[75]

It will be apparent by now that Foucault's attempts to establish a non-contingent relation between power and knowledge on a Nietzschean basis cannot easily be squared with his political commitments. Foucault's strong, 'official' thesis is that 'power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time relations of power.'[76] Yet, in his specific historical and political discussions, the intimacy of this relation is not maintained. At times he defines this relation in terms of the institutional preconditions for the elaboration of a form of knowledge, at others in terms of the authority and prestige which accrue to the holder of a discourse recognised as true or scientific. On other occasions, as we have seen, Foucault severs the link between power and knowledge, and suggests either that the discourse of a specific human science is in fact delusive and incoherent, or that there can be forms of knowledge - including his own genealogy - which are on the side of resistance rather than that of power. The irony of this outcome is that what is, in itself, an important philosophical project - the attempt to decipher the relation between power and knowledge - risks discredit for lack of an adequate theoretical framework. The basic theoretical thrust of Foucault's position, that knowledge is not produced in the course of a disinterested quest for truth, and the core of his historical argument, that in modern societies a panoply of forms of information, theorization and analysis - which he groups together as the 'human sciences' - are a central element in techniques of social management and social control, demand to be taken seriously. Yet what Foucault's work of the 1970s reveals is that a coherent account of the human sciences and their historical role cannot be developed if all problems of epistemology are bracketed. The epoche which Foucault attempts to perform with regard to the validity of the forms of knowledge which he analyzes cannot be consistently carried out, since without an assessment of the truth of the discourse studied, the very object of investigation remains ill-defined, and any consistent political critique is undermined.

Again, it is in the work of the Frankfurt School that a more philosophically sophisticated treatment of Foucault's concerns may be found, and in particular in the contemporary Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas. In Habermas's work the attempt is made to formulate the relation between knowledge and interests, between science, technology and domination without

falling prey to the difficulties of the classical Frankfurt School, whose position resembles that of Foucault in its tendency to discern an intrinsic link between science and domination, and to effect a Nietzsche-inspired 'reduction' of scientific knowledge to a means of self-preservation. Habermas attempts to escape the damaging consequences of this reduction for social science by agreeing that an interest in technical control guides the formation of what he terms 'empirical-analytic knowledge', but at the same time arguing that there is an interest in intersubjective understanding which constitutes a different categorial framework defining knowledge which is 'hermeneutic', rather than 'empirical-analytic'. For Habermas the relations of language, action and experience differ in principle in the two forms of knowledge: 'Empirical analysis discloses reality from the viewpoint of possible technical control over objectified processes, while hermeneutics maintains the inter-subjectivity of possible action-orienting mutual understanding.'[77] Habermas denies that this position entails relativism, since these interests cannot simply be set aside. Any society must both be able to reproduce itself materially through work, and to maintain structures of action coordinated through mutual understanding, so that for Habermas the term interests denotes 'the basic orientations rooted in specific fundamental conditions of the possible repro-duction and self-constitution of the human species, namely work and interaction.'[78] The 'cognitive interests' may therefore be described as 'quasi-transcendental': they cannot be gone behind if we wish to acquire knowledge of nature or to understand other human beings via their symbolic expressions, yet they are, at the same time, rooted in the specific, contingent natural history of humankind.

On the basis of this distinction between work and interaction and their respective cognitive interests, Habermas is able to give an account of modern capitalist society which theorises many of the features which Foucault also highlights, without falling into the philosophical contradictions of Foucault's account. In his well-known essay on 'Technology and Science as Ideology' Habermas registers the shift from ideological forms of legitimation to a 'technocratic consciousness' which is '"less ideological" than all previous ideologies' since 'it does not have the opaque force of a delusion which only transfigures the implementation of interests', and which is therefore 'more irresistible and further reaching than ideologies of the old type'.[79] The pervasiveness of this technocratic consciousness may be compared with the

pervasiveness of knowledge-power in Foucault's thought: both indicate a transformation of ever more domains of social life into objects of manipulation and control. Because of his awareness of this process, Habermas - no less than Foucault - warns against a confusion of 'the democratisation of the forms and a growing anonymity of the exercise of political domination with the actual dismantling of repressive force'.[80] Yet, at the same time, Habermas can avoid Foucault's dilemma - either power-knowledge constitutes the social, in which case there is no basis for resistance, or the social has an autonomous dynamic, in which case power-knowledge is neither power nor knowledge - by suggesting that the pervasive 'non-ideological' character of technocratic consciousness derives from its basis in a systematic categorial confusion, in a form of knowledge which is not illusory, but which misunderstands the validityof its own propositions. Social technology depends upon the application of the methods of empirical-analytical sciences, oriented to prediction and control, to the social domain, and although the laws and regularities which it discovers are objective, this objectivity is the 'pseudo-objectivity' of social processes which remain opaque to the subjects by whom they are sustained. Social technologies transform human subjects into objects of manipulation, screening out their ability to reflect upon, to transform and collectively to determine their own situation. 'It is a singular achievement of this ideology,' Habermas suggests, 'to detach society's self-understanding from the frame of reference of communicative action ... and to replace it with a scientific model. Accordingly the culturally-defined self-understanding of a social life-world is replaced by the self-reification of men under categories of purposive-rational action and adaptive behaviour.'[81]

The argument that the oppressiveness of social technologies results from their treating human subjects as objects makes possible a   resolution of many of the dilemmas of Foucault's thought. As we have seen, Foucault is perpetually torn between his structuralist resistance to the possibility that human agency might play any role in the constitution and transformation of the social world - and his consequent need for another principle of constitution, whether rules of formation, or power-knowledge - and his political need to define a domain which is occluded by and opposed to power. Experience is constructed by structures or dispositifs, yet there must be an experience of oppression which forms the basis of resistance and which can become crystallised in 'subjugated knowledges'. Meaning is merely an effect of

discourse, yet there must be a domain of meaning which is 'eclipsed' when the object of a discourse emerges. The distinction between the intersubjectively sustained social life-world, and systems of purposive-rational action which can encroach upon and colonize the life-world, makes it possible to avoid the Foucauldian dilemma, since this distinction enables us to describe what 'power-knowledge' obliterates, without being forced into the paradoxical claim to know what lies beyond knowledge: power-knowledge suppresses cultural traditions sustained by a relation of communication between subjects, and the possibilities of collective self-determination which are implicit in that relation, in favour of a relation between subjects of technical knowledge and subjects who have been transformed into the objects of this knowledge.[82]

It is worth noting that Foucault's work is not entirely devoid of this contrast between a state of reciprocity and a state of unilateral surveillance and control. As we have seen, Madness and Civilization recounts the history of a progressive distanciation of reason and folly, which culminates in the regime of observation of the modern asylum. For Foucault, this observation is 'deeper and less reciprocal' than that which occurred during the Classical Age, when 'the sane man could read in the madman, as in a mirror, the imminent moment of his downfall'.[83] A similar contrast appears in Discipline and Punish between the 'ambiguous rituals' of the public execution and the regimentation of the prison. 'In these executions,' Foucault writes, 'which ought to show only the terrorizing power of the prince, there was a whole aspect of the carnival, in which rules were inverted, authority mocked and criminals trans-formed into heroes'.[84] The difference between 'the ceremony of the public execution ... that uncertain festival in which violence was instantaneously reversible' and 'the gentle efficacy of total surveillance' made possible by the panoptic mechanism is clear,[85] and Foucault's preferences are revealed unmistakeably in the very tone of his descriptions. Unlike the Frankfurt School, therefore, Foucault does not portray reciprocity as a goal, a possible future, but as located in a now-unattainable past. Furthermore, his is not a reciprocity of communication between equal subjects, but a reciprocity of force which remains embedded in a hierarchy. 'Confinement, prisons, dungeons, even tortures,' Foucault remarks in Madness and Civilization, 'engaged in a mute dialogue between reason and unreason - the dialogue of struggle'. With the advent of the asylum, however, this dialogue itself was

now disengaged; silence was abolute.'[86] Thus, although the concept of
reciprocity does perform a critical function in Foucault's work, its effect is
only to make the order of the present appear more hopeless, more oppressive:
Foucault's critique of modernity is essentially a backward-looking one.

We have already examined the hostility to the modern subject which
leads Foucault to think in this way, to prefer even the spontaneity of
violence to the pacification of self-regulation, but we have not yet examined
how Foucault attempts to undermine the argument that the human being as
self-determining subject can be opposed to the human being as object of
knowledge. Fundamentally, Foucault aims to eliminate this possibility by
suggesting that it is one and the same process which transforms individuals
into subjects and into objects of knowledge, so that the attempt to counter-
pose one to the other is inherently misguided. This argument already appears
in Madness and Civilization, where Foucault describes the dual function –
both epistemic and moralizing – of the gaze. 'A purely psychological
medicine,' he suggests, 'only became possible on the day when madness found
itself alienated in guilt':[87] the formation of a positive science of madness was
the correlate of the enforced internalization of moral norms which we have
already examined. The argument resurfaces briefly in The Archaeology of
Knowledge, where Foucault suggests that it is within the human sciences that
what he terms 'anthropological categories' such as 'the speaking individual,
the subject of discourse, the author of the text' have been constituted,[88] but
receives its fullest articulation in Discipline and Punish, where Foucault
refers to panoptic power as 'a technique of overlapping subjectification and
objectification', as 'the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and
the objectification of those who are subjected'.[89] More recently still,
Foucault has described his entire intellectual itinerary in terms of this
correlation between the formation of object-domains and the constitution of
subjects. In an article on 'The Subject and Power' he writes: 'My work has
dealt with three modes of objectification which transform human beings into
subjects. The first is the modes of enquiry which try to give themselves the
status of sciences; for example, the objectivizing of the speaking subject in
grammaire générale, philology and linguistics. ... In the second part of my
work, I have studied the objectivizing of the subject in what I shall call
"dividing practices". The subject is either divided inside himself or divided
from others. This process objectivizes him. Examples are the mad and the

sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the "good boys". Finally I have sought to study ... the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject. For example, I have chosen the domain of sexuality - how men have learned to recognise themselves as subjects of "sexuality".'[90]

This retrospective, however, is fundamentally confused in its reliance on the notion of 'modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects', since a domain of reality can only be objectified for a subject. In his historical investigations Foucault sometimes appears to appreciate this. Madness and Civilization, for example, argues that it is only because the citizens of the bourgeois state acknowledge each other as possessors of a consciousness (and conscience) which is at once both 'private and universal', that the insane can become the targets of techniques designed to restore them to rational subjectivity, and the objects of the concomitant forms of knowledge. 'As the sole sovereign of the bourgeois state,' Foucault writes, 'the free man becomes the first judge of madness.'[91] The importance which Foucault attaches to the passage from the first Meditation in which doubt as to his own sanity is excluded by Descartes' from his procedure of hyperbolic doubt, makes clear that the self-reflection of the individual as epistemic subject is the condition for the objectification of the insane.[92] One of the reasons why Foucault's panoptic gaze tends to take on the characteristics of a transcendent meta-subject is that Foucault implicitly appreciates that the totality of social individuals can only be objectified for a subject. Even if this difficulty could be overcome, however, Foucault's contention that subjects can be forged through objectification, through a non-reciprocal operation of power, is incoherent. A human being can only acquire the competences which transform her or him into a speaking and acting subject through interaction with other subjects: the identity of the self is constituted through an entry into social roles, but these roles can themselves only be acquired through identifications, not with the actual behaviour of others, but with symbolically - above all linguistically - mediated models of behaviour. Foucault's account of a monstrously unidirectional surveillance, of a strict separation of seer and seen, fails to register the fact that socialization, the formation of subjects, depends upon a mutual recognition of subjects. Thus, throughout his work, Foucault has correctly stressed the increasing individualization of subjects in modern society, yet is unable to explain this process except as the result of an ever-closer observation and tighter definition of the individual by power.

In <u>Discipline and Punish</u> Foucault remarks that 'The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called discipline.'[93]

What this account of the formation of the modern individual reveals is Foucault's neglect of the relation between individualism and the forms of economic agency required in a capitalist society, his equation of modernization with the expansion of social administration, and his attempt to conflate the specific process of capitalist modernization with the rationalization of the life-world. In his essay on 'The Subject and Power' Foucault equates 'two meanings of the word "subject": subject to someone else by control or dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge'; he argues that 'Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.'[94] Yet it is precisely conscience and self-knowledge - in the sense of a morality based on the autonomous application of principles rather than the following of authoritative norms, and of a broadened access to the personal, inner dimension of experience - which loosen the ties that bind the subject to a socially-imposed identity. Foucault fails to grasp the fact that it is only a universalistic orientation of action which makes possible a critical distanciation from inherited roles and norms, because of his fundamental commitment to the critique of Enlightenment. There are signs, in Foucault's most recent writings, that - under the impact of the change of attitude which has marked French philosophy since the late 1970s - this stance has now been modified. Towards the end of the article cited above Foucault goes so far as to suggest - in contradiction of his opening thesis - that the exercise of power implies the limitation of the free action of one individual by another, that 'Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free'.[95] Nevertheless, the message of Foucault's work as a whole, from <u>Madness and Civilization</u> to <u>The History of Sexuality,</u> is that the very form of self-determining subjectivity represents an oppression and an enslavement, that the 'man of modern humanism' was born from 'a whole set of techniques, a whole corpus of methods and knowledge, descriptions, plans and data' designed for 'the control and use of men'.[96]

CHAPTER FIVE

THE POLITICS OF TRUTH IN POST-STRUCTURALISM

Although Foucault's attempts to suggest that the modern subject is generated by the technologies of the human sciences are unsuccessful, the fundamental philosophical impulse which drives him to these attempts is one which he shares with post-structuralism as a whole. Foucault wishes to circumvent claims for the liberation of an imprisoned, reified subjectivity, not only because he believes the subject to be formed by power, but because he believes that such claims are inextricably bound up with an indefensible - and politically dangerous - philosophy of history, with the standpoint of the tradition of 'Western' or Hegelian Marxism. For three of the most influential exponents of the Nietzscheanism of the 1970s - Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard - the encounter with, and the critique of, Hegelian Marxism was a formative philosophical experience. Indeed, the large-scale transformation of outlook which overtook French philosophy in the early 1960s, and which the philosophy of the 1970s continued, was already much concerned with the rejection of Hegelian and Marxist modes of thought, and although Nietzsche did not emerge as the dominant influence on French philosophy until the 1970s, he had decisively influenced thinkers such as Foucault two decades previously. In an interview dating from 1969 Foucault remarks: 'As regards the influence which Nietzsche has had on me, it would be difficult to be specific, precisely because I realize how deep it has been. I would just say ... that, ideologically, I remained a 'historicist' and Hegelian until I read Nietzsche.'[1] More recently Foucault has suggested that Nietzsche provided the means of rupture with a Husserlian, rather than Hegelian, concept of historicity.[2] Yet, in either case, it is clear that what the encounter with Nietzsche undermines for Foucault is any notion of the historical process as an advance or progressive realization of reason, and hence the viability of a Marxism conceived of as being dependent upon such a notion. In the early 1960s this Nietzschean critique of historicism remained - for the most part - subterranean, and a structuralist antagonism to historical thought, for a period, occupied the limelight. Yet Foucault well summed up the mood of the early 1960s when he wrote that 'What is already dying in us (a death which underpins our current language) is homo dialecticus, the being of departure, of

return, and of time, the animal which loses its truth and discovers it transfigured, the stranger to himself who becomes again familiar.'[3]

The problem with the above formulation, of course, is that its attack on Marxist historicism is itself undertaken from a historicist perspective: Foucault implies that it is simply anachronistic to employ the vocabulary of alienation. The Order of Things, published in 1966, develops this hint into a full-scale argument. Here Foucault supports his belief in the obsolescence of Marxism with an historical analysis of the sequence of epistemes, or fundamental cognitive frameworks, which have determined Western thought since the Renaissance, an analysis which places Marxism, along with all other forms of thought which point towards a historical redemption or reconcilia-tion, firmly within an episteme - centred on the concept of man as both object and foundation of knowledge - which is in the process of dissolution. At this point in his career, therefore, Foucault's critique of Marxism appears largely in the context of a theoretical assault on 'humanism'; it is only in the late 1960s, and in the aftermath of May '68, that the attack on Marxism begins to refer explicitly to the political implications of philosophies of history. In an interview published in Esprit, for example, Foucault expressed his disquiet at the 'perilous ease' which a progressive politics would endow itself with, if 'it gave itself the guarantee of a primitive foundation or a transcendental teleology',[4] although a year later, in The Archaeology of Knowledge, he defends an anti-humanist reading of Marx. By the later 1970s, however, Foucault's tone has become much more severe. 'The decisive test for the philosophies of antiquity,' he suggests, 'was their capacity to produce sages; in the Middle Ages, to rationalize dogma; in the classical age, to ground science; in the modern period, it is their suitability for justifying massacres.'[5] The crucial contemporary question, Foucault concludes - although it is, in fact, the question which has accompanied his work ever since the beginning - is no longer 'how to invert Hegel, put him back on his feet, or on his head, free him of his idealism, or ballast him with economics, fragment him, humanize him. But rather how not to be Hegelian at all':[6] the philosophy of history, the belief in the claim of reason to realization in the form of rationally organized society is the most dangerous of modern obsessions.

Despite his repeated attacks upon Hegel, which stretch from Madness and Civilization, via the concluding chapter of The Order of Discourse, to the

review of Glucksman quoted above, and his own attempts - largely unsuccess-
ful - to establish an alternative foundation for critique, Foucault cannot be
said to display any detailed understanding of the common structures of
Hegelian and Marxist thought and their internal difficulties. As we have seen,
his attitude to Marxism can jump from naively historicist attempts at disposal
to purely political denunciations. Because of his own long political commerce
with the thought of Marx and Hegel, as a member of Socialisme ou Barbarie,
Jean-François Lyotard is the post-structuralist thinker most sensitive to the
problem of the status of critique as it emerges in the Western Marxist
tradition. In his final 'Marxist' essay, published in 1969, Lyotard continues to
advocate a 'practical critique' of capitalist society, while arguing that no
theoretical critique has the right to serve as a basis for the organization and
direction of political tasks, and rejecting any conception of Marxist theory as
the coming-to-consciousness of objective contradictions.[7] However, this
argument requires Lyotard to claim a standpoint for critique entirely outside
the society which is its object, and it is not surprising, therefore, that by
1972, he has concluded that the very concept of critique implies an un-
justifiable claim to superiority over what is criticised: 'critical activity is an
activity of selection: a certain experience, a certain declaration, a certain
work, a certain political initiative, a certain libidinal position is displayed in
its insufficiency, denied therefore, seen from the standpoint of its limit and
not of its affirmativity, challenged to match up to the object of desire of the
critic, in other words, to infinity, to universality, to necessity ... from where
does the critic draw his power over what is criticised? he knows better? he is
the professor, the educator? so he is universality, the university, the state,
the city, leaning over childhood, nature, singularity, the dubious, in order to
raise it to his own level? the confessor and God helping the sinner to be
saved?'[8] In contrast to Foucault, it is only at this point that Lyotard begins
to move towards Nietzsche, in search of the 'lessons of the attitude of power-
lessness' which - he believes - 'Nietzsche tries to maintain in the face of all
powers, and which puts him in a position to detect them'.[9] In order to
comprehend the development of French philosophy in the 1970s it is important
to establish what this 'attitude of powerlessness' might consist in.

