

**FREUD AND SECRECY: ALLEGORY,
AESTHETIC AND SILENCE IN
PSYCHOANALITIC THEORY**

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PhD**

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To the memory of my father

To my mother

To Carmen

*Y en el silencio en que zozobra, dura
como un sueño la voz, vaga y futura,
y perpetua y difunta como un eco.*

Jorge Cuesta

*Les langues imparfaits en cela que plusieurs,
manque la suprême: penser étant écrire sans
accessoires, ni chuchotements mais tacite encore
l'immortelle parole, la diversité, sur terre, des
idiomes empêche personne de proférer les mots
qui, sinon se trouveraient, par une frappe unique,
elle-même matériellement la vérité.*

Stephan Mallarmé

*Ich albere mit meiner Nacht,
wir kapern
alles,
was sich hier losriß*

*lad du mir auch deine
Finsternis auf
die halben, fahrenden
Augen,*

*auch sie soll es hören,
von überallher,
das unwiderlegbare Echo
jeder Vershattung.*

Paul Celan

*(I fool about with my night
we capture
all
that tore loose here,*

*your darkness too
load on to
my halved, voyaging
eyes;*

*it too is to hear it
from every direction,
the incontrovertible echo
of every eclipse)*

Abstract

The thesis seeks to explore one of the most singular features of Freudian thought, his radical position in the history of the ideas about language. One of my chief claims is that the Freudian endeavour is not oriented towards a conclusive theory of language as such, but of the conditions of its destruction, its exhaustion, its silence.

The obscure centre of Freud's work, the passion for the shattering of language, manifests itself both as an affirmation and as a dissipation of the sense of speech, which cast some light upon the cardinal role of the notion of secrecy, not only in his comprehension of language, but also in his conception of subjectivity. Thus, secrecy can be conceived as a fundamental feature of different facets of his writings. The first facet exhibits psychoanalysis as the inheritor of the progressive emergence of silence in the core of modern thought. I argue that the logic of secrecy which appears in Freud's early writings enacts the historical emergence of secrecy which pervaded different discourses of the nineteenth century.

This singular logic had its origin at the confluence of the exalted discourses which enthroned observation and experience in the positivistic conception of knowledge bred by the Enlightenment, the obscure cults of magnetism and the speculative conceptions of subjectivity which emerged from the crisis of the Enlightenment, with the rising of Romanticism and its powerful effects on the Western culture. The second facet exhibits the logic of secrecy as expressed by the acts of language.

Secrecy introduces an inner discord in the meaning of signs: it reveals the obsolescence of the referential notion of truth. Allegory emerges from this discord as a privileged aesthetic and theoretical expression. Freud's theoretical creativity canceled the significance of the referential, discursive notion of truth with the violent implications of the notion of primary thought processes and a conception of primal experiences of pleasure and pain irreducible to the narrow margins of rationality.

The radical dissipation of the conventional foundations of semantic truth brought into focus an aesthetic —Baroque— conception of subjectivity. This vision pervades Freud's notion of psychical processes, and engendered a constellation of forms of theoretical expression: psychical processes were apprehended by allegorical figures: the fold, rhythm, movement, displacement involving paradoxical temporalities which offered a contrasting landscape of thought processes that informed desire and aroused anxiety; Freud created thus a theoretical chiaroscuro. A third facet involves two further Freudian notions: sexuality and pain. One of them, sexuality, is almost too notorious in Freud's work; the other, pain, was permanently and explicitly displaced, silenced, excluded or even emphatically avoided in Freud's writings, and yet it is an notion inherent in his conception of subjectivity. Freud's subversion of the modern notion of experience might be thought of as founded upon his conception of the experience of pain as a constitutional dimension of subjectivity, as its unspeakable, unapproachable, secret centre.

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Notes on texts and translations.

All quotations of Freud's text are taken from the *Studienausgabe*, edited by Alexander Mitscherlich, Angela Richards, James Strachey and Ilse Grubrich-Simmitis, 11 vols (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1969-1989). The name of the work, the year, the volume and page of the *Studienausgabe* edition are given in the body of the text, and preceded by the initials *SA*. For certain works not included in this edition, I used the *Gesammelte Werke* in which case the references are preceded by the initials *GW*. For all the quoted passages, I also included in footnotes the Strachey's version as published by *The Penguin Freud Library*, edited by Angela Richards and Albert Dickson (London: Penguin, 1990). The volume and pages of the translated quotation are included in each footnote, preceded by the initials *FP*.