During the 'positivist' phase of his work, which stretches from Human-all-too-
Human until the concluding sections of The Gay Science, Nietzsche's thought

is centred upon the attitude of scientific Enlightenment. Religious and metaphysical systems, all conceptions of the world as 'the embodiment of an eternal rationality',[10] are to be traced back to their origins in human drives, fears and aspirations, and their historical transformations. The ideal of science plays a dual role in this conception. Firstly, the meticulousness and caution of the scientific attitude, the refusal to be seduced into belief by considerations of human happiness, and the abandonment of unanswerable questions concerned with the overall purpose and meaning of the world, provides a means of exposing the illusions of traditional world views. 'It is the mark of a higher culture,' Nietzsche suggests in Human-all-too-Human, 'to prize small, inapparent truths discovered by strict method more highly than the gladdening, blinding errors which stem from metaphysical and artistic ages and men.'[11] And secondly, scientific procedure offers a means of explaining the origins of these age-long illusions, on the basis of a thorough-going naturalism. Even after the 'positivist' phase of his work, this attitude remains a permanent strand in Nietzsche's thought, so that - as late as Beyond Good and Evil - he can present his task as being 'to confront man henceforth with man in the way in which, hardened by the discipline of science, man today confronts the rest of nature, with dauntless Oedipus eyes and stopped up Odysseus ears, deaf to the siren songs of the old metaphysical birdcatchers who have all too long been piping to him "you are more! you are higher! you are of a different origin!"'.[12]

But although Nietzsche is prepared to employ science as a weapon against religion and metaphysics, he cannot accept the assumption of 19th-century positivism that science alone can provide an answer to the problem of the aims and meaning of human existence. Towards the end of The Gay Science, Nietzsche suggests that 'It follows from the laws of hierarchy that scholars, in so far as they belong to the middle-rank, may not even come into view of the truly great problems and questions.'[13] Nietzsche's own problems are problems of the totality, of the ultimate nature and purpose of the world and of the place of human life within it, and he is thus obliged to condemn the myopia of science, while unable to ignore the undermining by modern science of traditional claims to knowledge of the whole. Already in the Philosophenbuch, written - though not published - in the wake of The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche is centrally concerned with this dilemma, conscious that 'absolute and unconditional knowledge is wishing to know without

knowledge',[14] while unable to deny the immense power and value - indeed the necessity - of philosophical systems. And already he outlines his characteristic solution to this dilemma, in which the energy with which a viewpoint is affirmed becomes the criterion of its validity. 'The philosopher,' he suggests, 'is filled with the highest pathos of truth: the value of his knowledge guarantees its truth for him. All fruitfulness and all driving forces reside in this gaze turned towards the future.'[15]

Ultimately, Nietzsche resolves the tension of his relation to science by suggesting that science itself is a continuation of metaphysics, in so far as it embodies the belief in the possibility of an exhaustive and uniquely true account of the world. The infinity of the world which Nietzsche - in his third phase - reasserts against the immodesty and naivety of science, is no longer the religious infinity of a transcendent reality, but the interminable proliferation of perspectives: 'The world has rather become "infinite" for us again, in so far as we cannot banish the possibility that it encloses endless interpretations within itself.'[16] Part of the basis of Nietzsche's attempt to overcome 'nihilism', the spiritual desolation caused by the loss of a transcendent meaning of existence, is the acceptance that all cognition and all evaluation is perspectival, that the world as a whole cannot be appraised or known. The assumption is not novel in Nietzsche, of course. In The Birth of Tragedy, it is expressed by the counterposition of the Dionysiac and Apollonian principles. Here Nietzsche suggests that although it is only through the ordering and simplifying activity of the Apollonian principle that the world can be grasped at all, the result of this activity must always be accompanied by a marginal awareness of illusion. By its very nature, the Dionysian 'primal unity' (Ureine) which overflows all boundaries and erases all distinctions cannot be grasped in itself, yet it remains the backdrop against which the deceptive, dreamlike quality of Apollonian consciousness is revealed. For Nietzsche, this tension cannot be resolved by conceiving the task of philosophy as the comprehension of the inner logic of the succession of perspectives, considered as moments of truth to be integrated into an historical whole. The thrust of Nietzsche's invocation of the Dionysian - or of 'life' - as the ultimate principle of reality is to block any such cumulative ordering: life is inherently multifarious and contradictory, 'there would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspective evaluations and appearances'.[17] The notion of life implies that contradictions cannot be mediated.

If no perspective can claim ultimate validity, however, then the problem of the correct philosophical standpoint is raised for Nietzsche himself. Nietzsche has a two-stage answer to this problem, both aspects of which have been influential on post-structuralism. The lack of an ultimate perspective must first be compensated for by a tireless variation of perspectives, none of which lays claim to absolute validity. In The Genealogy of Morals Nietzsche argues that 'There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective "knowing"; and the more affects we allow to speak of one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity", be.'[18] Even this multiple approach to the object, however, is ultimately portrayed by Nietzsche as a training and preparation for the true philosophical task of commitment and creation. Throughout his work, art functions as a model for this task, since - in the absence of any ultimate truth - art is the form of representation which acknowledges its own illusory nature. 'Art treats appearance as appearance,' Nietzsche remarks in the Philosophenbuch, 'therefore intends precisely not to deceive, is true ...'[19] Accordingly, the task of the philosopher is not to discover, but rather to decree, not to reveal truths, but rather to render true: 'Authentic philosophers ... are commanders and law-givers: they say "thus it shall be!, it is they who determine the Wherefore and Whither of mankind ... Their "knowing is creating, their creating is a law-giving, their will to truth is - will to power.[20]

Although it is only in the early 1970s, in the aftermath of May '68, that the conflict between Nietzsche and Marxism becomes a widespread political issue in France, for the pacemakers of post-structuralism - with the exception of Lyotard, who does not make the turn towards Nietzsche at this time - this theoretical encounter had been fought out some ten or fifteen years earlier. Foucault, as we have already seen, dates his break with 'historicism and Hegelianism' from a reading of Nietzsche in the mid-1950s, while Derrida is already invoking Nietzsche - as a means of criticizing structuralism - in an essay daying from 1963.[21] It is in the case of Deleuze, however, that the Nietzschean influence stretches furthest back. Unlike Foucault, or Lyotard a decade and a half later, Deleuze never needed to make the transition from a Hegelian Marxist to a Nietzschean position since, from his student days in the

late 1940s, he appears to have had a profound aversion to both Hegelianism and phenomenology. In an autobiographical conversation Deleuze pays tribute to the enlivening effect which Sartre - as an outsider - had upon academic philosophy in the immediate post-war period, but he goes on to recall: 'I could bear neither Descartes, dualisms and the Cogito, nor Hegel, triads and the labour of the negative. At that time I liked the authors who seemed to belong to the history of philosophy, but who also eluded it in one way or another: Lucretius, Spinoza, Hume, Nietzsche, Bergson.'[22] This long-standing 'untimely' commitment to a naturalistic, anti-dialectical - if not specifically Nietzschean - position, culminated in Deleuze's 1962 book on Nietzsche and Philosophy, which influenced subsequent uses of Nietzsche in post-structuralism, and foreshadows many of the more politicised arguments of the 1970s.

Nietzsche and Philosophy is not merely an ingenious display of the architectonics of a thought which has traditionally been regarded as wilfully unsystematic; it is also an attack on dialectical thought, in its Hegelian, Young-Hegelian and - less explicitly, but unmistakeably - in its Marxist form. 'The philosophy of Nietzsche,' Deleuze suggests, 'has a great polemical import; it forms an absolute anti-dialectic, proposes to denounce all the mystifications which find their last refuge in the dialectic.'[23] In Deleuze's view, the most fundamental error of dialectical thought consists in its attempt to extract a positive from a negative. It is only 'The man of ressentiment', he writes, who 'needs to conceive a non-me, then to oppose himself to this non-me, in order finally to posit himself as a self. Strange syllogism of the slave: it requires two negations to produce an appearance of affirmation. We can already sense the form in which the syllogism of the slave has had such success in philosophy: the dialectic. Dialectics as the ideology of ressentiment.'[24] Deleuze opposes to this negative relation an affirmation of difference which does not define itself in terms of that to which it is opposed. In the domain of history, this standpoint implies an opposition to all conceptions of a dialectical continuity between historical stages, which thereby confuse affirmation with the 'veracity of the true or the positivity of the real',[25] and in particular to the Hegelian notion of a reappropriation of alienated powers. Deleuze considers Stirner's The Ego and its Own as the work of 'the dialectician who reveals nihilism as the truth of dialectics', since Stirner denounces earlier dialectical reconciliations as further alienations, and is therefore left with nothing but the empty ego, the pure form of appropriation

now deprived of any content.[26] Even the Marxist concept of the social individual, Deleuze suggests, fails to overcome this inherent impasse of dialectical thought. 'It is difficult, in truth, to stop the dialectic and history on the common slope down which they drag each other: does Marx do anything but mark a last stage before the end, the proletarian stage?'[27]

In place of the discredited 'speculative motor of the dialectic' which is 'contradiction and its resolution', against the 'apparatus of bad conscience, the false prestige of the negative, which make of the multiple, of becoming, of chance, of difference itself, so many unhappinesses of consciousness, and of these unhappinesses of consciousness, so many moments of formation, of reflection, of development',[28] Deleuze proposes an affirmative relation to plurality: 'That difference is happy, that the multiple, becoming, chance are sufficient, objects of joy in themselves; that only joy returns: such is the practical teaching of Nietzsche.'[29] Deleuze differs from other post-structuralists, however, in perceiving that Nietzsche's philosophy is not a simple celebration of pluralism and perspectivism, that Nietzsche is driven by the same ideal of a reconciliation of contraries which had also been the aim of other great philosophies. Hence he develops a complex interpretation of Nietzsche's theory of affirmation, as an affirmation of itself: 'Becoming is said to be, the multiple is said to be one, chance is said to be necessity, but only to the extent that becoming, the multiple, chance are reflected in the second affirmation which takes them for its object.'[30] Deleuze's exposition of Nietzsche concludes not in a happy-go-lucky relativism, but in an ecstatic vision in which the oppositions of metaphysical thought are overcome.

Two years after the publication of Nietzsche and Philosophy, in an essay on 'Nietzsche, Freud, Marx', Foucault takes up a position which stresses the irreducible pluralism of interpretation, and portrays Nietzsche as the most determined exponent of this pluralism. Foucault begins by contrasting the closed world of resonances and resemblances imagined by Renaissance science, with the open-endedness of modern hermeneutics, most clearly exemplified – he argues – in the work of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. Since the work of these three thinkers, he suggests, 'There is nothing absolutely first to interpret, because, at bottom, everything is already interpretation, every sign is itself not the thing which is offered to interpretation, but an interpretation of other signs.'[31] But although Foucault discerns the same interpretation of

interpretation in Marx, Freud and Nietzsche, it is clear that he considers
Nietzsche's thought to be the most consistent in its following-through of the
implications of this view. Foucault contrasts semiology, which he defines as
the belief that 'there are signs ... which exist primarily, originally, and truly
as coherent, pertinent and systematic marks' with a hermeneutics which
believes that 'the life of interpretation ... is to believe that there are only
interpretations,'[32] and, foreshadowing the arguments of the 1970s, he goes on
to claim that 'A hermeneutics which bases itself on a semiology believes in
the absolute existence of signs: it abandons the violence, the incompleteness,
the infinity of interpretations, in order to promote the reign of terror of the
index, and to cast suspicion on language'.[33] This, he suggests, has been the
fate of Marxism after Marx. However, Foucault is unwilling to go as far as
Deleuze, who suggests in Nietzsche and Philosophy that 'To be walking with
one's feet in the air is not something with which one dialectician can
reproach another, it is the fundamental character of the dialectic itself.'[34] In
a clear dissension from Deleuze's view, Foucault denies that talk of setting
the dialectic on its feet is meaningless, yet also wishes to eliminate any
suggestion of an ultimate resolution of contradictions: 'If this expression has
any meaning, it would be that of having put back into the density of the sign,
into this open, endless, gaping space, into this space without real content or
reconciliation, the entire play of negativity which the dialectic had - in the
end - disarmed by giving it a positive meaning.'[35]

During the 1960s Foucault's insistence on the endlessness of the
hermeneutic process, to be found not only in 'Nietzsche, Freud, Marx', cannot
be easily squared with his claims for the objectivity of his own archaeologies:
the tension here is similar to that in the work of Nietzsche himself, between
commitment to a scientific study of the historical determination of forms of
thought, and an awareness that science itself is simply one more form of
illusion. Nietzsche attempts to escape from this dilemma, as we have seen, by
arguing for the intrinsically perspectival character of 'life' which - in his
later work - is theorised more systematically in terms of the conflicts and
metamorphoses of the will to power. In the transformation which Foucault's
thought undergoes between the 1960s and the 1970s, a similar move can be
detected. During the 1960s Foucault had attempted to block evolutionary and
teleological conceptions of history by arguing that objective investigation
revealed history to be discontinuous, at least on the level of systems of

thought. Already in The Archaeology of Knowledge, however, this strategy is clearly breaking down under the impact of criticism of the illusory coherence and independence of the epistemes analysed in The Order of Things, and by the early '70s Foucault is attempting to evade these criticisms - while still blocking any concept of rational progress - by appealing to the notion of a play of forces which itself resists any ultimate interpretation.

The locus classicus of this argument, and a pace-setter for Foucault's work of the 1970s, is to be found in the essay on 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' first published in 1971. Here Foucault's aim is still to reveal the illusory nature of those 'transcendental teleologies' whose political perils we have already seen him denounce: he denies that concepts can be said to have an implicit content whose unfolding can be historically traced, preferring Nietzsche's suggestion that meaning and its transformations are entirely determined by local relations of forces: 'The isolation of different points of emergence does not conform to the successive configurations of an identical meaning; rather, they result from substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests, and systematic reversals. If interpretation were the slow exposure of the meaning hidden in an origin, then only metaphysics could interpret the development of humanity. But if interpretation is the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning ... then the development of humanity is a series of interpretations.'[36] By adopting Nietzsche's conception of the primacy of force over meaning Foucault can oppose 'the hazardous play of dominations', the 'exteriority of accidents'[37] not only to notions of the rationality of, but to any conception of an immanent direction of history. 'The traditional devices for constructing a comprehensive view of history and for retracing the past as a patient and continuous development must,' Foucault suggests, 'be dismantled.'[38] In particular, since any social consensus cannot be the expression of a shared interpretation of the world, but only the result of a temporary equilibrium of forces, it can be affirmed that 'Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination.'[39]

But while this committed exegesis of Nietzsche confirms Foucault's earlier repudiation of the possibility of reconciliation as envisaged by the

Hegelian-Marxist tradition, it equally marks a distance from the objectivism and positivism of the 1960s. Foucault now endorses a form of historiography, modelled on Nietzsche's 'effective history', whose aim is not to systematize, but rather to disperse and fragment the past: 'History becomes "effective" to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being - as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself'.[40] Effective history, furthermore, recognising the impossibility of historical objectivity, it is characterised by its 'affirmation of knowledge as perspective'. 'Nietzsche's version of historical sense,' according to Foucault, 'is explicit in its perspective and acknowledges its system of injustice. Its perception is slanted, being a deliberate appraisal, affirmation, or negation. ... It is not given to a discreet effacement before the objects it observes and does not submit itself to their processes; nor does it seek laws, since it gives equal weight to its own sight and to its objects.'[41] This endorsement of a self-conscious perspectivism is already a long way from Foucault's claim, during the later 1960s, to be countering metaphysical and teleological histories with a 'pure description of the facts of discourse':[42] the standpoint of his own enquiries is a problem which Foucault will not be able entirely to ignore during the 1970s.

Foucault's conceptualisation of history as composed of discontinuous structures, or - later - as a 'hazardous play of dominations' is directed against the philosophy of history, and - primarily - against the Marxist claim to grasp the totality of past and present from the standpoint of a future yet to be realised. Here Foucault's underlying fear, one which he shares with numerous other critics of Marxism, is that a theory which believes itself to have deciphered the objective movement of history will tend to encourage an authoritarian political practice which overrides moral qualms by means of an appeal to the inevitability of progress. Yet there is a second strand in Foucault's thought during the 1970s which is opposed not simply to philosophies of history, but to any systematic theory, even in a comparatively restricted domain. 'Concretely,' Foucault argues, in a lecture dating from 1976, 'it is not a semiology of the life of the asylum, it is not even a sociology of delinquency, that has made it possible to produce an effective criticism of the asylum and likewise of the prison, but rather the immediate emergence of historical contents. And this is simply because only the historical contents allow us to rediscover the ruptural effects of conflict and

struggle that the order imposed by functionalist or systematising thought is designed to mask.'[43] This argument might appear to exclude Marxism, since it is precisely the strength of Marxism to stress the inherently conflictual nature of social reality in contrast to functionalism or systems theory. Foucault's objections, however, are evidently based on the Nietzschean assumption that any systematic theory must inevitably simplify and falsify, with the corollary that such simplification - if taken as a guide for practical intervention - will encourage the attempt to force social reality to conform to its expectations. Thus Foucault speaks quite generally of 'the coercion of a theoretical, unitary, formal and scientific discourse'[44] and has no hesitation in including Marxism amongst those modes of thought which have 'the inhibiting effect of global, totalitarian theories', although he admits that it may provide 'useful tools for local research'.[45]

On an even more fundamental level, if Foucault is willing to criticise both dialectical and positivist social theory, whereas Marxism counterposes the former to the latter, this is because science, in modern societies, is considered as the pre-eminent vehicle of truth, and Foucault implies that any truth-claim - regardless of the theoretical status of the discourse involved - must embody a claim to power. This suggestion first appears in The Order of Discourse, where Foucault lists the division between the true and the false, along with the prohibition of discourses and the separation between reason and madness, as one of three 'systems of exclusion'. Foucault admits that, at first sight, it appears implausible to align the 'constraint of truth' with partitions which are 'arbitrary from the very beginning or which at the least are organised around historical contingencies';[46] yet he goes on to suggest that even the distinction between the true and the false must ultimately be considered as arbitrary and contingent, although its contingency has become ever more deeply obscured in the course of history. Foucault perceives the first step in this concealment in the emergence of philosophy from poetry and myth: 'Still, for the greek poets of the sixth century, true discourse - in the strong and valorised sense of the word - the true discourse for which one had respect and terror, to which it was necessary to submit, because it reigned, was the discourse pronounced by whoever had the right and according to the stipulated ritual.'[47] Between Hesiod and Plato, however, this status is trans- formed: 'a century later the highest truth no longer resided in what discourse was or in what it did: the day arrived when truth was displaced from the

ritualised efficacio us and just act, from the utterance towards the statement itself: towards its meaning, its form, its object, its relation to its referent.'[48] For Foucault, however, this separation of criteria of truth from the recognition of an actual power and authority is merely apparent. Even in the case of modern science, which Foucault considers to be the result of the latest mutation in a 'will to knowledge' inaugurated by Greek philosophy, the very meaning of propositions is inseparable from the systems of practices with which scientific discourse is interwoven, so that to comprehend propositions as candidates for truth or falsity is already to have acquiesced in specific institutional arrangements, and - as we have seen - for Foucault such arrangements must always crystallize an unequal relation of forces. 'Truth,' Foucault suggests, a few years after The Order of Discourse, 'is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and extend it. A "regime of truth".'[49]

This conception of scientific truths as immanently connected to relations of power clearly poses the problem of the kind of political action, and the kind of relation between theory and practice, which Foucault would be willing to endorse. In the period of post-'68 leftism, Foucault appears to support struggles which are localised and specific, referring to 'this amazing efficacy of discontinuous, particular and local criticism'.[50] For Foucault, it is a point in favour of such forms of struggle and criticism that they do not rely on a global historical and social analysis, but arise from the immediate experience of those involved. The obvious criticism can be raised, of course, that without the suport of a wider analysis such forms of struggle will be condemned to ineffectiveness, and this argument is put to Foucault by a young interlocutor in a political conversation dating from 1971: 'I can't believe that the movement must remain in its present phase, in this vague, disjointed ideology of the underground ... At this level the groups remain incapable of taking on the whole of society, and ultimately of conceiving it as a whole.'[51] Foucault rejects this argument, however: 'We readily believe that the least we can expect of our experiences, actions and strategies are projects which take account of the "whole of society"; this would be the minimum required for their existence. I think on the contrary that this would be to ask the maximum of them; that it would thus be to impose on them an impossible condition: since the "whole of society" functions precisely in such a way that these actions can neither take place, nor succeed, nor perpetuate

themselves. The "whole of society" is that which we need not take account of, except as an objective to be destroyed.'[52] Elsewhere in the same discussion Foucault suggests that not simply totalising social theories, but 'any theory or general discourse should be renounced', and counterposes to such discourse social experimentation and the experience of struggle.[53] In so far as the validity of theory is admitted at this stage in Foucault's career, such validity can only come from its status as a direct expression of the experience of struggle: 'When the prisoners began to speak, they possessed an individual theory of prisons, the penal system, and justice. It is this form of discourse which ultimately matters, a discourse against power, the counter-discourse of prisoners and those we call delinquents - and not a theory about delinquency.'[54]

As might be expected, given the symmetries which we have already noted between their philosophical positions, Foucault's account of the immanent connexion between truth and power is paralleled, in Lyotard's work of the 1970s, by a similar link between truth and desire. In an essay on the painter René Guiffrey, Lyotard rehearses the classic Nietzschean argument for the impossibility of ultimate truth: 'In truth, there is no such thing as a lie, except measured by the standard of the desire for truth, but this desire is no truer than any other desire, and the paradox does not state what is really the vicious circle of the lie, but the circulation of masks which do not mask anything, beneath none of which can be discovered, at last, at first, the face itself.'[55] However, whereas Foucault is primarily concerned with the implications of the ultimate arbitrariness of criteria of truth for our view of the human sciences, Lyotard is much more concerned with the repercussions on philosophy itself. Thus, whereas Foucault takes science as the paradigmatic modern form of a discourse which conceals its own motivation ('the will to truth, as it has imposed itself on us for a long time, is such that the truth which it wills cannot help but mask it')[56], Lyotard considers theory, by which he understands less the individual sciences than philosophical discourse claiming to provide an apodictic, universal, and systematic foundation for knowledge, as a form of fiction which denies its own fictive status, as a dispositif pulsionnnel which refuses to acknowledge itself as such. Lyotard's initial task, therefore, is to reveal the structure of libidinal investment which characterises theory, a task which he attempts to carry out in the concluding chapter of Economie Libidinale.

Here Lyotard suggests that theoretical discourse is characterised by the demand for clarity and consistency: whether an object falls under a particular concept, whether a judgement is true or false must be unambiguously decidable: 'every statement advances into pathos in order to separate the this and the not-this, advances therefore armed with a cutter, a double-edged blade, and cuts.'[57] However, because 'each segment of the libidinal band is absolutely singular',[58] the attempt to divide up the band into conceptual identities 'implies the denial of disparities, of heterogeneities of transits and stases of energy, it implies the denial of polymorphy.'[59] A theoretical text may therefore be described as an 'immobilised organic body'. Lyotard admits that a discourse which tells a story may form a similar unified body, but points out that theoretical discourse is distinguished from narrative-figurative discourse by the fact that the totality which it constitutes is not situated at the pole of reference, but becomes one with the theoretical text itself. Lyotard suggests that, between these two poles, abstract painting constitutes an intermediate case. But whereas, in the case of abstraction which has not degenerated into mere system, 'the apparent immobility, insignificant for an eye which takes no pleasure in it, of the patterns of points, lines, surfaces, colours, is precisely what desire makes movement out of', a movement on the surface of the canvas which contrasts with the immobilisation of the spectator,[60] in theoretical discourse this movement tends towards stasis and repeatability, and is complemented by the disconnection and emotional neutrality of producer and consumer. Even this indifference, however, must be interpreted libidinally. 'The notorious universality of knowledge,' Lyotard writes, 'generally interpreted as an a priori condition of theoretical discourse in its communicability, is, understood in terms of drives, a mark of the destruction of personal identities.'[61]

If Lyotard is to be consistent, then the analysis of theoretical discourse as a dispositif pulsionnel cannot provide him with the means to criticise the theoretical mode. Theory is characterised not by its detachment from libidinal inqestments, but by the distinctive configuration of those inqestments: the disjunctive bar which traces the libidinal band is - according to Lyotard - both immobile and in rapid rotation, a paradox which is explained by the fact that 'as disjunctive, it suspends all passage of energy from the body-client to the body-text and vice versa: as animated, it opens a passage onto the dis-

junctive function itself ... it makes a connexion out of this disconnexion.'[62] In
theory, therefore, 'the libidinal band appears at the very point where it seems
excluded',[63] and Lyotard is obliged to admit that 'we do not claimthat
(theory) is an error, a perversion, an illusion, an ideology. If mimesis gives you
a hard-on, gentlemen, what could we have against it?'[64] At the same time,
Lyotard cannot entirely prevent a note of disapprobation from colouring his
conclusions, since the theoretical mode does demand an elimination of the
inherent dissimulation of libidinal reality: 'Every fixation of a standard is
related to a demand for appropriation, it invests the disjunctive bar on its
exclusive function, and induces the confusion of intensities and identities.'[65]

The conclusion of Economie Libidinale is largely concerned with an analysis of
what the Frankfurt School would term 'traditional theory': a closed deductive
system of propositions based upon a small set of axioms. Lyotard seems to
ignore the fact that dialectical thought is also opposed to the fixed
conceptual identities which he arraigns. In the essays written after Economie
Libidinale, however, and collected as Rudiments Païens, Lyotard's attention
turns towards theories of the dialectical type, and, since this brings him
closer to questions of politics, his antagonism to the claims of theory becomes
even fiercer. In an essay on historical interpretations of the dechristianising
movement of 1793, Lyotard offers an ontology of socio-historical reality
which parallels Foucault's views in 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History'. Just as
Foucault suggests that history consists of 'a complex of distinct and multiple
events, incapable of being mastered by the powers of synthesis',[66] so Lyotard
suggests that 'the political "body" is a monster composed of a unified body
and of a plurality of drives which are incompatible with it and with each
other'.[67] In contrast to an author such as Daniel Guérin, who sees the de-
christianisation movement as in part as diversionary manoeuvre on the part of
the Hébertists, a means of channeling popular energies, in part a cathartic
release from the age-old oppressive structures of which the church was an
integral part,[68] Lyotard sees in the carnival antics of the dechristianisers the
pure disorder of the drives, a mockery of all - even Republican - order.
Guérin's interpretation, which suggests that the 'abolition' of religion was
premature, since the misery for which religious belief compensates could not
be eliminated by a merely bourgeois revolution, itself depends upon belief in a
'beyond' termed socialism. All historical interpretations must, in the same

way, ultimately rely upon a priori assumptions, and will involve a coercion and defusing of intensities unknown to reasonable history.[69] 'History, like politics,' Lyotard writes, 'seems to have need of a unique point of perspective, a place of synthesis, a head or eye envelop ing the diversity of movements in the unification of a single volume: a synthesising eye, but also an evil eye which strikes dead all which does not enter its field of visibility.'[70]

Despite the distinction between the vocabulary of forces and power and that of libido and drives, the homology between the arguments of Lyotard and Foucault is unmistakeable, as is their common ancestry in Nietzsche's insistence that 'life' - 'changeable and untamed and in everything a woman, and no virtuous one'[71] - cannot be grasped from any single, comprehensive perspective. However, because of Lyotard's more detailed interest in the question of philosophical claims to truth, there can be found in his work both a logical and a historical reflection on the problems of foundational philosophy which are missing from that of Foucault. Lyotard's logical case takes up the paradoxes of self-reference exemplified by the celebrated declaration of Epimenides the Cretan, by certain arguments of the sophists and, in a 20th-century form, by the difficulties encountered by Russell in the theory of classes. In an essay on the arguments of the sophists, Lyotard suggests that the Platonic and Aristotelian opposition to sophism is directed against 'a logical ruse which is also moral, political, economic; it simply consists in placing what presents itself as absolute, as the last word, in placing that in relation with itself'.[72] Russell's attempted solution to the paradoxes of self-reflexive statement, in the form of the theory of types, is of particular interest to Lyotard, since he sees the very arbitrariness of the theory of types - a theory which other philosophers have found singularly ad hoc and unconvincing - as an involuntary betrayal of the coup de force on which all attempts to provide criterial accounts of truth and rationality must be based: 'All discourse of knowledge rests on a decision, namely that the two statements the soup is served and it is true that the soup is served do not belong to the same class and must be distinguished. But this decision is not itself demonstrable. In other words, what is called the "paradox" of the Liar is not refutable; and by the same token the decision constituting the discourse of knowledge, constitutive of the constituting order, appears as a fact of power and as the power of a fact.'[73]

Lyotard's concern with the vicious circularity of the foundational enterprise of philosophy points to a major divergence between his account of contemporary societies and that of Foucault. As we have seen, Foucault arrives at the problem of the 'politics of truth' via historical and cultural relativism: different epochs and different societies possess different conceptions of what is true and what is false, and since the criteria on which these conceptions are based are simply incommensurable, there can be no rational transition from one to another. According to this account, the modern age is no less trapped within an - ultimately arbitrary - 'regime of truth' than any other; indeed, if anything, our constriction is even more complete, since modern science provides the most effective camouflage for the fact that 'Truth ... is only produced by virtue of multiple forms of constraint'.[74] Lyotard's argument however is that, although the paradoxes which threaten foundational discourse have been known since the beginnings of philosophy, it is only in the modern period that a 'crisis of metaphysical philosophy'[75] takes place, and that this crisis is due specifically to the intertwined successes of capitalism and modern science. On the normative front, the incessant over-turning of herited beliefs and forms of behaviour demanded by the capitalist mode of production erodes the very notion of a transcendent legitimation of the social order: 'Capital is this supposed social organism which is nevertheless incapable of providing the discourse grounding its own truth. It has at its disposal no religious or metaphysical discourse capable of giving an account of its existence and of justifying it. Not the least That's why I'm here or That's why I'm in Power. Not only is our society bereft of any founding discourse, but what is more it sends the very idea of a foundation, of an ultimate authority, into an intense decline.'[76] Similarly, on the epistemological front, modern science progressively cuts itself loose from, and begins to undermine, the philosophical discourse of which it had once formed an integral part. Scientific knowledge stands in an antagonistic relation to what Lyotard terms 'narrative knowledge' - those inherited discourses in which cognitive, normative and aesthetic components are inextricably interwoven, and whose unbroken transmission and transformation is an important factor in the cohesion of pre-capitalist societies - and thus to philosophy itself, in so far as philosophy contains an inexpungeable narrative element.[77] The result is a situation in which scientists themselves, no longer possessing a philosophical account and justification of their activity, cease to claim truth for their

theories and are content with 'efficiency, or controlled, previsional operativity'.[78]

Although, for Lyotard, it is the rise of capitalism and modern science which results in the erosion of religious and metaphysical world-views, he does not believe that this erosion has been a steady, cumulative process. The undermining of values and truths which he refers to - following Nietzsche - as 'decadence', is an oscillating, hesitant process in which repeated attempts are made to fill the desolate spaces left by the decline of a transcendent legitimation with new faiths. Lyotard's general conception of the history of Western culture since the 'caesura of modernity' exemplifies such a pattern on a large scale, since he suggests that the initial impact of capitalism on traditional societies provoked a massive defensive reaction against the dis- integration of social bonds which ensued. This reaction consisted in the elaboration of grand narratives (grands récits), of which Lyotard lists some examples at the beginning of La Condition Post-Moderne: 'the dialectic of spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or labouring subject, the development of riches ...'[79] For Lyotard it is the dominating reference to such a historical account for purposes of legitimation which marks a society as modern: 'We may term modern those societies which anchor discourses of truth and justice in grand historical and scientific narratives. Of course, there are many variations. The French Jacobins do not speak like Hegel, but in each case the just and the good are caught up in a great progressive odyssey.'[80] Marxism, to a militant brand of which he himself for a long time adhered, represents for Lyotard both the most potent and the most enduring of these major narratives, yet even Marxism is ultimately unable to escape from its belief in an objective rationality of the historical process. It seems perfectly clear to me,' Lyotard affirms, 'that the grand narrative which emerged from both German Idealism and from the French Revolution, the narrative of the realisation of knowledge and the emancipa- tion of humanity, taken up by Marx and combined with economic theory, will not take place'. [81]

However, the grand narratives are not merely erroneous in their diagnosis and predictions: since the belief in an objectively rational world- order is beyond philosophical retrieval, the temptation is great to impose such an order by force and fiat. What Lyotard terms the 'obstinate belief in the

unity, totality and finality of a Meaning'[82] can readily slide over into a terroristic imposition of homogeneity upon the ethical and experiential fragmentation of modern societies. The catastrophe of fascism was one clear exemplification of such an impulse, the fabrication of a narrative with the explicit aim of reconstituting an organic social body,[83] but Lyotard detects a similar - and similarly dangerous - longing for the restoration of an impossible organic totality in Marx's thought.[84] In the case of Marxism this danger is compounded by the theoretical inheritance of Hegel's speculative dialectic, with its demand for the remainderless realisation of reason: 'German Social Democracy, Stalinist communism, Maoist Marxism-Leninism were not political errors; they were but so many symptoms of the fact that the speculative system, if it were not rid of the rule of the necessary result, restored life to metaphysics rather than contributing to its downfall and continued to produce excommunicatory effects with regard to everything that did not fall in step with what was deemed to be the ineluctable march of the historical process ... With the extermination of part of the Cambodian people, the "subject" has taken this logic to its bitter end: rather no "substance" at all than a substance of which it is not the subject.'[85]

If the legitimating reference to narratives characterises modern societies, then, for Lyotard, post-modernity, the historical phase which we have now entered, is distinguished by a new incredulity. The fragmentation and mutability of social forms and modes of experience under capitalism no longer generate the anxiety which was initially provoked. 'The nostalgia for the lost narrative,' Lyotard suggests, 'is itself lost for the majority of people':[86] in this sense what Lyotard terms 'post-modernity' is simply modernity coming to terms with itself. This diagnosis of the relation between modernity and post-modernity leads Lyotard, like Foucault, to endorse only those forms of political action which are not guided by an orientation towards totality. Beneath the level of the grand narratives, social life itself, Lyotard suggests, consists in the production, transmission and elaboration of 'little stories' which make no claim to embody a universal principle and it is this everyday inventiveness which offers the best prospects for the subversion of the dominant discourse: 'If networks of uncertain and ephemeral stories can gnaw away at the great, institutionalised narrative apparatuses, it is by multiplying somewhat lateral skirmishes, as did ... in the course of the last decade women who have had abortions, prisoners, conscripts, prostitutes, students,

peasants. One invents little stories, even segments of stories, one listens to them, transmits them, acts them out at the right moment.'[87] Following Zarathustra's recommendation that 'What is falling should also be pushed', Lyotard proposes that the only acceptable 'political line' in a society where no discourse can claim a legitimate hegemony is 'to harden, aggravate, accelerate this decadence. To adopt the perspective of active nihilism, not to remain at the stage of a mere observation, whether depressed or admiring, of the destruction of values: to lend a hand in their destruction, to advance further and further into incredulity, to battle against the restoration of values'.[88]

There is one obvious difficulty which theories such as those of Deleuze, Foucault and Lyotard, which espouse a perspectivist account of truth, and – furthermore – attempt to ground a conception of political practice in this account, must confront: the problem of their own status and validity as theories. This problem is perhaps most starkly posed by Deleuze's Nietzsche and Philosophy, since Deleuze presents Nietzsche less as the arch anti-philosopher and anti-theoretician, than as the exponent of what philosophy must be in the modern period. Nietzsche, in Deleuze's view, 'develops a philosophy which ought ... to replace the old metaphysics and transcendental critique, and give the human sciences a new foundation: genealogical philosophy, that is to say the philosophy of the will-to-power.'[89] Nietzsche is portrayed, unashamedly, as a systematic metaphysician, whose speculative teachings Deleuze summarises in the following terms: 'becoming, the multiple, chance contain no negation; difference is pure affirmation; the return is the being of difference which excludes all negation';[90] and Nietzsche and Philosophy concludes with an exposition of the jubilant unity of affirmation and the affirmed which is more reminiscent of the grand systems of German Idealism than of the thinker who aimed to philosophize with a hammer. To expound Nietzsche in this systematic manner, however, raises the question of why his metaphysics should be considered more convincing than any other. Deleuze eliminates precisely what makes Nietzsche such a powerful represent-ative of the position of the modern subject: despair at the possibility of a comprehensive interpretation of the world, and the consequent experience of being driven from one standpoint to another, without being able to find any stable ground. In Beyond Good and Evil Nietzsche finds himself reflecting that

his metaphysics of the will-to-power may be simply one more interpretation,[91] whereas Deleuze appears to have no qualms about claiming both that truth is irreducibly perspectival, and that there is a theory which explains this fact: 'The world is neither true, nor real, but living. And the living world is the will-to-power, a will to the false which becomes effective under diverse powers.'[92] It has been suggested that Deleuze's very lack of concern with the justification of such pronouncements is part of a philosophical strategy. Deleuze's dispassionate dissections are carried out in the service of 'no thought - no objective, no particular theme', but are rather intended to reveal the ultimate arbitrariness of any philosophical system, to show that 'any thought (association of ideas) is no less random than the associations of events which men call facts, and demands in the end a similar diagnostic of facticity.'[93] Such a suggestion is unconvincing, however: Deleuze's exposition of Nietzsche may be clinically precise, but it is also passionate, foreshadowing many themes - most prominently the critique of dialectics - which he will later develop in a 'first person' manner. Unless Deleuze is to deny having any philosophical aims at all, apart from a nihilistic debunking of all philosophy, these themes cannot be placed beyond defence and criticism.