The quotations of *Zur Auffassung der Aphasie* are taken from the original Leipzig edition of 1891 and the pages are referred to in the text, preceded by the complete name of the work. The corresponding versions in English of the quoted passages, also added as footnotes, are taken from the American edition, *On Aphasia. A Critical Study*, translated and introduced by E. Stengel (New York: International Universities Press, 1953); the pages referred to are preceded by the initials *CA*.

Works originally written in French are quoted from their original editions and no translation of them is included in the thesis. Texts written in German and Spanish are also quoted from their original editions and their translation, included also as footnote, is mine, with the exception of that of Ignacio de Loyola which is taken from Antonio T. de Nicolas, *Ignatius de Loyola. Powers of Imagining. A Philosophical Hermeneutic of Imagining Through the Collected Works of Ignatius de Loyola with a Translation of His Work* (New York: State University of New York, 1986).

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Introduction

There are only fragmentary readings of Freud. Each new exegesis, every discourse which seeks to elucidate certain facets of Freud's work becomes, in turn, a singular echo, a variation of its senses; the new interpretation enhances with discording resonances the broad and diffuse contours of its own sphere of sense.

Nevertheless, never a new interpretation of Freud is obsolete. Freud's text seems to have foreseen even the obsolescence of the commentaries it arouses, responding to their potential appearance with a meaningful, symptomatic repetition or variation of its arguments. For the interpreter, Freud's text appears as a hall of mirrors, which seems to reveal an unexpected physiognomy, an unforeseen feature with each slight displacement of the enquiring gaze, even with every slight displacement of the point of view. Like Borges' dreaming characters, Freud's writings seem to have dreamed, foretold and, in turn, interpreted their own later versions, the distorted shadows of their future interpretations. Each new reading of Freud's work appears as a symptomatic image of the original text itself. Each narrative or theoretical reflection incited by Freudian writing appears as a rarefied resonance of a restricted spectrum of dispersed textual shreds. However, each new unfolding of Freud's text *creates* a previously unpronounced sense which emerges from a silence, a reiteration, an accent, a breach, a fracture of a text.

Perhaps, it was not an hyperbole to call this century "the age of Freud". Not simply because, as has been often asserted, it enacts the enthrone and exhaustion of the notion of *subject*, nor because it has bred a most impressive variety of therapies akin to the Freudian psychoanalysis. Moreover, the reason for this appreciation might not be the social impact of the Freudian thought, clearly discernible in the peculiar trends of arguments which underlie the modern sexual revolution and its equivocal sequel: the contemporary receding of social strategies which involves both the crude contest to conventional prejudice and to conservative sexual policies. The

anthropologist Ernest Gellner has recognized in his analysis of the psychoanalytical movement the complex nature of the impact of Freudian thought in the institutional strategies of modernity:

We are dealing with nothing less than an intellectual, moral and terminological revolution, on an enormous, indeed a global scale. Changes in intellectual climate constitute something that is inherently elusive, and yet supremely important.¹

Gellner's appreciations of the relevance of psychoanalysis to contemporary culture are meaningful. Psychoanalysis might well be thought of as a pervading climate which extends well beyond the perceivable evidence. A broad explanation of the genesis of this climate can be built by relating only several dispersed and evident factors: the everyday open or veiled, direct and indirect, deliberate or unaware quotations of Freud's words in an immense variety of social discourses; the slow impregnation of familiar speech with echoes or distorted shades of Freudian terms and conceptions, the invention and repetition of countless commonplaces which stand as authorized explanations of everyday behaviour, the building of fictitious taxonomies of psychical afflictions, the daily assailing of the Freudian notions carried out by the media, their persevering extortion of the common belief in the therapeutic efficacy of psychoanalysis and of the popular faith in its interpretations. But the intellectual climate nourished by psychoanalysis is also the outcome of a complex, diffuse interaction of contrasting discourses about the nature of subjectivity, and the historical social experience of the relevance of settled, hermeneutic patterns informed by psychoanalytic discourse.

"To begin is to be free —writes Harold Bloom provocatively—, and after Freud we are never free of Freud."² Paradoxically, this "loss of freedom", this "never [being] able to begin again", imposed on the modern sensibility by the "freedom" brought about by the Freudian subversion of the different conceptions of subjectivity exhibits one of the chief inner tensions in Freud's discourse. Perhaps, our age should be seen as a spectral symptom of Freud's discourse, just like Freud himself was undoubtedly a radical and multi-faceted symptom of the endeavours of Enlightenment and the cultural, epistemological and political struggles in contemporary society. The complex cultural evolution in this century shall remain at least partially unfathomable without

a clear understanding and exploration of the Freudian discourse and its interpretative force.