Although Foucault cannot be said to pay any systematic attention to the status of his own discourse, he does give the matter more consideration than Deleuze. As we have seen, during the 1960s he tends to understand his work as an objective analysis of the history of forms of knowledge, doubtless on the model of Nietzsche's historical philosophy, the 'youngest of all philosophical methods', which can 'no longer be thought of in separation from the natural sciences'.[94] Nietzsche's own formulations point to the unease and ambiguity of the conception, and Foucault is not unaware of the problems which his enterprise raises, indeed, in the 'Conclusion' of the Archaeology of Knowledge, he puts the most obvious objections into the mouth of an imaginary interlocutor: if Foucault has done no more than carry out an empirical enquiry, then he cannot avoid the 'naïvety of all positivisms', while if he raises the question of the subject of knowledge, he will become entangled in the 'transcendental thought' from which he wishes to escape. Is his work history of philosophy? Foucault's response to his imaginary interrogator, however, is somewhat evasive. He reiterates the anti-hermeneutic principles of archaeology, stresses that archaeology is connected to the sciences both by its objects and by its methods, although he does not claim

for it the status of a science, and concludes by suggesting that 'to the extent that it is possible to constitute a general theory of productions, archaeology as the analysis of the rules proper to different discursive practices, will find what could be called its enveloping theory.'[95]

What is perhaps most striking about these formulations at the end of The Archaeology of Knowledge is the absence of any consideration of the relation between theory and practice: for Foucault, at this period, a practical intention can only be attributed to his opponents, whom he suspects of bolstering their own political prejudices with a philosophy of history. In the aftermath of May '68, however, when Foucault's historical studies of institutions took on a new political relevance, it was no longer possible entirely to avoid the question of theory and practice, and - as we have seen - Foucault begins to back away from his former objectivist position. Firstly, because he suspects, on Nietzschean grounds, that any system must betray the complexity of reality, he begins to stress the 'disordered and fragmentary' nature of his own researches, and explicitly renounces the striving for systematic unity: 'It will be no part of our concern,' Foucault remarks, 'to provide a solid and homogeneous theoretical terrain for all these dispersed genealogies, nor to descend upon them from on high with some kind of halo of theory that would unite them.'[96] Only a thought which is itself not systematic could 'entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge...'[97] Secondly, Foucault opposes to the representative function of the 'universal' intellectual - the intellectual 'taken as the clear, individual figure of a universality whose obscure, collective form is embodied in the proletariat'[98] - the notion of the 'specific' intellectual, engaged in particular struggles in his or her workplace, whether asylum, hospital, laboratory or university. In so far as these struggles have any general import, Foucault suggests, this is simply because the question of scientific knowledge is a crucial question for our type of society, and not because the intellectual develops a theory valid for all struggles. Lastly, Foucault suggests that, in so far as the intellectual does develop theory, its validity must be interpreted instrumentally. Theory is merely a 'toolkit' in the service of a particular struggle, and may be discarded as soon as it loses its utility.[99]

Even setting aside the intrinsic - and intractable - difficulties of an instrumentalist reduction of theoretical truth-claims, it is doubtful whether Foucault ever seriously espoused such a position, which would entitle anyone with different political aims to reject his arguments out of hand. Indeed, Foucault does not even appear to adopt the weaker (Neo-Kantian) position, according to which historical theories can be tested for truth or falsity, although theory-formation is always determined by specific interests and values, since he seems to understand the relation between political commitment and theory-construction simply as a relation of empirical motivation. 'If one is interested in doing historical work that has a political meaning, utility and effectiveness,' Foucault suggests, 'then this is possible only if one has some kind of involvement with the struggles taking place in the area in question.'[100] Indeed, it is clear that, behind this activist stance, Foucault never in fact abandons his fundamental objectivism, since he immediately goes on to distinguish between truth and effectivity: 'The problem and the stake was the possibility of a discourse which would be both true and strategically effective, the possibility of a historical truth which could have a political effect.'[101] But if Foucault is claiming truth for his historical theories, while arguing for an immanent connexion between truth and power, he can only be claiming recognition for the particular system of power with which his own discourse is bound up. The fundamental question which emerges at this point, therefore, a question which is central to Nietzsche's thought, is whether it is possible to secure assent to a discourse by mobilizing a persuasive force entirely disconnected from considerations of veracity. It is a measure of the sloganistic nature of Foucault's formulations on truth and power that he fails to pay adequate attention to this problem. At one point Foucault describes a reciprocal, hermeneutic relation between truth and fiction in historical investigation.[102] But, for the most part, he is content to assume that the mere label 'genealogy' sets his work apart from the 'human sciences' which it denounces.

Because he takes more seriously than Foucault the reflexive paradoxes involved in any account of the nature of truth - even an account as iconoclastic as that of Nietzsche - Lyotard tends to be more concerned with the problem of philosophical discourse itself. In the opening essay of Rudiments Païens he takes Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle as the model for a form of discourse which openly admits its own lack of ultimate grounds. Since,

according to Freud's final dualism, all events which can be attributed to Eros can equally be attributed to the death-drive, Freud himself is obliged to stress the speculative and uncertain nature of his own thought: the 'dissimulation' of the drives excludes any conclusive determination of causes. For Lyotard, however, this uncertainty does not reveal a defect in Freud's thought: 'It is not a weak conviction, or a lack of conviction which the economist of 1920 experiences, but an undecidability of affect, a positive power of affirmation alien to the question of belief.'[103] Yet simply to abandon theoretical discourse in favour of fiction, or to develop a philosophical critique of theory, would not resolve the problem, since this would either be to leave the pretensions of theory untouched by abandoning the terrain, or to remain on that terrain, and it is the 'desire for truth' expressed in theoretical discourse, Lyotard affirms, which 'feeds terrorism in everyone'.[104] The solution to this problem is to produce theorie-fiction, a type of discourse which does not simply renounce the norms of theoretical discourse, but rather takes the form of a subversive parody of them. 'To destroy theory,' Lyotard suggests, 'is to produce one, many pseudo-theories; the theoretical crime is to fabricate theoretical fictions.'[105] If such a form of discourse wishes to convince it must do so without any appeal to truth, just as in Nietzsche the will-to-truth of the authentic philosopher ultimately reveals itself as will-to-power. Lyotard's most sustained attempt to produce such a philosophical fiction is to be found in Economie Libidinale, a work in which deduction and denunciation, argument and anecdote are woven into text of considerable rhetorical vehemence. The aim, as in Nietzsche, is to reveal 'the meaning hidden in emotion, the vertigo in reason', to confront the reader with a 'force of language beyond truth'.[106]

At the end of Economie Libidinale Lyotard admits that the problem of truth and falsity cannot simply be dismissed as non-pertinent, but argues that there is a better way of reading his text which by-passes this problem: 'As soon as one wishes to demonstrate something, one organises the object which is spoken of according to the field of the true and the false, and one demonstrates what is true in it and what is false. It is rather a matter of not demonstrating in this sense, or not acknowledging the spirit of true and false. Is a dance true? One can always say so. But it is not in that that its power lies.'[107] However, in a book of interviews published five years later under the

title <u>Au Juste</u>, Lyotard admits that, rather than the question of truth and falsehood concealing the power of the philosophical text, it is this power - in the sense of rhetorical force - which strives to conceal the problem of truth and falsehood. The intention and the background of <u>Economie Libidinale</u> are theoretical, it is not simply a literary or poetical work, and - to this extent - there remains 'a gap between the <u>lexis</u>, in other words the mode of presentation on the one hand, and the <u>logos</u>, in other words the content on the other, and this gap does violence: the theses are not up for discussion. But in reality they can be.'[108] This admission that a discourse which attempts to persuade without providing adequate grounds 'does violence' has important consequences for the political stance of the French Nietzscheanism of the 1970s as a whole, since this kind of violence cannot be recognised by the Nietzschean position. Characteristically, Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard conceptualize political conflict in terms of a clash between two kinds of forces - in Foucault these are '<u>pouvoir</u>' and '<u>résistance</u>', in Deleuze '<u>désir molaire</u>' and '<u>désir moléculaire</u>', in Lyotard the 'white terror of truth' and the 'red cruelty of singularities' - but there is no attempt to link the question of the differentiation of forces to the question of legitimacy; rather, the assumption is that any force which claims universal validity for its standpoint can only do so as part of a quest for domination, or in support of its present supremacy. Since the notion of truth implies validity for all subjects, and no statement can prove itself to be thus valid, claims to truth are themselves pre-eminent examples of claims to domination.

The deep naïvety of this conception lies in the assumption that once the aspiration to universality - whether cognitive or moral - is abandoned, what will be left is a harmonious plurality of unmediated perspectives. Thus Lyotard writes that 'it is always a matter of minorities crushed in the name of the Empire. That are not necessarily critical (the Indians); they are much "worse", they <u>do not believe</u>. ... In this sense they are polytheists, whatever they may have said and thought about themselves: to each nation its authorities, none endowed with universal value or a totalitarian vocation.'[109] But although the universality of a principle does not in itself guarantee absence of coercion, the rejection of universality is even less effective in this respect, since there is nothing to prevent the perspective of one minority from including its right to dominate others: the Empire which Lyotard so vehemently denounces is simply the minority which has fought its way to the

top. Similarly, Foucault's position - according to which only power can be socially constitutive - implies that successful resistance will itself become simply another power, while Deleuze and Guattari become lost in interminable labyrinths in attempting to distinguish désir molaire from désir moléculaire. It is clear, therefore, that the distinction of qualities of force or violence upon which the post-structuralists of the 1970s attempt to base their politics cannot be upheld, since one is simply the triumphant version of the other. In this respect, Nietzsche is far more consistent than his emulators, since he accepts, and even celebrates, the fact that, if claims to universality can never be more than the mask of particular forces and interests, then 'life' cannot take the form of a harmonious plurality of standpoints, but is 'essentially appropriation, injury, overpowering of the strange and weaker, suppression, severity, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and, at the least and mildest, exploitation'.[110] 'Every drive is a kind of lust to rule,' Nietzsche writes in The Will to Power, 'each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm.'[111]

It is with the realization of this consequence of the Nietzschean position that the impetus of post-structuralism is finally broken. Perhaps the defining impulse of this phase of French thought was expressed by Deleuze at the beginning of the 1960s in the section of Nietzsche and Philosophy which compares the Kantian and Nietzschean conceptions of critique. Kant, Deleuze argues, 'conceived critique as a force which should bear on all claims to knowledge and truth, but not on knowledge itself, not on truth itself. As a force which should bear on all claims to morality, but not on morality itself. From this point on total critique becomes a politics of compromise.'[112] The radical critic Nietzsche, by contrast, attacks the very concepts of truth and morality. With the notable exception of Lacan, all the post-structuralist thinkers assume that the concept of truth implies some form of unwarrantable restraint, and their aim is therefore to break out of, or subvert, philosophy, conceived of as an attempt to establish ultimate truths. The original impulse behind the assault on truth, therefore, is a libertarian one. Particularly after the disillusionment with Marxism, considered as the last great attempt to forge all partial perspectives on reality into a comprehensive theory, the only feasible path appears to be to allow each person or group their own truth, without any attempt to impose a common viewpoint. Yet, by the later 1970s, it has become apparent that this pluralism, which dissolves truth into the

force of perspectives, far from protecting difference and idiosyncrasy, has no means of protesting against the coercive imposition of points of view. Philosophical claims to truth were criticised, because the idea of a self-grounding discourse appeared to be the central illusion of philosophy, allowing particular standpoints to pass themselves off as universal. Yet the abandonment of any obligation to provide grounds, of any aspiration to universality, the attempt to supplant argument with some form of rhetorical strategy is seen to lead to an arbitrariness which is even more dangerous than the unity implicit in the concept of truth. Thus, in Au Juste, Lyotard can admit that 'It is not true that the quest for intensities or things of that kind can provide the basis for a politics, because there is the problem of injustice.'[113] The major shift of focus which has taken place in French philosophy since the late 1970s, the revival of interest in moral philosophy, and in particular the philosophy of Kant, are a direct response to this moral and political blind alley of the Nietzschean phase of post-structuralism.

CONCLUSION

As a result of the intellectual pendulum-swing which began in the late 1970s, the preoccupations of French thought in the first half of the 1980s are in many ways diametrically opposed to the philosophies of laughter and dance, of liberation from the burden of truth and responsibility, which the major thinkers of the previous decade had embraced. It is not widely known that the 'New Philosophers', who became notorious for their assault on Marxism, were no less scathing in their critiques of the philosophy of desire, perceiving in both a doctrine of liberation which claimed to transcend – either in a historicist or a naturalistic manner – considerations of morality.[1] Fresh from their disillusionment with Maoism, the New Philosophers posited the absolute primacy of individual human rights, and discovered in doing so the inability of any post-structuralist mode of thought to provide even a rudimentary framework for ethical reflection, an inability linked to the absence of any coherent theory of the subject.[2] Despite its general intellectual debility, it would be a mistake to dismiss the New Philosophy as simply a media-orchestrated sideshow, since it did express, in a raw and demagogic way, many of the frustrations which had been building up inside post-structuralism. Lament over the neglect of the problem of the subject in the sixties and seventies has now become widespread in France; indeed, the recent shift in philosophical consciousness has been as radical as that which replaced phenomenology with structuralism two decades earlier. Unlike its predecessor, however, this transformation has not resulted in a new – if broad – methodological consensus, but has seen the fragmentation of philosophical activity into a variety of subcurrents. In some quarters there has been a revival of interest in the native phenomenological tradition, and not least in the work of Merleau-Ponty, so abruptly pushed aside in the early sixties in favour of the new objectivist models of language.[3] Elsewhere there has been a turn towards the novelties of Anglo-American analytical philosophy,[4] and even a surge of interest in the Frankfurt School, whose major works did not become available in French translation till the 1970s. But despite the cogency of many current incidental criticisms of post-structuralism, a simple emphasis upon those areas of philosophy with which post-structuralism was unable to deal is not the best way of understanding the strengths and weakness of the movement as a whole.

For this an overview of its development, and a grasp of its central impetus is required.

Post-structuralism, in the form of Derrida's philosophy, establishes itself as a new phase by means of its critique of structuralism. Although the particular theory of language on which structuralism relied - based on the work of Saussure and his successors - might appear rudimentary in the light of contemporary theoretical developments such as generative grammar, what was important for structuralism was not so much the particular content of Saussure's theory as the general approach to language and meaning which it implied. The belief that language can be adequately theorized as a formal system in which the elementary units of sense can be inventoried prior to all experience, and in which the rules governing the composition of these units can be seen as determining all meaningful discourse, has been an influential one in 20th-century philosophy. It is this type of approach to language which, in the later 1960s, becomes the target of Jacques Derrida's critique, which shows that the analytical separation of _langue_ and _parole_, synchronic and diachronic, signifier and signified, ultimately leads to incoherence and self-contradiction. As we have already noted, however, Derrida's initial orientation towards Husserlian phenomenology, and his consequent neglect both of the hermeneutic tradition and of post-Husserlian developments in phenomenology, leads him into difficulties, since he tends to assume that the entire history of philosophy is dominated by the conception of meaning as a 'transcendental signified', as the object of an ultimate intellectual intuition. As a result of this questionable belief that 'the formal essence of the signified is _presence_', Derrida has no choice but to assume that 'each time a question of meaning is posed, this can only be within the closure of metaphysics.'[5] However, this is to ignore all those thinkers, from Schleiermacher to Merleau-Ponty, for whom meaning can in no sense be said to take the form of an ideal identity. No less than Derrida, Merleau-Ponty - for example - attacks 'the objectivist illusion' that 'the expressive act in its normal or fundamental form consists, given a signification, in the construction of a system of signs such that, for each element of the signified, there corresponds a signifying element - in other words, in _representation_.'[6] Derrida is far from being alone among 20th-century philosophers in wishing to challenge the securities of self-reflection, to move beyond 'this epoch of presence in general which is consciousness as meaning (_vouloir-dire_) in self-presence.'[7] The specific impact of Derrida's thought must

therefore be attributed to something other than his critique of subject-centred or objectivist theories of meaning.