But it is precisely Freud's conceptual kaleidoscope that exerts an unyielding fascination upon its reader. The variety and dispersion of interpretations are incited by the conflicting tensions in Freudian writing itself which unfolds as a permanent reflection and refraction of his own textual accents and silences, presuppositions and reserves, monuments and wrecks. The spectacle of these metamorphosis of the text, of its disquieting series of mutations, expansions and repetitions, the evoked images and visions, lured any further reading. In modernity, the vision of sexuality which emerged from this contrasting landscape undergoes, in the social sphere, severe transfigurations which lead, in turn, to endless delusive conventional shapes of the subjective processes; it engendered countless parodic physiognomies and gave rise to theoretical masquerades built upon faint resonances of the literal and metaphorical powers of the Freudian text.

Yet Freudian discourse aroused a fundamental anxiety regarding modern cultural and political processes, which unleashed a fertile and original enquiry about the nature of subjectivity, of non-rational phenomena, of the factors of subject's identity, of the role of narcissism and the roots of cruelty and domination, of the nature of destruction and the limits of expressiveness; it drove modern thought to the recognition of the need for a rigorous analysis of the cultural resistance against a complex reflexive meditation on the role of subjectivity in the genesis of contemporary knowledge and its intrinsic, unescapable silences. This anxiety has, in turn, given rise to a large-scale effort on the part of scholars and commentators to integrate into a congruous unity the heterogeneous and often conflicting premises which support the Freudian vision, and also to trace the historical conditions of its origins and development; Moreover, Freud's readers seek to deepen some of his ephemeral insights and transient illuminations, to unveil its inherent tensions, to recognize the specific resonance of the psychoanalytic notions in literary and philosophical discourses, as well as in aesthetic, political and ethical facets of contemporary thought. All this effort has not been carried out as a mere strategy for developing, clarifying and enhancing his essential insights on psychical processes. Rather, it reveals a deliberate striving for a definite comprehension of the failures of reflexive consciousness, of the experience of

the limits of language, of the subject's expressiveness, of the wrecking of the civilizatory process, of the roots of the psychical relevance of the extreme crucial experiences: of pleasure and pain.

This endeavour involves a bold attempt, not to circumscribe and define an ontological stillness of the subject's identity, but to discern the web of diverging tensions, the manifold fractures and hollow regions of the subject's nature, its finiteness, the changing scene of devastation and self-invention of its intimacy, the transience and perseverance of desire, the ellusiveness and crudeness of social constraints, the fragility and steadiness of memory, the bareness and lavishness of oblivion, the opaqueness of the subject's experience, the differences which dissipates the unity of subjective processes and, simultaneously, shape the subject's identity.

It is now a commonplace both of Freud's antagonists and of certain of his apologists to stress what might be called a "weak paradox" of Freudian thought: he is either blamed or praised for seeking a rational explanation of the irrational. The weakness of this paradox resides in the indefinite sense of the notion of rationality. As Freud himself remarked, rather than this weak paradox, his conception illuminates a strong one: the notion of the unconscious enlarges and shatters, unfolds and dissipates, the seemingly clear, unequivocal significance of the notions of understanding and reason created by the Enlightenment:

Die psychoanalytische Annahme der unbewußten Seelentätigkeit erscheint uns einerseits als eine weitere Fortbildung des primitiven Animismus, der uns überall Ebenbilder unseres Bewußtseins vorspiegelte, und ander seits als die Fortsetzung der Korrektur, die Kant an unserer Auffassung der äußeren Wahrnehmung vorgenommen hat. Wie Kant uns gewarnt hat, die subjektive Bedingtheit unserer Wahrnehmung nicht zu übersehen und unsere Wahrnehmung nicht für identisch mit dem unerkennbaren Wahrgenommenen zu halten, so mahnt die Psychoanalyse, die Bewußtseinswahrnehmung nicht an die Stelle des unbewußten psychischen Vorganges zu setzen, welcher ihr Objekt ist. Wie das Physische, so braucht auch das Psychische nicht in Wirklichkeit so zu sein, wie es uns erscheint. (*Das Unbewußte*, SA, 1915, III: 130)*

*The psychoanalytic assumption of unconscious mental activity appears to us, on the one hand, as a further expansion of the primitive animism which caused us to see copies of our own consciousness all around us, and, on the other hand, as an extension of the corrections undertaken by Kant of our views on external perception. Just as Kant warned us not to overlook the fact that our perceptions are subjectively conditioned and must not be regarded as identical with what is perceived though unknowable, so psychoanalysis warns us not to equate

Overturing Kant's notion of object, Freud brings to light the relevance of the unstable, dynamic tensions of inner perception, its contorted and contingent contours and, nevertheless, its definitive role in the performance of reason, rather as an unpronounceable memory, as the remains of an unexpressible experience of pain, as a thought process which remains beyond the reach of categories and language. The inherent obscurity of an inner, irreducible "thing-in-itself" [*Ding an sich*] as the essential origin of any psychical process not only imposes on rationalism a particular strain, but obscures the notion of reason itself, bringing to light the informing power of an intimate and primordial, unbearable experience.