The singularity of Derrida's thought may become clearer if it is noted that, after the realization that meaning can be reduced neither to the intentions of speaking subjects deposited in the form of a linguistic system, nor to the content of an objective system which subjects can do no more than employ, then the only remaining recourse appears to be to endow meaning with a transcendent source prior to both subject and object. It is at this point that the continuities of the hermeneutic tradition with religious modes of thought become apparent. Even when no explicitly theological argument is employed, authors such as Gadamer and Ricoeur lay stress on the attitude of openness and receptivity, of attentive self-subordination, which is needed in order to comprehend a meaning and a truth which comes from beyond all individual subjects. Although many of Derrida's philosophical moves parallel those of Heidegger and his successors, Derrida carries out one further manoeuvre in making différance not the ultimate origin of meaning, but the principle of a perpetual undercutting of meaning, which is thereby reduced to an ephemeral effect. Derrida therefore belongs - with his post-structuralist colleagues - to that tradition of thought which celebrates the erosion of meaning in modernity, not as a loss, but as a liberation. At one point in The Case of Wagner Nietzsche suggests that 'The same kind of person who once enthused about Hegel today enthuses about Wagner ... Above all the German youth understood him. The two words "infinite" and "meaning" were enough: at these words he experienced an incomparable sense of well-being.'[8] It is a similar rejection of the claustrophobia of boundless significance, a preference for the cold remoteness of Nietzsche's 'dance of the stars', which leads Derrida to place at the centre of his work the 'subtraction of all writing from the semantic horizon or the hermeneutic horizon, which in so far - at least - as it is a horizon of meaning, can be burst open by writing.'[9]

The difficulty with Derrida's position, however, is that it takes on board uncritically the structuralist assumption that meaning can indeed be reduced to the status of an 'effect' of linguistic structure, even if this structure is now transformed into the 'historico-transcendental scene of writing.'[10] In Dissemination, for example, he refers to the 'impossibility of reducing a text as such to its effects of meaning, of content, of thesis or of

theme', while in <u>Marges</u> he writes of 'an ever more powerful historical deployment of a general writing of which the system of speech, of consciousness, of meaning, of presence, of truth, etc., would be merely an effect'.[11] But since it is not possible to identify structurally relevant features at the level of the signifier without relying on speakers' intuitive sense of differences of meaning, the notion of the 'text in itself' prior to all considerations of meaning is deeply enigmatic: phenomena of meaning cannot be made comprehensible simply in terms of the relations <u>between</u> signifiers. It is for this reason that the hermeneutic and phenomenological traditions seek to describe a reciprocal relation - rather than one of representation - between language and meaning. Again, the reference to Merleau-Ponty is illuminating, since, although rejecting the notion of language as a representation of meanings, Merleau-Ponty nevertheless believes that 'what we have to say is only the excess of what we live over what has already been said'.[12] Much of Merleau-Ponty's effort is therefore directed towards delineating a new, more subtle relation between signifier and signified. He has no doubt that the 'very description of silence rests entirely on the virtues of language', yet, at the same time, insists that there is a 'meaning captive in the thing' which 'a precise uneasiness in the world of things said frees'.[13] In the post-structuralist climate such an 'autochthonous significance' of the world, which language merely elicits and consolidates, would be ascribed to the register which Lacan describes as the 'imaginary'. Yet it should be noted that, despite his arguments for the primacy of the symbolic, Lacan does not suggest that the imaginary - the domain of meaning and stable identity - can be reduced simply to an <u>effect</u> of the symbolic. Certainly, Lacan stresses that there is always an element of bare contingency in the symbolic order, so that analysis, in seeking for the determinations of the analysand's behaviour, will eventually run up against an incomprehensible given. 'Interpretation,' he argues, in <u>The Four Fundamental Concepts,</u> 'does not so much aim at meaning, as to reduce the signifiers to their non-meaning, so that we can find the determinants of the behaviour of the subject.'[14] Yet, in his later work, Lacan also stresses the interdependence of his three registers. In his topological models, Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic appear as three rings intertwined in such a way that it is always the presence of the third ring which holds the other two together. Thus Lacan does not attempt to privilege non-meaning over meaning, non-identity over identity in an unequivocal manner. For Lacan, whether

meaning is determinable or indeterminable is itself indeterminable, whereas Derrida asserts confidently that différance 'has no meaning'.[15]

A similar distinction, as we have already seen, can be drawn in relation to Derrida's attitude towards the subject. In his well-known essay on 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Human Sciences', Derrida argues that the beginning of the end of metaphysics arrives with the discovery that the notion of a centre of structure - a point which would be both part of the structure, and outside it as its immobile foundation - is incoherent. The successive philosophical names for this centre, determinations of this centre, are portrayed as the result of attempts to master the anxiety caused by being 'implicated in the game, caught up in the game, of being, as a being, from the very beginning in the game.'[16] Having seen through this deception, however, Derrida jumps to the assumption that there is no centre, that the centre was not 'a fixed place but a function, a sort of non-place in which substitutions of signs played to infinity'.[17] Derrida does not entertain a third possibility - that of a centre which is not immobile, but itself in movement, of a focus which is not an absolute point of origin. It is precisely such a conception of the subject, however, which thinkers such as Adorno, Merleau-Ponty and - of course - Lacan have been concerned to elaborate. Derrida's argument, as Manfred Frank has pointed out, can be seen as the result of clinging to one side of the paradox of self-consciousness. Self-identity depends upon an act of reflection in which a subject grasps the object of consciousness as itself. Yet the subject would not be able to recognize this object, this other as itself, unless it were already acquainted with itself prior to the act of self-reflection, an acquaintance which it was precisely the task of the theory of reflection to explain.[18] In stressing the 'anteriority of the text to my presence to myself' Derrida underlines the moment of otherness in the relation of reflection.[19] But, in so doing, he disperses the complementary moment of unity in self-consciousness into the spacing of the text, and is unable to develop any coherent theory of the subject at all. It is worth noting that even a philosopher such as Sartre, for whom Derrida evidently has little time, has a conception of consciousness which cannot be accorded with the Derridean model of pure self-presence. Sartre stresses that the act of reflection reveals a nothingness, a gap in consciousness which cannot be closed, so that consciousness 'is what it is not and is not what it is'. In the pre-reflexive cogito consciousness cannot know itself as unified, while to the extent that - in the

reflective cogito - it knows itself, it is no longer unified. 'We run after ourselves,' Sartre therefore remarks, 'and we are, by this very fact, the being which cannot join up with itself.'[20] The theory of the subject developed by Lacan clearly parallels that of Sartre at numerous points. Lacan differs from Sartre principally in arguing that we cannot become conscious of our non-self-identity, not because we cannot become aware of the inappropriateness of specific identifications, but because we cannot become conscious of ourselves independently of any self-identification whatsoever. For Lacan the unconscious is the self which cannot reflect itself.

Despite its ingenuity as a comprehensive reinterpretation of Freudian doctrine, Lacanian psychoanalysis raised a series of problems which became particularly pressing in the newly-politicised climate of the early 1970s, and which centred on the status of the concepts of repression and desire in Lacan's work. As we have seen, the unconscious in Lacan is not substantial, it does not consist in thoughts and feelings which have been forcibly removed from, or debarred from entering consciousness. 'Primal repression' in Lacan is not - as in Freud - a reaction to an 'excessive force of excitation and the breaking through of the protective shield against stimuli',[21] it does not imply a renunciation of satisfaction, but rather describes the inability of the satisfaction of need to reply to demand, and the consequent emergence of desire. But since there is therefore no desire before this entry of the subject into language, before an 'interposition of the signifier which renders impossible an immediate relation to the object',[22] the notion that the symbolic order - which Lacan unjustifiably equates with the social order - forcibly contains or inhibits the expression and realization of desire becomes incoherent. 'It is only through a speech that lifted the prohibition that the subject has brought to bear on himself by his own words,' Lacan remarks, 'that he might obtain the absolution which would give him back his desire.' And he continues: 'But desire is simply the impossibility of such speech, which, in replying to the first can merely reduplicate its mark of prohibition by completing the split which the subject undergoes by virtue of being a subject in so far ashe speaks.'[23] For Lacan desire is nothing other than the perpetual, self-thwarting, movement of the signifying chain in its attempts to signify itself; the hidden law which governs the movement of this chain and repressed desire are 'one and the same thing'.[24] Accordingly, the mostthat analysis can hope to achieve is to 'elevate powerlessness/impotence

(impuissance) (that which accounts for the phantasy) into logical impossibility
(that which embodies the real). That is to say, to complete the quota of signs
in which human fate is played out.'[25]

It is Lacan's pessimism, his erasure of the energetic dimension of the
Freudian unconscious, and the consequent absence in his thought of any clash
between desire and the forces of social order, of any link between psycho-
analysis and politics, against which Lyotard and Deleuze protest in the 1970s.
Lyotard shows convincingly, in Discours, Figure, that Lacan's view of the
unconscious as 'structured like a language' fails to take account of the
distorting impact of the repressed on speech. Lyotard's argument is further
confirmed by a consideration of Lacan's explanation of the privilege which
Freud accords to phenomena such as jokes and slips of the tongue in revealing
the unconscious. For Lacan 'the signifier plays and wins, so to speak, before
the subject even realizes it, to the extent that in the play of the Witz, the
mot d'esprit, for example, it surprises the subject. By its flash, what it
illuminates is the division of the subject with itself'.[26] The majority of
Freudians would interpret the joke or slip in terms of the relation between a
primary process and a secondary process, and of the irruption of the former
into the latter: the force which is revealed by the joke is not the same as
that which establishes the barrier between conscious and unconscious which
makes the joke possible. For Lacan, however, the fact that it is the play of
the joke which reveals the division of the subject 'should not conceal from us
that this division is produced by nothing other than the same play, the play of
the signifiers'.[27] For those who oppose Lacan's position, therefore, the
problem is raised of how to theorize the relation between desire – in its
energetic aspect – and the order of consciousness and discourse. For Lacan is
undoubtedly encouraged to take up his position by the consideration that to
treat the unconscious simply as an energetic system leaves unexplained how
becoming conscious of a process within such a system could have any effect
upon it. A purely objectivist account of the unconscious would leave it
impermeable to consciousness.

The solution to this problem adopted by Paul Ricoeur in Freud and
Philosophy, and by Jürgen Habermas in Knowledge and Human Interests, is to
argue that the causality of unconscious processes is the distinctive causality
of an alienated subjectivity. The argument entails that the form of compre-

hension operating in analysis is an unusual blend of causal explanation and hermeneutic understanding. For, on the one hand, the appearance of a symptom, which is a distorted form of communication, requires the supposition of determinate causal relations, yet, on the other hand, the analyst would not even know where to look for the causal antecedents of the symptom unless he or she had some conception of what its privatized, garbled symbolism might mean. Thus, in analysis, explanation and understanding are interdependent: the aim is not merely to establish the meaning of a distorted text, but the meaning of the distortions of the text. 'The analyst's understanding,' Habermas writes, 'owes its explanatory power ... to the fact that the clarification of a systematically inaccessible meaning succeeds only to the extent to which the faulty or misleading meaning is explained.'[28] Accordingly, unlike a hypothesis in the natural sciences, an analytic construction, no matter how apparently well-substantiated, cannot be accepted as valid unless ultimately accepted by the 'object' to which it is applied. It is only a subject who can acknowledge a formerly split-off meaning as its own, thereby dissolving the causality of this meaning. Thus analysis concludes in a self-reflection in which the subject is released from its dependence of 'hypostatized powers' by seeing through its own former self-deception.

It is important to note that, in this interpretation of psychoanalysis, the end-point of analysis, in which the distortion of communication in the form of the symptom is dissolved, serves both a normative and a cognitive function, and that these two functions are intrinsically linked. For it is only against the background of a conception of undistorted communication that the causal impact of the unconscious on discourse can be identified at all: we cannot apprehend the drives directly as 'natural' forces, but only privatively, via the lacunae which they induce in everyday meaningful discourse, since they are 'twisted and diverted intentions that have turned from conscious motives into causes and subjected communicative actions to the causality of "natural" conditions.'[29] Thus although, in contrast to Lacan, force cannot be reduced to the persistence of a hidden meaning, to the 'insistence of the letter', it can only be revealed through the dislocation of meaning. This point emerges with particular clarity in a discussion of Ricoeur's work by Charles Taylor, where Taylor powerfully argues that the various terminologies which psychoanalysis employs in order to theorize unconscious forces - mechanical, hydraulic, economic - are intrinsically metaphorical. The operation of these forces

cannot be grasped in itself, but only via their impact on the meaning of human speech and action. Although Taylor himself does not stress this aspect of the question, his phrasing supports Habermas's contention that analysis depends upon 'a preconception of the structure of non-distorted ordinary communication'.[30] 'We can locate <the unconscious forces> at work,' Taylor writes, 'in the distortions of meaning, the displacements of our true aims, the deformation of our self-revealing images, the forgetting of the essential, senseless deformations of behaviour, fears without adequate objects, slips of the tongue etc.'[31] Psychoanalysis is therefore, by implication, a search for the essential, the meaningful, the undeformed.

At around the time of Discours, Figure Lyotard's position seems to be fairly close to this. The repressed, he suggests, is 'something from the space of reference which, coming to lodge in discourse, produces anomalies'.[32] Hence 'the prime condition of discourse which is discontinuity, the existence of articuli, is not satisfied by unconscious "discourse". Freud always characterises the unconscious as work, as an other of discourse, not as another discourse'.[33] Lyotard differs from Ricoeur and Habermas, however, in insisting on an irreducible heterogeneity of the discursive and the figural, the conscious and the unconscious. This is why, in the aesthetic theory which Discours, Figure develops, the work of art cannot be simply a placating expression of phantasy, but reveals the gap between the forces at work in the production of phantasy and the order of consciousness. For Lyotard any reconciliation of Eros and Logos is already a betrayal of the disruptive force of desire, and - towards the end of Discours, Figure - the slide from Freud towards Nietzsche which this position entails is already apparent. 'Precisely what the legend of Orpheus shows,' Lyotard argues, 'is that regression is not reversible, that the orphic body, the work of art, is destined to be fragmented, and that there is no synthesis of Dionysianism (of the Freudian demonic) and of Apollonianism. The domination of the ego is the domination of reality over the unconscious, the domination of repression ... there is no ego whose function would be to lift or reverse repression.'[34]

To Lyotard's conclusion that there can be no reconciliation of conscious and unconscious, except in the deceptive form of phantasy, there corresponds, on the political level, a loss of trust in the normative foundations of the Marxist critique. In the immediate aftermath of May '68 Lyotard continues to

use the concept of alienation to describe 'the experience of a false, abstract universality'.[35] But he rapidly comes to enquire how a _true_ universality could ever be determined, and concudes that any theoretical attempt to define such a universality is viciously circular, indeed that the striving for a universal which would no longer exclude the particular is simply another means of clamping down on the drives. Marxist critique can only validate its claim to detect the forces, the relations of domination, which render other viewpoints partial and irrational, by believing itself to be immune to such forces. But this belief in its own unique objectivity is simply the force of Marxism itself, its own play for power: all viewpoints are determined by forces. In reaching this conclusion Lyotard arrives, via a long political and theoretical detour, at the position which his fellow philosopher of desire, Gilles Deleuze, had espoused from the very beginnings of his work. In Nietzsche and Philosophy Deleuze introduces the fundamental principles of Nietzsche's thought in the following way: 'A phenomenon is not an appearance or an apparition, but a sign, a symptom, which finds its meaning in an actual force ... Every force is appropriation, domination, exploitation of a quantity of reality ... The same object, the same phenomenon changes its meaning according to the force which appropriates it.'[36]

The paradox of this type of argument, of course, is that it must rely upon an ontology, on an absolute subordination of meaning to force, in order to back up its critique of epistemology, to explain why there cannot be an objective account of the world. Thus Deleuze writes that 'The world is neither true nor real, but living. And the living world is the will to power, will to the false which actualizes itself under diverse powers.'[37] Nietzsche's critique of truth, his wish to combine relativism with the contention that all perspectives are illusory rather than all being equally true, requires a cognition of the world as intrinsically inaccessible to cognition. As we have already seen, Nietzsche does not so much abolish the true world as invert its traditional attributes, so that - in The Will to Power - he can argue that 'Everything simple is merely imaginary, is not "true". But whatever is real, whatever is true, is neither one nor even reducible to one'.[38] Equivalents for this ontology can be found in the work of all the Nietzsche-influenced thinkers of the 1970s in France, from the chain of ineffable singularities which constitute Lyotard's libidinal band, via the boundless flux of Deleuze and Guattari's desire, to Foucault's evocation - behind the unity of the soul -

of 'a complex system of distinct and multiple elements, unable to be mastered by the powers of synthesis',[39] or his portrayal - in The History of Sexuality - of the ever more minute ramifications of power.

By a consistent series of moves, therefore, post-structuralism arrives at a position which launches an all-out attack on truth, but which presupposes the truth of its own ontology of radically singular forces. Rather than retreating on discovery of this paradox, however, post-structuralism forges ahead to make the only philosophical move remaining open to it: to present all philosophical discourse as a 'fiction fashioned in the materials of language',[40] and to distinguish itself from other philosophies only by its willingness to confess its own status, to abandon the 'fiction of non-fiction'.[41] At this point the preoccupations of post-structuralism necessarily become, to a large extent, stylistic. The task becomes one of developing a mode of discourse which will embody what Nietzsche terms 'affirmation', that is: a form of assertion disconnected from the concept of truth. This is the moment when Deleuze and Guattari produce the rhetorical floods of Anti-Oedipus, in mimicry of the flux of desire which they describe, when Derrida begins his more daring experiments in writing, in Tympan, Glas, Eperons,[42] and when Lyotard pens the pyrotechnics of Economie Libidinale. In Economic Libidinale Lyotard - typifying this moment - seeks to evoke a form of knowledge beyond all demonstration. 'We are sure,' he exclaims, 'absolutely sure of what we are saying (without it being in the least like certainty as you understand it) and, at the same time, bereft of all security.'[43] By the end of the 1970s, however, Lyotard is obliged to retreat from this position. His admission, in Au Juste, of a distinction between logos and lexis, is an admission of the unavoidability of an appeal to norms of truth and rationality, and signals a change of mood in French philosophy which extends far beyond Lyotard himself. 'Theorie-fiction', it appears, is neither good fiction nor good theory.

One way of understanding Lyotard's admission of the possibility of a violent gap between logos and lexis is as a retreat from the belief in the possibility of disconnecting assertion from truth. In Rudiments Païens Lyotard had already noted the tenacity of the link between assertion and truth, observing that 'The desire for truth which feeds terrorism in everyone, is inscribed in our most spontaneous use of language, to such an extent that every discourse appears to deploy naturally its claim to speak the truth, by a

sort of irremediable vulgarity.'[44] By the time of Au Juste, however, Lyotard ascribes potential terrorism not to claims to truth, but to the claim that statements are beyond interrogation as to their truth or falsity. 'The theses <of Economic Libidinale> are not up for discussion,' he admits, 'but in reality they can be... That supposes that the reader does not allow himself to be intimidated, so to speak.'[45] This seems to suggest that, far from truth being the object of a 'desire' which could, in principle, be abandoned, there is an intrinsic link between assertion, the raising of truth claims, and an expectation of possible discussion. In recent philosophy, Jürgen Habermas has developed a theory of truth based on precisely this set of relations. Truth, in Habermas's view, is 'a validity-claim which we link with an utterance in so far as we assert it.'[46] The content of this claim is that, if the statement should be challenged, convincing reasons can be brought forward in support of it. Such a form of discussion, in which claims to truth are contested and adjudicated, Habermas terms Diskurs, so that to consider a statement as true is to assume that it would be the object of an agreement reached by all possible interlocutors in the medium of Diskurs.

Habermas's consensus theory of truth does not fall victim to relativism because of the stipulation that possible interlocutors must be qualified as rational. Speakers of a language are conscious of the fact that no empirically existing consensus guarantees truth, otherwise the challenging of a hitherto universally accepted assumption would be incomprehensible. Thus the project of reaching consensus implies the ability to distinguish between a true and a false consensus. This in turn, Habermas suggests, implies the concept of a form of communication in which interlocutors do not produce utterances for unacknowledged or unconscious reasons, as the result of forces either internal or external to the structure of communication: the concept of the rationality of speakers is bound up with the idea of their openness to the force of argument alone. Habermas goes on to suggest that the 'ideal speech situation' in which this force would prevail would be characterised by the symmetrical rights of all interlocutors to bring forth evidence, questions, objections, and to employ the different types of possible speech acts. It is important for the political bearings of Habermas's argument that the ideal speech situation should not be simply an ideal, but a necessary presupposition or communication oriented towards reaching understanding. Unless we believe ourselves to be engaged in rational dialogue, then Diskurs has already lost its point.[47]

Habermas's consensus theory of truth throws into clear relief the error upon which the post-structuralist assault on truth is based. For the post-structuralists the universality implicit in the concept of truth appears as a threat. Since no philosophical conception of truth can demonstrate the universal validity which it claims, such a claim can only embody a desire for the coercive unification of a multiplicity of viewpoints. Truth becomes 'the weapon of paranoia and power, the claw of unity-totality in the space of words'.[48] What this argument fails to perceive, however, is that it is the very universality of claims to truth which makes for their vulnerability: it is only because assertions make demands on the assent of others, and are not proven simply by the certainty of the speaker, that they are vulnerable to challenge. And it is only when assent cannot be elicited through argument that the use of force becomes a temptation. Hence it is not truth itself which is intrinsically linked to power, but rather truth-claims which could not be upheld if they were not shielded from critical probing by coercion or manipulation. Furthermore, although Habermas's theory tells us what truth is, it does not fall victim to post-structuralist criticism of the circularity of criterial accounts of truth, since it does not provide a _method_ for sifting true from false statements: theories about how truth may best be attained are themselves subject to revision in the medium of _Diskurs_. Lastly, it should be noted that Habermas's theory of truth cannot be accused of the errors which Derrida gathers together under the label of the 'metaphysics of presence'. The theory is fallibilistic since, although we can discover, by revealing forces which formerly distorted the structure of communication, that we were not in the ideal speech situation, we can never be certain that we are in such a situation. Accepted truths can be problematized in _Diskurs_, but we cannot simultaneously enter into and question the validity of _Diskurs_ itself: there is no metadiscursive level.[49] This is simply another way of saying that the anticipation of the ideal speech situation, and hence the actual effectiveness of this anticipation, is a necessary condition of communication aimed at reaching agreement. The ideal speech situation provides a critical yardstick by means of which any factually existing consensus may be tested, a standpoint from which the forces which distort meaning can be detected, without presupposing an ultimate experience of truth as presence.[50]

As we have already noted in discussing the work of Foucault, Habermas develops this theory of communication, and of the conception of rationality implicitly at work in communication, not primarily in order to explicate the concept of cognitive truth, but in order to restore the cogency of a critical theory of society which was threatened by its too intimate dependence on a faltering philosophy of history. The ideal speech situation, to which - in Habermas's view - we are committed by the very act of speech, provides an adumbration of a social order in which not only knowledge claims, but social norms would be assessed and determined in the light of the freely expressed needs and interests of all social members. Habermas stresses the 'non-classical' nature of his consensus theory of truth,[51] because - like earlier members of the Frankfurt School - he perceives a conflict between the classical philosophical accounts of truth and rationality and the ideal of a full individuality, no longer split between mind and reason, and the empirical manifold of needs, wants and capacities. This critique is also shared, of course, by some of the leading post-structuralist thinkers, even appearing - in a rarified form - in Derrida's celebration of the play of a discourse cut free from its logocentric moorings. Yet where the post-structuralists, following Nietzsche, crucially diverge from the Frankfurt School is in their belief that philosophy is inherently antagonistic to impulse, that there is an irreducible conflict between reason and liberation. In order to correct this situation the post-structuralists attempted to introduce the aesthetic dimension into philo-sophical discourse itself, as a means of radicalizing it by transcending its constraints. The result of this move, however, was to dissolve the critical purchase of the discourse into a form of play which tended towards an amoralistic hedonism.

It is largely as a reaction to this implicit amoralism that the revival of interest in Kant's philosophy, which has been a distinctive feature of the French thought of the early 1980s, must be understood. In returning to Kant, a figure almost entirely eclipsed in France since the Hegel renaissance of the 1930s, the most recent French philosophy has continued to accept the in-evitability of the choice between reason and liberation imposed by the avant-garde thought of the 1970s, but has now opted for the former at the expense of the latter. The Kantian stress on the impossibility, for finite rational beings, of transcending the tension between duty and impulse is now prized as a valuable brake on claims for unconditional autonomy, which reached their

delirious culmination in seventies Nietzscheanism. In a recent influential book, Jean-Luc Nancy, a former pupil of Derrida, counterposes to what he sees as our contemporary 'imperative of imperatives' - 'that veritable imperatives ought not to have the character of constraint, of exteriority, nor be linked to the exercise of an injunction, an obligation, a submission'[52] - an interpretation of Kant's ethical theory which positively exults in the heteronomous aspect of the moral law, considered as 'untranscendable as an imperative law because it is not the self-legislation of a subject.'[53] Nancy's reading of Kant is echoed by much of the French thought of the early 1980s, which - referring to Blanchot, Heidegger, Levinas - is marked by a similar pathos of finitude, and repeatedly stresses the hubristic dangers of claims to self-grounding and self-determination. Even those younger thinkers whose quest for a philosophically-grounded theory of human rights leads them to emphasize the concept of rational autonomy in Kant appear to be in a minority.[54] Yet, whatever its form, this reversion from Nietzsche to Kant is scarcely an adequate reply to post-structuralism, since it leaves the difficulties raised by the advocacy of spontaneity and impulse unresolved. Nietzsche's accusation, in On the Genealogy of Morals, that the categorical imperative 'reeks of cruelty' cannot be lightly dismissed. By contrast, the tradition of Critical Theory attempts to reconcile the Nietzschean and Kantian insights by arguing that any conception of reason which excludes or downgrades the idea of sensual happiness must be seen as partial and ideological. The conflict between reason and impulse cannot be overcome either by a simple aestheticization of theory, or by a recourse to inflexible moral universals, but only by a practical transformation of the system of society which generates this conflict. For Critical Theory the most effective critique of philosophy, of the 'Western metaphysical tradition' against which post-structuralism rebels, is to take philosophy at its word, to insist that there is a 'secret utopia in the concept of reason' which demands realization in a form of community where self-expression and self-determination would become a practical possibility for all.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Quotations from existing translations of foreign works have sometimes been altered in the interests of accuracy.

Introduction

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5   See the representative essays collected in Richard Rorty, Consequences of Pragmatism, Brighton, 1983.

6   See, for example, Andreas Huyssen, 'Critical Theory and Modernity: Introduction', in New German Critique 26, Spring-Summer 1982.

Chapter One

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and 4.

2 Michel Foucault, Folie et Déraison. Histoire de la Folie à l'Age
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1962.

3 See Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'Introduction à l'Oeuvre de Marcel Mauss', in
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5 This ideological moment in French thought is nicely captured in François
Châtelet's essay, 'Où en est le Structuralisme?', La Quinzaine
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6 Gérard Granel's essay on Derrida in Traditionis Traditio, Paris, 1972,
welcomes Derrida's work as the rebirth of philosophical thought after a
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10 For a classic statement of Husserl's project see 'Philosophy as a
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12 Philosophy as Rigorous Science, p. 181.

13   Edmund Husserl, <u>Logische Untersuchungen</u>, Tübingen, 1968, Vol. 2, Part
      1, p. 30.

14   <u>Ibid</u>., p. 32.

15   <u>Ibid</u>., p. 37.

16   <u>Ibid</u>., p. 40.

17   Jacques Derrida, <u>La Voix et le Phénomène</u>, Paris, 1967, pp. 58-9.

18   <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 55-56.

19   <u>Ibid</u>., p. 63.

20   <u>Ibid</u>., p. 78.

21   Jacques Derrida, <u>Marges de la Philosophie</u>, Paris, 1972, p. 378.

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23   See <u>Marges</u>, pp. 16-17.

24   See, for example, Jacques Derrida, <u>Positions</u>, Paris, 1972, pp. 28-9.

25   See <u>Logische Untersuchungen</u>, Vol. 2, Part 1, p. 32.

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34   <u>L'Ecriture et la Différance</u>, p. 410.

35   See <u>La Voix et le Phénomène</u>, pp. 83-90.

36   See Jacques Derrida, 'Plato's Pharmacy', in <u>Dissemination</u>, London,
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37   Ferdinand de Saussure, <u>Course in General Linguistics</u>, London, 1974, p.
      112.

38   See <u>Of Grammatology</u>, pp. 30-44.

39   See <u>Marges</u>, pp. 111-13.

40   See <u>Of Grammatology</u>, pp. 6-26.

41   See <u>L'Ecriture et la Différance</u>, p. 412.

42   See especially <u>Sein und Zeit</u>, Division Two, chapters 1-2.

43   See Martin Heidegger, 'Metaphysics as History of Being', in <u>The End of
      Philosophy</u>, New York, 1973.

44   Martin Heidegger, <u>An Introduction to Metaphysics</u>, London, 1975, p. 155.

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46   See Martin Heidegger, 'Platons Lehre von der Wahrheit', in <u>Wegmarken</u>, Frankfurt, 1967.

47   <u>An Introduction to Metaphysics</u>, p. 39.

48   <u>Of Grammatology</u>, p. 20.

49   <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 22.

50   See <u>Dissemination</u>, pp. 192-193.

51   <u>Marges</u>, pp. 243-4.

52   Martin Heidegger, <u>Unterwegs zur Sprache</u>, Pfullingen, 1959, p. 14.

53   <u>L'Ecriture et la Différance</u>, p. 266.

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56   <u>Positions</u>, p. 94.

57   <u>Der Satz vom Grund</u>, p. 161.

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60   See Martin Heidegger, 'Die Sprache', in <u>Unterwegs zur Sprache</u>.

61   <u>Unterwegs zur Sprache</u>, p. 255.

62   <u>An Introduction to Metaphysics</u>, p. 172.

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64   Martin Heidegger, <u>Erläuterungen zu Holderlins Dichtung</u>, Frankfurt, 1951, p. 36.

65   <u>Of Grammatology</u>, p. 69.

66   <u>Unterwegs zur Sprache</u>, p. 33. My emphasis.

67   <u>Positions</u>, p. 39.

68   <u>Marges</u>, p. 161.

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70   <u>Dissemination</u>, p. 194; <u>Of Grammatology</u>, p. 160.

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103   Of Grammatology, p. 61.

104   See Edmund Husserl, 'Phenomenology and Anthropology' in <u>Shorter Works</u>. However, Husserl believes that Fichte failed adequately to grasp the 'infinite transcendental ground', and that German Idealism 'lost its way in a mire of speculations': <u>ibid.</u>, p. 319.

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107   F.W.J. Schelling, <u>Philosophie der Offenbarung</u>, Suhrkamp edition, Frankfurt, 1977, p. 111.

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110   See <u>La Voix et le Phénomène</u>, p.6.

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113   See, for example, Adorno's critique of Husserl, <u>Against Epistemology</u>, Oxford, 1982.

Chapter Two, Section One

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17   De la Psychose Paranoïaque, p. 320.

18   Ibid., p. 319.

19   Ibid., p. 248.

20   E, p. 65.

21   E, p. 88.

22   E, p. 89.

23   E, p. 89.

24   ES, p. 8.

25   E, p. 178.

26   While England and Italy had thriving schools of Hegelian thought during
      the 19th century, Hegel made no direct impact on French philosophy
      until the 1930s. Jean Wahl's Le Malheur de la Conscience dans la
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      Kojève's courses, which interweave Hegel with Marx and Heidegger,
      began in 1933. Jean Hyppolite published the first part of his translation
      of the Phenomenology in 1939, and the second in 1941. His thesis on
      Hegel, Genèse et Structure de la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit, appeared in
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      Lacan pays tribute to Kojève and Hyppolite (p. 172n.). For more detail
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41   E, p. 374.

42   See Jacques Lacan, Le Séminaire Livre I: Les Ecrits Techniques de
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43   See ES, p. 6.

44   Séminaire I, p. 242.

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52   E, p. 375.

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55   ES, p. 126.

56   ES, p. 126.

57   Séminaire I, p. 126.

58   Ibid., p. 264.

59   E, p. 82.

60   ES, p. 87.

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64   See Paul Ricoeur, Freud and Philosophy, pp. 461-482; Jürgen Habermas,
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     'Phénoménologie de Hegel et Psychanalyse', in Figures de la Pensée
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65   Phänomenologie des Geistes, p. 562.

66   Séminaire I, p. 20.

67   Ibid., p. 20.

68   Ibid., p. 46.

69   E, p. 144.

70   ES, p. 54.

71 ES, p. 52.

72 ES, p. 52.

73 ES, p. 53.

74 Jacques Lacan, <u>Le Séminaire Livre XI: Les Quatre Concepts Fondamentaux de la Psychanalyse</u>, Paris, 1973, p. 164.

75 E, p. 875.

76 ES, p. 51.

77 <u>Séminaire I</u>, p. 294.

78 <u>Séminaire II</u>, p. 58.

79 This conception of analysis, and the American 'ego-psychology' on which it is based, is one of Lacan's favourite targets.

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81 See <u>Sein und Zeit</u>, pp. 382-387.

82 ES, p. 4.

83 Jacques Lacan, 'The Neurotic's Individual Myth', <u>Psychoanalytical Quarterly</u>, Vol. 48, 1979, p. 423.

84 See ES, pp. 47-48.

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86 See E, p. 172.

87 ES, p. 80.

88 E, p. 373.

89 Jean-Paul Sartre, <u>L'Etre et le Néant</u>, collection 'Tel' edition, Paris, 1980, pp. 89, 90.

90 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, <u>The Phenomenology of Perception</u>, London, 1962, pp. 157-8.

91 Erich Fromm, 'Freud's Model of Man and its Social Determinants', in <u>The Crisis of Psychoanalysis</u>, Harmondsworth, 1973, p. 47.

92 R.D. Laing, <u>The Divided Self</u>, Harmondsworth, 1973, p. 19.

93 ES, p. 76.

94 'The Neurotic's Individual Myth', p. 406.

95 <u>Séminaire I</u>, p. 82.

96 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 178.

97 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 32, 20.

98 E, p. 381.

99 The 'Discours de Rome' is the common name for the longest <u>écrit</u>, 'The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis' (ES, pp. 30-113). Due to be delivered to an official congress in Rome, in September 1953, it

was delivered to an alternative gathering of analysts in the same city, because of a split in the Paris Psychoanalytic Society centred on Lacan.

100   Séminaire II, p. 386.

101   'Hegel is at the limits of anthropology. Freud went beyond them. His discovery is that man is not completely in man. Freud is not a humanist': Séminaire II, p. 92.

102   See, for example, E, pp. 867-868.

103   Jacques Lacan, 'Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to any Subject Whatever', in The Structuralist Controversy, p. 188.

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109   Séminaire I, p. 7.

110   ES, p. 281.

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112   See ES, pp. 84-5, for Lacan's demonstration that the 'language of the bees' is not a language in the human sense.

113   'Of Structure as an Inmixing', p. 194.

114   ES, p. 150.

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121   'Introduction a l'Oeuvre de Marcel Mauss', p. xxxii.

122   Claude Lévi-Strauss, Totemism, London, 1964, p. 68.

123   See Totemism, p. 77.

124   ES, p. 66.

125   ES, p. 46.

126   ES, p. 48.

127   ES, p. 307.

128   E, p. 857.

129   Séminaire II, p. 96.

130   ES, p. 301.

131   Séminaire II, p. 96.

132   Lacan's discovery that linguistic meaning cannot be grounded in
      intention may be compared with almost contemporary developments in
      analytical philosophy, where the attempt to theorize meaning in terms
      of communicative intention ran aground on the realization that
      communicative intention, in order to succeed, requires a higher
      level-level intention to secure the recognition of the intention to
      communicate (see P.F. Strawson, 'Intention and Convention in Speech
      Acts', in J.R. Searle (ed.), The Philosophy of Language, Oxford, 1971).
      But once this is appreciated, an indefinitely escalating series of
      intentions can be seen to be required, a mirror-play of intention and
      recognition which corresponds to Lacan's realization that all
      intersubjectivity is imaginary.

133   Séminaire II, p. 43.

134   E, p. 346.

135   Séminaire III, p. 47.

136   Séminaire II, p. 286 p. 286.

137   Ibid., p. 48.

138   ES, p. 126.

139   ES, p. 172.

140   Séminaire II, p. 286.

141   ES, p. 304.

142   ES, p. 101.

143   E, p. 23.

144   E, p. 25. Lacan's phrasing neatly condenses his distinction between the
      predictability of a code-determined reaction, and the unpredictability of
      a human reply.

145   E, p. 30.

146   Jacques Lacan, 'Introduction à l'édition allemande d'un premier volume
      des Ecrits', Scilicet 5, 1975, p. 11.

147   ES, p. 134.

148   ES, p. 134.

149   See ES, pp. 131-7.

150   ES, p. 9.

151   Jacques Lacan, 'Radiophonie', in Scilicet 2/3, 1970, p. 60.

152   ES, p. 150.

153   E, pp. 387-388.

154   Séminaire II, p. 261.

155   ES, p. 288.

156   ES, p. 287.

157   E, p. 709.

158   E, p. 830.

159   E, p. 834.

160   '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': ES, p. 49;
      'The unconscious is the sum of the effects of speech on the subject, at
      that level where the subject constitutes itself from the effects of the
      signifier': Séminaire XI, p. 16.

161   E, p. 469.

162   Jacques Lacan, 'Psychanalyse et Médicine'. Cited in Moustafa Safouan,
      Le Structuralisme en Psychanalyse, Paris, 1968, p. 32.

163   Séminaire I, p. 79.

164   E, p. 469.

165   Séminaire I, p. 79.

166   Séminaire XI, p. 27.

167   'Psychanalyse et Médicine'. Cited in Safouan, p. 32.

168   Freud, 'Inhibitions, Symptoms, Anxiety', Standard Edition, Vol. 20, p.
      139.

169   ES, p. 285.

170   Jacques Lacan, 'La relation d'objet et les structures freudiennes',
      (compte rendu of the fourth Seminar), Bulletin de Psychologie, Vol. XI,
      1957, p. 852.

171   Ibid., p. 851.

172   Séminaire III, p. 329.

173   Séminaire XI, p. 268.

174   Jacques Lacan, 'Le Désir et son Interpretation' (compte rendu of the
      sixth Seminar), Bulletin de Psychologie, Vol. XIII, 1959, p. 269.