The agonistic features of Freud's discourse have nourished countless and conflicting interpretations of his works. Different currents of philosophical and psychoanalytical thought have stemmed from different stages of development of his conceptions, and found a support upon contradictory passages of his work or certain nuances, stylistic inflections and conceptual mutations disseminated in his writings. His enterprise has been seen both as a chapter in the history of confession and as the final subversion of the modern notion of truth, as a historical sequel of the regime of the sacramental universe of Catholicism and as a shattering of the convictions engendered by science. It has been conceived as the emergence of a "rational mysticism" and as the natural outcome of the dark currents of mesmerism; it has appeared both as the extreme consequence of the empiricist aims of Locke, Condillac and the postulates of Enlightenment, and as the exacerbation of the Romantic vision of subjectivity. Freud has been accused both of reductionism, of blind submission to the trends and constraints of the scientific thought in the nineteenth century, and of a chimeric conceptual imagination, likely to invoke the authority of ancient myths, of privileged poetic visions and of philosophical delusion. His thought has been characterized as speculative as well as pragmatic. It has been seen as a means to legitimate a dubious therapeutic procedure and as an amazing synthesis and development of the chief philosophical, scientific, medical and even aesthetic conceptions of his age.

perception by means of consciousness with the unconscious mental processes which are their object. Like the physical, the psychical is not necessarily in reality what it appears to us to be. (FP, 11: 173)

This work seeks to explore one of the most singular features of the Freudian theoretical conceptions: Freudianism can be thought of as a definitive chapter in the history of philosophy of language, but a singular one. The approach to his radical position in the history of ideas about language will be guided by a central intuition: Freud's conception of language is not the progressive unveiling of previously inaccessible sense of speech; rather, it illuminates the moment in which philosophy abandons its dominant objects, words and sense, to dip itself in a foreign territory: the silent history of the shattering of language. The analysis of Freud's notion of experience implicitly involves the obliteration of the conventionally accepted conceptions of *truth*. In turn, the debasement of this central category of Western philosophy [truth] involved a profound review of the notion of experience itself. What emerges from this preliminary enquiry is the relevance of the notion of secrecy rooted in historical, philosophical and political grounds. Secrecy acquired in the political, philosophical and aesthetic thought of the nineteenth century a puzzling presence both cardinal and veiled. Freud's founding notion of experience which bore complex implications on the temporality of psychical and physical processes is of an unusual kind: it gives rise to an unforeseeable aesthetic conception of subjectivity.

This approach demanded a manifold reading of the Freudian text. In the first place, from a historical point of view: I shall present Freud's thought as a moment in the modern history at which heterogeneous and even conflicting conceptions of language —medical, philosophical, anthropological and literary— converge to reveal chiefly the limits of subjectivity and language, which will lead to the notion of secrecy; chapter one is devoted to a brief exploration of this aspect. In the second place, I shall present secrecy as an aesthetic and discursive construction involving a radical notion of experience, and giving rise to Freud's vision of subjectivity —a Baroque conception— founded in the particular role of pain and allegory both in his conception of subjectivity and in his very writing: chapters two and three expound the essential elements of this discursive and aesthetic approach. And finally, in the last two chapters —fourth and fifth— I seek to analyse Freud's writing as a mirror image of the notion of subjectivity he constructs: Freudian text is shown as the expression both of the

experience of language as limit, and of the exhaustion of the subject's expressiveness; Freud took as a radical, metaphorical model of the psychical shattering of language the medical theories of aphasia, and reflected in his narrative constructions the allegorical, finite nature of subjectivity, the secrecy inherent in the writing act; Freud's theoretical silences also revealed the constitutional role of the experience of pain; his allegories of sexuality exhibited the moulding force and the enlivening impuse of secrecy and the delusional patterns inherent in subjective construction of truth.

NOTES

1. Ernest Gellner, *The Psychoanalytical Movement* (London: Paladin, 1985), p.8.
2. Harold Bloom, *Introduction*, in *Sigmund Freud*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1985), p.2.