175   Séminaire XI, p. 78.

176   ES, p. 280n.

177   ES, p. 313.

178   See Jacques Lacan, 'L'Etourdit', Scilicet 4, Paris, 1973, p. 44; Séminaire
      XI, p. 245.

Chapter Two Section Two

1   La Voix et le Phénomène, p. 92.

2   ES, p. 307.

3   See 'Radiophonie', pp. 55-6; Positions, p. 90.

4   See 'Plato's Drugstore', in Dissemination, pp. 142-55, and ES, p. 199.

5   E, p. 470.

6   For example Roland Barthes' S/Z (Paris, 1970), based on courses given
     at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in 1968 and '69, both inveighs
     against the difference-suppressing 'system of closure of the West' and
     employs a Lacanian account of the relation between the symbolic and
     castration. Much of the work of the Tel Quel group from around the
     same period also bears the mark of both thinkers. In his Psychanalyser,
     Paris, 1968, Serge Leclaire, a close follower of Lacan, refers
     favourably to Derrida (p. 69). Lacan's adherents were subsequently
     forbidden to follow Derrida's teaching.

7   GREPH was founded in 1974 as an organization of philosophy teachers
     in secondary and tertiary education, and of philosophy students, to
     research critically into the history of philosophy teaching and to
     combat the government's proposed cutbacks in this area. See the
     collective volume Qui a Peur de la Philosophie?, Paris, 1977.

8   Collected in Jacques Derrida, La Carte Postale: de Socrate à Freud et
     au-delà, Paris, 1980. Translated as 'The Purveyor of Truth', Yale
     French Studies 52, 1975.

9   Jean-Luc Nancy et Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Le Titre de la Lettre,
     Paris, 1973.

10   See 'Discussion' following Jacques Derrida, 'Structure, Sign and Play in
     the Human Sciences', in Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (eds.),
     The Structuralist Controversy, London, 1970, pp. 271-2.

11   Positions, p. 40.

12   Marges, p. 16.

13   Ibid., p. 12.

14   Ibid., p. 12-13.

15   Ibid., p. 16.

16   For a fuller statement of this critique of Derrida, see Manfred Frank,
     Das Sagbare und das Unsagbare, Frankfurt, 1980, pp. 184-203.

17   L'Ecriture et la Différance, p. 411.

18   Positions, p. 90.

19   E, p. 840.

20   Jacques Lacan, Le Séminaire Livre XX: Encore, Paris, 1975, p. 10.

21   Logische Untersuchungen, Vol. 2, Part 1, p. 164.

22   'Le Désir et Son Interpretation', p. 264.

23   ES, p. 304.

24   ES, p. 306.

25   ES, p. 306.

26   ES, pp. 665-6.

27   Séminaire XI, p. 181.

28   ES, p. 300.

29   Dissemination, p. 328.

30   Edmund Husserl, The Paris Lectures, The Hague, 1970, p. 32.

31   Positions, p. 88.

32   Of Grammatology, p. 158.

33   The Paris Lectures, p. 33.

34   Positions, p. 40.

35   Séminaire XX, p. 23.

36   Séminaire II, p. 278.

37   E, p. 25.

38   Séminaire XI, p. 152.

39   E, p. 388.

40   E, p. 388.

41   'Radiophonie', p. 60.

42   Séminaire XI, p. 149.

43   ES, p. 194.

44   ES, p. 17.

45   Jacques Lacan, 'Conferences et Entretiens dans les Universités Nord-
      Americaines', Scilicet 6/7, 1976, p. 29. Like so many elements of Lacan's
      thought, this conception is already to be found in Kojève. Speaking of
      modern physics, Kojève remarks that 'This abstract description is produced
      not with words which have a meaning (Logos) but with the aid of algor-
      ithms: if concrete man speaks of the Real, the abstract Subject of physics
      employs a mathematical 'language'. At the level of the algorithm there is
      neither incertitude nor contradiction. But neither is there Truth in the
      proper sense of the term, since there is no Discourse (Logos)': Introduction
      à la Lecture de Hegel, collection 'Tel' edition, Paris, 1979, p. 455n.

46   Positions, p. 38.

47   Of Grammatology, p. 62.

48   See Séminaire III, p. 18.

49   Le Séminaire Livre XXII: R.S.I., 1974-75 (unpublished). The title also
      puns on the French word for 'heresy'. Lacan's tripartite ontology has
      its correlates, although not exact parallels, in the work of other
      twentieth-century thinkers. For example, in the 'three worlds' of the
      later philosophy of Karl Popper, or in Habermas's distinction of three
      'domains of reality': outer nature, society, and inner nature. Lacan is
      the only post-structuralist to draw these distinctions, which, Habermas
      contends, are irreducible in post-Hegelian thought.

50   ES, p. 87. Some of the main disagreements between Derrida and Lacan
      discussed in this section emerge very clearly in the course of Derrida's
      full-scale attack on Lacan in 'Le Facteur de la Vérité' (The Purveyor of
      Truth), where the Derridean notion of dissemination clashes with
      Lacan's interpretation of the letter and its circuit in the story by
      Edgar Allen Poe. For Derrida dissemination has two crucial
      implications: firstly, the letter cannot be - as Lacan contends -
      indivisible, 'dissemination mutilates the unity of the signifier, that is, of
      the phallus' (The Purveyor, p. 66); and secondly, it cannot be claimed -
      as Lacan does - that a letter 'always arrives at its destination', since
      'it can be said that it never really arrives there, that when it arrives
      its possibly not arriving, torments it with an internal divergence' (The
      Purveyor, p. 107). It is clear, however, that Derrida has misunderstood
      what Lacan intends by the indivisibility of the letter, and that he has
      simplified the notion of the letter 'arriving at its destination'. Derrida
      thinks of the indivisibility of the letter as that of a 'self-identity
      inaccessible to displacement' (The Purveyor, p. 31); what is
      indestructible in the letter, he suggests, 'resides in what elevates it
      towards the ideality of a meaning' (The Purveyor, p. 86), even if this
      meaning is the constitutive absence of the phallus. Derrida fails to
      appreciate that, as Lacan puts it, 'the signifier is a unity by virtue of
      being unique' (Ecrits, p. 24), in other words because it is the
      embodiment of the singularity of a speaking subject, and not the
      representation of an ideality. Thus the Lacanian letter is far from
      implying the 'intangibility of a self-identity travelling without
      alteration' (The Purveyor, p. 84). Rather, as Lacan makes clear, the
      letter is capable of 'sustaining itself only in a displacement' (Ecrits, p.
      29). Lacking the notion of a subject which strives to express itself by
      constantly displacing the universal rules of language, Derrida, as we
      have seen, is obliged to ascribe semantic mobility to a hypostatized
      'movement of the signifier'. Similarly, Lacan's contention that a letter
      'always arrives at its destination' does not imply a unique trajectory,
      but rather that wherever the letter arrives is its destination, in the
      sense that the signifier always reveals the truth of the subject. The
      circularity of the letter's trajectory, connected by Lacan with his
      dictum that we receive from the Other our own message in an inverted
      form, suggests only that we cannot avoid the assumption of a true
      meaning, even if this meaning can never be finally pinned down.

Chapter Three

1   See Claude Lévi-Strauss, L'Homme Nu, Paris, 1971, pp. 563, 570.

2   Jean François Lyotard, Dérive a Partir de Marx et Freud, Paris, 1973, p. 11.

3   Dérive, p. 311.

4   Jean-François Lyotard, La Phénoménologie, Paris, 1954.

5   Ibid., p. 43.

6   Ibid., p. 44.

7   L'Ecriture et la Différance, p. 427.

8   Dissemination, p. 328.

9   La Phénoménologie, p. 43.

10 Ibid., p. 43.

11 Ibid., p. 5.

12 Jean-François Lyotard, Discours, Figure (DF), Paris, 1971, p. 9.

13 DF, p. 11.

14 DF, p. 14.

15 DF, p. 33.

16 DF, p. 34.

17 DF, p. 32.

18 DF, p. 31.

19 DF, p. 118.

20 DF, p. 109.

21 Positions, p. 90.

22 Ibid., p. 90.

23 Ibid., p. 40.

24 In the discussion following his 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Human Sciences', in Macksey and Donato (eds.), The Structuralist Controversy, Baltimore, 1972. David Wood has also indicated the difficulties created by Derrida's unconditional prioritization of non-identity over identity in his 'Time and the Sign', Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology, Vol. 13, No. 2, May 1982.

25 DF, p. 38.

26 DF, p. 52.

27 DF, p. 129.

28 DF, p. 211.

29 DF, p. 218.

30   _Dérive_, p. 229.

31   Maurice Merlean-Ponty, _Le Visible et l'Invisible_, collection 'Tel' edition, Paris, 1981, p. 61.

32   See, for example, _ibid._, pp. 107-108.

33   _Ibid._, p. 58.

34   _Ibid._, p. 230.

35   DF, p. 56.

36   DF, p. 56.

37   Cited in DF, p. 108n.

38   DF, p. 59.

39   DF, p. 271.

40   Freud, _The Interpretation of Dreams_, _Standard Edition_, Vol. 4, p. 278.

41   ES, p. 159.

42   ES, p. 159.

43   ES, p. 164.

44   ES, p. 164.

45   ES, p. 160.

46   E, p. 470.

47   _The Interpretation of Dreams_, _Standard Edition_, Vol. 5, p. 534.

48   ES, p. 259.

49   _Standard Edition_, Vol. 5, p. 546.

50   ES, p. 257.

51   Freud explicitly uses this term as a synonym for 'considerations of representability' in his introductory essay 'On Dreams', _Standard Edition_, Vol. 5, p. 685.

52   DF, p. 129.

53   DF, p. 238.

54   DF, p. 244.

55   _Standard Edition_, Vol. 4, p. 296.

56   _Ibid._, p. 169-176.

57   ES, p. 157.

58   DF, p. 259.

59   _Standard Edition_, Vol. 4, p. 306.

60   'On Dreams', p. 667.

61   _Ibid._

62   DF, p. 270.

63   DF, p. 349.

64   Dérive, p. 240.

65   DF, p. 360.

66   DF, p. 384.

67   Dérive, p. 174.

68   Jean-François Lyotard, 'Presentations', Alan Montefiore (ed.),
     Philosophy in France Today, Cambridge, 1983, p. 128.

69   DF, p. 19.

70   Dérive, p. 104.

71   Ibid., p. 306.

72   Ibid., p. 208.

73   Epistémon (pseudonym of Didier Anzieu), Ces Idées Qui Ont Ebranlé la
     France, Paris, 1968, p. 17.

74   Dérive, p. 226.

75   Ibid., p. 226.

76   Ibid., p. 225

77   DF, p. 246.

78   DF, p. 237.

79   Jean-François Lyotard, Des Dispositifs Pulsionnels, Paris, 1973, p. 281.

80   Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe, 'Theatrum Analyticum', in Glyph 2, 1977, p.
     123.

81   Nietzsche, Walter Kaufman (ed.), The Will to Power, New York, 1968, p.
     550.

82   The Will to Power, p. 36.

83   Jean-François Lyotard, Economie Libidinale, Paris, 1974, back cover.

84   Economie Libidinale, p. 64.

85   Des Dispositifs Pulsionnels, p. 63.

86   Economie Libidinale, p. 11.

87   Jean-François Lyotard, 'Contribution des Tableaux de Jacques Monory',
     in Gerald Gassiot-Talabot et al., Figurations 1960-1973, Paris, 1973, p.
     154.

88   'Contribution des Tableaux de Jacques Monory', p. 158.

89   Ibid., p. 156.

90   Ibid., p. 155.

91   Economie Libidinale, p. 36.

92   Freud, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', Standard Edition, Vol. 18, p. 36.

93   Freud, 'An Outline of Psychoanalysis', Standard Edition, Vol. 23, p. 149.

94   Economie Libidinale, p. 311.

95   Ibid., p. 309.

96   Des Dispositifs Pulsionnels, p. 18.

97   Economie Libidinale, p. 257.

98   Des Dispositifs Pulsionnels, pp. 308-9.

99   Economie Libidinale, p. 311.

Chapter Four Section One

1   Jean-François Lyotard, Discours, Figure, p. 213.

2   The phrase in employed by Lyotard in Dérive a Partir de Marx et Freud,
     p. 311.

3   Lyotard's Economie Libidinale, Paris, 1974, differs from Gilles Deleuze
     and Félix Guattari's Anti-Oedipus, New York, 1977, in explicitly
     embracing this consequence.

4   See Michel Foucault, 'Omnes et Singulatim: Towards a Criticism of
     "Political Reason"', in S.M. McMurrin (ed.), The Tanner Lectures on
     Human Values, Cambridge, 1981.

5   Michel Foucault, Madness and Civilization, New York, 1973, p. 61.

6   Ibid., p. 278.

7   Michel Foucault, The Birth of the Clinic, London, 1973, p. 28.

8   The Birth of the Clinic, p. 79.

9   Ibid., p. xix. The word 'structural' is omitted from more recent French
     editions.

10   This reworking can be observed in an interview of the early seventies,
     where Foucault states: 'What I am trying to do is grasp the implicit
     systems which determine our most familiar behaviour without our
     knowing it. I am trying to find their origin, to show their formation, the
     constraint they impose upon us. I am therefore trying to place myself at
     a distance from them and to show how one could escape': 'Interview
     with J.K. Simon', Partisan Review, Vol. 38, No. 2, 1971.

11   Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punish, Harmondsworth, 1977, p. 192.

12   Michel Foucault, Colin Gordon (ed.), Power/Knowledge, Brighton, 1980,
     p. 151.

13   Ibid., p. 151-2.

14   Discipline and Punish, p. 206.

15   Ibid., p. 301.

16   See 'Structuralism and Post-Structuralism: An Interview with Michel
     Foucault', Telos 55, Spring 1983, p. 200.

17   Discipline and Punish, p. 174.

18   In a discussion of the Soviet prison system, for example, Foucault
     describes a form of modern power which is 'authoritarian', 'cynical',
     and 'fear-instilling': 'The Politics of Crime', Partisan Review, Vol. 43,
     No. 3, 1976.   Foucault stresses that the systems of surveillance and
     control employed by the Soviet state are simply an enlarged and
     perfected version of those developed by the nineteenth century
     bourgeoisie.

19   Power/Knowledge, p. 156.

20   Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Dialectic of Enlightenment,
     London, 1979, p. 36.

21   Theodor Adorno, Negative Dialectics, London, 1973, p. 180.

22   Theodor Adorno, 'Subject and Object', in Andrew Arato and Eike
     Gebhardt (eds.), The Essential Frankfurt School Reader, Oxford, 1978,
     p. 499.

23   See Jürgen Habermas, Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns, 2 Vols,
     Frankfurt, 1981, Vol. 1, p. 519.

24   Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns, Band 1, p. 27.

25   See Jürgen Habermas, 'What is Universal Pragmatics?', in Communication
     and the Evolution of Society, London, 1979.

26   Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns, Vol. 2, pp. 489-491.

27   Negative Dialectics, p. 160.

28   Max Horkheimer, Eclipse of Reason, New York, 1974, p. 138.

29   Negative Dialectics, p. 277.

30   See Jürgen Habermas, 'Moral Development and Ego-Identity', in
     Communication and the Evolution of Society.

31   Friedrich Nietzsche, Zur Genealogie der Moral, Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 5,
     p. 293.

32   Ibid., p. 325.

33   Ibid., p. 325.

34   Madness and Civilization, pp. 115, 83.

35   Ibid., p. 248.

36   Ibid., p. 267, 247.

37   Ibid., p. 265.

38   Ibid., p. 269.

39   Ibid., p. 250.

40   Ibid., p. 250.

41   The Birth of the Clinic, p. 38.

42 Ibid., p. 52.

43 Ibid., p. 39.

44 Discipline and Punish, p. 29.

45 Ibid., pp. 202-3.

46 Ibid., p. 193.

47 Theorie des Kommunikativen Handelns, Vol. 2, pp. 115-7.

48 Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction, Harmondsworth, 1981, p. 58. The title of the French original, La Volonté de Savoir, gives a much more informative clue to Foucault's intentions.

49 The History of Sexuality, p. 64.

50 Ibid., p. 59.

51 Ibid., p. 60.

52 Power/Knowledge, p. 103.

53 Discipline and Punish, p. 222.

54 Ibid., p. 222. My emphasis.

55 Negative Dialectics, p. 171.

56 Michel Foucault, 'Revolutionary Action: "Until Now"', in Donald Bouchard (ed.), Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, Oxford, 1977, p. 222.

57 Discipline and Punish, p. 30.

58 Power/Knowledge, p. 98.

59 See the 'Préface' to Michel Foucault, Folie et Déraison. Histoire de la Folie à l'Age Classique, Paris, 1961.

60 Madness and Civilization, p. 250.

61 Ibid., p. 281.

62 See Paolo Caruso, Conversazione con Lévi-Strauss, Foucault, Lacan, Milan, 1969, pp. 98-100.

63 Discipline and Punish, pp. 29, 30.

64 Ibid., p. 137, 145.

65 Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, pp. 222, 208.

66 Power/Knowledge, pp. 8-9.

67 Ibid., p. 164.

68 'Non au Sexe Roi' (interview with Michel Foucault), Le Nouvel Observateur, No. 644, 12-21 Mars 1977, p. 113.

69 The History of Sexuality, p. 22.

70 Ibid., p. 155.

71 See Dérive à Partir de Marx et Freud, p. 145.

72   See Jean-François Lyotard, 'Contribution des Tableaux de Jacques
     Monory', pp. 154-238.
73   The History of Sexuality, p. 93.
74   Ibid., p. 103.
75   Ibid., p. 53.
76   Ibid., p. 57.
77   Ibid., p. 152-3.
78   Michel Foucault, 'Introduction' to Herculine Barbin: Being the Recently
     Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite,
     Brighton, 1980, pp. xiii, vii.
79   The History of Sexuality, p.4.
80   Power/Knowledge, p. 191.
81   Ibid., p. 190.

Chapter Four Section Two

1   Max Weber, Talcott Parsons (ed.), The Theory of Social and Economic
    Organization (Part I of Economy and Society), Toronto, 1964, p. 339.

2   See Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, p. 225.

3   Alain Schapp and Pierre Vidal-Naquet (eds.), The French Student
    Uprising November 1967 - June 1968, Boston, 1971, p. 117.

4   Eclipse of Reason, p. 62.

5   Discipline and Punish, p. 249.

6   Ibid., p. 220-221.

7   Ibid., p. 27.

8   See Histoire de la Folie à l'Age Classique, collection 'Tel' edition,
    Paris, 1976, pp. 56-9. This edition will be used for those sections not
    translated in the condensed English edition. The full 'Préface' appears
    only in the original French edition, Paris, 1961.

9   Ibid., p. 481.

10 Ibid., p. 480.

11 The Birth of the Clinic, p. 16.

12 Ibid., p. 16.

13 Ibid., p. 42.

14 L'Archéologie du Savoir, Paris, 1969, p. 61.

15 Discipline and Punish, p. 27.

16 Power/Knowledge, p. 59.

17 Ibid., p. 61.

18 Discipline and Punish, p. 193.

19 Ibid., p. 28.

20 Georges Canguilhem, 'L'Objet de l'Histoire des Sciences', in Etudes de
    l'Histoire et de la Philosophie des Sciences, Paris, 1968, p. 18.

21 It is for this reason that Canguilhem can attack Thomas Kuhn for
    allowing normal science only 'an empirical mode of existence as a fact
    of culture': Georges Canguilhem, Idéologie et Rationalité dans l'Histoire
    des Sciences de la Vie, Paris, 1977, p. 23. By contrast, Foucault
    persistently reads Canguilhem as a relativist. See Michel Foucault,
    'Georges Canguilhem: philosopher of error', in Ideology and
    Consciousness, No. 7, 1980.

22 Nietzsche, Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik, Sämtliche
    Werke, Vol. 1, p. 99.

23   The Will to Power, p. 263.

24   Ibid., p. 281.

25   See, for example, Eugen Fink, Nietzsches Philosophie, Stuttgart, 1960.

26   The Will to Power, p. 263.

27   Die Geburt der Tragödie, pp. 58-59.

28   The Will to Power, p. 330.

29   Ibid., p. 305.

30   Ibid., p. 307.

31   Ibid., p. 280.

32   Ibid., p. 550.

33   Power/Knowledge, p. 133.

34   Michel Foucault, Maladie Mentale et Psychologie, Paris, 1966, p. 7.

35   'Préface', in Histoire de la Folie à l'Age Classique, p. iv.

36   Madness and Civilization, p. 84.

37   See Histoire de la Folie à l'Age Classique, pp. 547-557.

38   Ibid., p. 330.

39   Madness and Civilization, p. 117.

40   Ibid., p. 176.

41   Ibid., p. 177.

42   Ibid., p. 276.

43   'Préface', in Histoire de la Folie à l'Age Classique, p. vii.

44   Ibid., p. vii.

45   Ibid., p. vii.

46   The Will to Power, p. 281.

47   Caruso, p. 126.

48   Michel Foucault, 'Interview with M. Chapsal', La Quinzaine Littéraire, No. 5, 16 May 1966, p. 15.

49   Michel Foucault, 'La Folie, l'Absence d'Oeuvre', La Table Ronde, May 1964, p. 18.

50   Michel Foucault, 'Préface', in Les Mots et les Choses, Paris, 1966, p. 15.

51   Ibid., p. 15.

52   L'Archéologie du Savoir, p. 61.

53   Ibid.

54   Caruso, pp. 94-5.

55   Ibid., p. 56.

56   Ibid., p. 56.

57   Madness and Civilization, p. 250.

58   Discipline and Punish, p. 18.

59   Ibid., p. 198.

60   'Introduction' to Herculine Barbin, p. VIII.

61   L'Archéologie du Savoir, p. 22.

62   The History of Sexuality, pp. 94-5.

63   The Will to Power, p. 326.

64   This tendency is also prominent, perhaps more so than in Foucault
      himself, in work produced under the Foucauldian aegis. See, for
      example, Pasquale Pasquino, 'Theatrum Politicum. The Genealogy of
      capital - police and the state of prosperity', and Giovanna Procacci,
      'Social economy and the government of poverty', in Ideology and
      Consciousness, No. 4, Autumn 1978. See also Jacques Donzelot, La
      Police des Familles, Paris, 1977.

65   Jacques Léonard, 'L'Historien et le Philosophe', in Michelle Perrot (ed.),
      L'Impossible Prison, Paris, 1980, p. 12.

66   Gianna Pomata, 'Storie di "police" e storie di vita: note sulla
      storiographia foucaultiana', in Aut-Aut 170-1, 1979, p. 62.

67   L'Impossible Prison, p. 55.

68   Madness and Civilization, p. 271.

69   Power/Knowledge, p. 47.

70   Ibid., p. 118.

71   Discipline and Punish, p. 296.

72   Power/Knowledge, p. 82.

73   Discipline and Punish, p. 27.

74   Power/Knowledge, p. 83.

75   Ibid., p. 84.

76   Discipline and Punish, p. 27.

77   Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests, London, 1972, p. 191.

78   Ibid., p. 196.

79   Jürgen Habermas, 'Technology and Science as Ideology', in Towards a
      Rational Society, London, 1971, p. 111.

80   Jürgen Habermas, Kultur und Kritik: Verstreute Aufsätze,
      Frankfurt-on-Main, 1977, p. 114.

81   'Technology and Science as Ideology', pp. 105-6.

82   It should be noted that Habermas does not adopt the
      'ethnomethodological' view that social structures are entirely
      constituted by the intentional activity of subjects. Language has a
      'quasi-transcendental' status, as the vehicle of the tacit knowledge
      which constitutes a socio-cultural life-world. But at the same time,
      there is no item of this knowledge which is in principle immune to
      problematization and critical scrutiny. See Theorie des Kommunikativien
      Handelns, Vol. 2, pp. 173-228.

83   Madness and Civilization, pp. 249, 248.

84   Discipline and Punish, p. 61.

85   Ibid., p. 63, 249.

86   Ibid., p. 262.

87   Madness and Civilization, pp. 182-3.

88   L'Archéologie du Savoir, p. 43.

89   Discipline and Punish, pp. 184-5.

90   Michel Foucault, 'The Subject and Power', Critical Inquiry 8, Summer
      1982, p. 777.

91   Histoire de la Folie à l'Age Classique, p. 465.

92   Ibid., p. 56-9.

93   Discipline and Punish, p. 194.

94   'The Subject and Power', p. 781.

95   Ibid., p. 790.

96   Discipline and Punish, p. 141.

Chapter Five

1   Caruso, p. 117.

2   See 'Structuralism and Post-Structuralism: An Interview with Michel Foucault', pp. 197-9.

3   'La Folie, l'Absence d'Oeuvre', p. 13.

4   Michel Foucault, 'Politics and the Study of Discourse', Ideology and Consciousness, No. 3, Spring 1978, p. 20. This is a translation of the interview which first appeared in Esprit, May 1968.

5   Michel Foucault, 'La Grande Colère des Faits' (review of André Glucksmann, Les Maîtres Penseurs), Le Nouvel Observateur, 9 May 1977, p. 84.

6   Ibid., p. 84.

7   See Jean François Lyotard, 'La Place de l'Aliénation dans le Retournement Marxiste', in Dérive a Partir de Marx et Freud.

8   Dérive, pp. 14-15.

9   Ibid., p. 275.

10 Nietzsche, Menschliches, Allzumenschliches, Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 2, p. 540.

11 Ibid., p. 25.

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18 Nietzsche, Zur Genealogie der Morale, Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 5, p. 365.

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20 Jenseits von Gut und Böse, p. 104.

21 See 'Force et Signification', in L'Ecriture et la Différance.

22 Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, Dialogues, Paris, 1977, p. 21.

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24 Ibid., p. 139.

25 Ibid., p. 210.

26 See ibid., p. 183-6.

27   Ibid., p. 186.

28   Ibid., p. 218.

29   Ibid., p. 218.

30   Ibid., p. 217.

31   Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Freud, Marx', Nietzsche (Cahiers de
     Royaumont), Paris, 1967, p. 189.

32   Ibid., p. 192.

33   Ibid., p. 192.

34   Nietzsche et la Philosophie, p. 182.

35   'Nietzsche, Freud, Marx', p. 192.

36   Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, p. 151.

37   Ibid., p. 146, 148.

38   Ibid., p. 153.

39   Ibid., p. 151.

40   Ibid., p. 154.

41   Ibid., p. 156-7.

42   Michel Foucault, 'Réponse au Cercle d'Epistémologie', Cahiers pour
     l'Analyse, No. 9, Summer 1968, p. 16.

43   Power/Knowledge, pp. 81-2.

44   Ibid., p. 85.

45   Ibid., p. 80-81.

46   Michel Foucault, L'Ordre du Discours, Paris, 1971, pp. 15-16.

47   Ibid., p. 17.

48   Ibid., p. 17.

49   Power/Knowledge, p. 133.

50   Ibid., p. 80.

51   Ibid., p. 233.

52   Ibid., p. 231.

53   'Intellectuals and Power' (conversation between Foucault and Deleuze),
     Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, p. 209.

55   'En Attendant Guiffrey', Des Dispositifs Pulsionnels, p. 226.

56   L'Ordre du Discours, p. 22.

57   Economie Libidinale, p. 289.

58   Ibid., p. 196.

59   Ibid., p. 294.

60   Ibid., p. 291.

61   Ibid., p. 295.

62 Ibid., p. 296.

63 Ibid., p. 296.

64 Ibid., p. 296.

65 Ibid., p. 305.

66 Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, p. 161.

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70 Ibid., p. 164.

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72 Jean-François Lyotard, 'Sur la Force des Faibles', in L'Arc 64, 1976 (special issue on Lyotard), p. 5.

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76 Rudiments Païens, p. 139.

77 See La Condition Post-Moderne, chapters 6 and 8.

78 Rudiments Païens, p. 124.

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80 'Jean-François Lyotard dans la Société "Post-Moderne"' (interview with Lyotard), Le Monde, 14 October 1979, p. xvi.

81 Jean-François Lyotard, 'Le Jeu de l'Informatique et du Savoir' (interview with Lyotard), Dialectiques 29, 1979, p. 9.

82 Rudiments Paiens, p. 119.

83 See 'Jean-François Lyotard dans la Société "Post-Moderne"'.

84 See Economie Libidinale, chapter 3, 'Le Désir Nomme Marx'.

85 Jean-François Lyotard, 'Presentations', pp. 127-8.

86 La Condition Post-Moderne, p. 68.

87 Jean-François Lyotard, Instructions Païennes, Paris, 1977, pp. 34-5.

88 Rudiments Païens, p. 122.

89 Nietzsche et la Philosophie, p. 168.

90 Ibid., p. 217-8.

91 Jenseits von Gut und Böse, p. 25.

92 Nietzsche et la Philosophie, p. 211.

93 Clement Rosset, 'Sécheresse de Deleuze', in <u>L'Arc</u> 49, 1972 (special issue on Deleuze), p. 93.

94 Nietzsche, <u>Menschlich, Allzumenschlich</u>, p. 23.

95 <u>L'Archéologie du Savoir</u>, p. 270.

96 <u>Power/Knowledge</u>, p. 87.

97 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 83.

98 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 126.

99 <u>Language, Counter-Memory, Practice</u>, p. 208.

100 <u>Power/Knowledge</u>, p. 64.

101 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 64.

102 'It seems to me that the possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth, and for bringing it about that a true discourse engenders or 'manufactures' something that does not as yet exist, that it 'fictions' it. One 'fictions' history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one 'fictions' a politics not yet in existence on the basis of historical truth.' <u>Power/Knowledge</u>, p. 193.

103 'Apathie dans la Théorie', <u>Rudiments Païens</u>, p. 23.

104 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 9.

105 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 29.

106 <u>Economie Libidinale</u>, p. 54; <u>Des Dispositifs Pulsionnels</u>, p. 227.

107 <u>Economie Libidinale</u>, p. 311.

108 Jean-François Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thébaud, <u>Au Juste</u>, Paris, 1979, p. 14.

109 <u>Rudiments Paiens</u>, p. 116.

110 <u>Jenseits von Gut und Böse</u>, p. 207.

111 <u>The Will to Power</u>, p. 267.

112 <u>Nietzsche et la Philosophie</u>, p. 102.

113 <u>Au Juste</u>, pp. 170-71.

Conclusion

1   Bernard-Henri Lévi's <u>La Barbarie à Visage Humain</u>, Paris, 1977, opens
    with a denunciation of Deleuze and Guattari's <u>Anti-Oedipus</u>, while part
    of the last chapter of Guy Lardreau and Christian Jambet's <u>L'Ange</u>,
    Paris, 1976, is devoted to a demolition of Lyotard.

2   The exception to this generalization is, of course, Lacan. But Lacan's
    theory of the subject hardly offers a hopeful basis for a philosophy of
    human rights. In 'Kant avec Sade' he suggests that everyone now knows
    that human rights boil down to 'the freedom of desiring in vain': <u>Ecrits</u>,
    p. 783.

3   See the special issue of <u>Esprit</u> on Merleau-Ponty, June 1982. For a
    'Merleau-pontian' critique of structuralism and post-structuralism, see
    Philippe Hodard, <u>Le Je es les Dessous du Je</u>, Paris, 1981.

4   Exemplified by Vincent Descombes, <u>Grammaire d'Objects en Tous
    Genres</u>, Paris, 1983.

5   <u>Of Grammatology</u>, p. 18; <u>Marges</u>, p. 58.

6   Maurice Merleau-Ponty, <u>The Prose of the World</u>, London, 1974, p. 148.

7   <u>Marges</u>, p. 17.

8   Nietzsche, <u>Der Fall Wagner</u>, in <u>Sämtliche Werke</u>, Vol. 6, p. 36.

9   <u>Marges</u>, p. 376.

10 <u>L'Ecriture et la Différence</u>, p. 338.

11 <u>Dissemination</u>, p. 7; <u>Marges</u>, p. 392.

12 <u>The Prose of the World</u>, p. 112.

13 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, <u>Le Visible et L'Invisible</u>, p. 233; <u>Themes from
    the Lectures at the Collège de France 1952-1960</u>, Evanston, 1970, p. 4.

14 <u>Séminaire XI</u>, p. 196.

15 <u>Marges</u>, p. 23.

16 <u>L'Ecriture et la Différance</u>, p. 410.

17 <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 411.

18 See <u>Das Sagbare und Das Unsagbare</u>, pp. 17-18. For an enlightening
    commentary of the difficulties of the reflection theory of
    self-consciousness, see Dieter Henrich, 'Fichte's Original Insight', in
    Darrel E. Christiansen (ed.), <u>Contemporary German Philosophy</u>, Vol. 1,
    1982.

20 Jean-Paul Sartre, <u>L'Etre et le Néant</u>, Collection 'Tel' edition, Paris,
    1980, p. 224.

21   Freud, 'Inhibitions, Symptoms, Anxiety', <u>Standard Edition</u>, Vol. 20, p. 94.

22   See E, p. 710.

23   ES, p. 269.

24   E, p. 782.

25   Jacques Lacan, '... Ou Pire', <u>Scilicet</u> 5, 1975, p. 9.

26   E, p. 840.

27   E, p. 840.

28   Jürgen Habermas, 'Systematically Distorted Communication', in Paul
     Connerton (ed.), <u>Critical Sociology</u>, Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 361.

29   <u>Knowledge and Human Interests</u>, p. 256.

30   See 'Systematically Distorted Communication', pp. 348-349.

31   Charles Taylor, 'Force et Sens, les deux dimensions irréductible d'une
     science de l'homme', in Gary Brent Madison (ed.), <u>Sens et Existence</u>,
     Paris, 1975, p. 131.

32   DF, p. 72.

33   <u>Dérive</u>, p. 249.

34   DF, p. 357.

35   <u>Dérive</u>, p. 212.

36   <u>Nietzsche et la Philosophie</u>, pp. 3-4.

37   <u>Ibid</u>., p. 211.

38   <u>The Will to Power</u>, p. 291.

39   <u>Language, Counter-Memory, Practice</u>, p. 161.

40   <u>Rudiments Paiens</u>, p. 244.

41   <u>Ibid</u>., p. 243.

42   Derrida's philosophy does not, of course, contain the naturalistic
     moment of the more directly Nietzsche-inspired philosophies of the
     1970s. Nevertheless, in so far as his work is an attempt to define the
     'system' which generates the illusion of truth and presence, he finds
     himself embroiled in the same general paradoxes. Lacan is the only
     post-structuralist who avoids these difficulties, by developing a theory
     of truth as a necessary presupposition of discourse. Lacan is,
     accordingly, fairly hostile to Nietzsche.

43   <u>Economie Libidinale</u>, p. 43.

44   <u>Rudiments Paiens</u>, p. 9.

45   <u>Au Juste</u>, p. 14.

46   Jürgen Habermas, 'Wahrheitstheorien', in <u>Wirklichkeit und Reflexion:</u>
     <u>Walter Schulz zum 60. Geburtstag</u>, Pfullingen, 1973, p. 212.

47   See ibid., pp. 258-9.

48   Economie Libidinale, p. 278.

49   See Jürgen Habermas, 'Vorbereitende Bermerkungen zu einer Theorie der kommunkative Kompetenz', in Jürgen Habermas and Niklas Luhmann, Theorie der Gesellschaft oder Sozialtechnologie - Was leistet der Systemforschung?, Frankfurt, 1971, p. 135n.

50   In his more recent work, notably La Condition Postmoderne and 'Reponse à la Question: Qu'est-ce que le Postmoderne?' (Critique 419, April 1982), Lyotard has criticized Habermas's consensus theory of truth and replied to his explicit attacks on poststructuralism. In these writings Lyotard contends that the heteromorphous variety of 'language games' renders impossible the establishment of a single system of rules which would govern them all, and that consequently 'consensus has become an outdated and suspect value' (CPM 106). Habermas's belief thatthe fragmented processes of modern society should be brought under collective democratic control implies a belief in the continuing possibility of organic unities and dialectical totalizations, the only alternative to which - in Lyotard's view - is the abandonment of notions of a 'unitary end of history' and of the concept of the subject (Reponse, pp. 358-9). However, in this critique Lyotard incorrectly assumes that the impossibility of a 'logical grammar' of language, of specifying a common set of rules for all the varieties of social interaction, disqualifies the generality of the question of whether a particular type of action is right or just. Lyotard's own attempt to rethink the problem of legitimation in terms of possibilities for dissent or paralogism, his belief that 'we must arrive at an idea and a practice of justice which are not linked to those of consensus' (CPM 106), simply fails to pose the problem of harmful or anti-social actions. Lyotard avoids any explicit choice between the liberal solution of drawing an inviolate boundary around the individual, with the attendant problem of what should be included within the boundary, and the Marxist stress upon structural inequalities of power and capacities for choice. He certainly offers no coherent alternative to Habermas's advocacy of the maximization of unconstrained discussion as a means of fusing the strengths of the liberal and Marxist traditions. Indeed the preference for the 'deliberative' over the 'narrative' mode in Lyotard's most recent book, Le Différend, suggests that he may now himself be moving in this direction.

51   Kultur und Kritik, p. 381.

52   Jean-Luc Nancy, L'Impératif Catégorique, Paris, 1983, p. 10.

53   Ibid., p. 29.

54   See Luc Ferry and Alain Renault, 'Penser les Droits de l'Homme', Esprit, March 1983.

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