Chapter I

Psychoanalysis and Secrecy: the Inherent Silence

I. The thresholds of representation

Nineteenth century thought exhibits a tension which spans its different movements and currents and defines, not a conception of the world, but a discourse regime. This tension emerges from the confrontation between the "ontological primacy of the natural object" —an ontological conception that had become stronger since its appearance at the dawn of rationalism— and language conceived as an autonomous and contingent order. Kant's autonomy of reason foretold at the end of the eighteenth century an ensuing independence of language. The contingency of language and the bursting into the philosophical scene of the imagination invoked an essential bond between creation and language. Hölderlin writes:¹

Indem sich nemlich der Dichter mit dem reinen Tone seiner ursprünglichen Empfindung in seinem ganzen innern un äußern Leben begriffen fühlt, und sich umsieht in *seiner* Welt, ist ihm diese eben so neu und unbekannt, die Summe aller seiner Erfahrungen, seines Wissens, seines Anschauens, seine Denkens, Kunst und Natur wie sie in ihm und außer ihm sich darstellt, alles is wie zum erstenmale, eben deßwegen unbegriffen, unbestimmt, und lauter Stoff und Leben aufgelöst, ihm gegenwärtig, und es ist vorzüglich wichtig, daß er in diesem Augenblike nichts als gegeben annehme, von nichts positiven ausgehe, daß die Natur und Kunst, so wie er sie kennen gelernt hat und sieht, nicht eher spreche, ehe für ihn eine Sprache da ist, d.h. ehe das jezt Unbekannte und Ungenannte in seiner Welt eben dadurch für ihn bekannt und nahhaft wird [...]

The creative force of language corresponds also to the equally powerful strangeness of

¹While the poet feels completely seized by the pure tone of the original sensibility of his inner and outer life as he sees all around him, all of it so new and unknown, the sum of all his experiences, his knowledge, his conceptions, his thoughts, art and nature both in and out of him present themselves as if it were the first time, thus unfathomed, undetermined, and the pure matter and life dissolved and it is specially important that in this moment he does not admit anything as already given, that he takes nothing positive as point of departure, that Nature and Art, as he has known and seen them do not speak to him before, not before there is for him a Language, this is, before what is now unknown and unnamed in his world become to him known and named... (My translation)

the referred world. The claim of the primacy of the subject's power to name opens a breach which subverts the sovereignty of representation. The word no longer reflects or renders the object's absolute presence. The convolutions of the nineteenth century are rooted in deeply layered, yet slowly uncovering ground largely made up, paradoxically, from lost certitude: representation had irrevocably lost its illuminating and revealing power, its immediate relation to the world. The word had been divested from the theological virtue of encompassing the truth of Nature. A *fracture* in the whole order of things uncovered a profound, unsettling asymmetry between the world and the subjective experience. This asymmetry manifested itself in an assertion of irreparable loss: that of representation as epiphany, and the fusion of the word and the world. Beda Alleman, writing about Hölderlin's conception of Nature in his *Empedocles* remarks:

Cet qu'Empédocle ressentait comme une nostalgie légitime de la nature maternelle, devient le *Cours naturel éternellement hostile à l'homme*; la Nature elle-même devient désert sauvage et abîme où gîtent les Titans.²

The nineteenth century established the primacy of the natural object and, with it, its unsurmountable strangeness; it asserted its ontological precedence over language. Romanticism witnessed a growing conviction of the nature's invincible resistance to any attempt to encompass it within the borders of universal notions and representations. The classical equilibrium between the world and its material images was lost; the reciprocal communication between the represented object and the sign that represented it was shattered, paradoxically enough, by the overwhelming power of language's self-contained creativity. The response to the assertion of the ontological primacy of Nature was the proclamation of the dominion of language, of its creative, evoking power over the fading truth of the world. The hollowness at the core of representation is not a mere weakness of mind or weariness, it is the final revelation of the immense scope of imagination.

Nevertheless, in spite of this, representation did not vanish as a crucial notion in western culture. It remained within it as an elusive token. Western culture remained captivated by the image, by analogy, and fascinated by the unfair symmetry of the mirror and its deceiving fidelity.

However, in time representation suffered an unexpected displacement: after a momentary eclipse during Romanticism, it *reappeared* in the late nineteenth century as the enshrining of metaphor: the word as an undetermined sovereignty, as an absolute origin. At the same time, the boundaries that separated the ontological domain of representation —as epiphany of the world— from the metaphor dissolved. After Romanticism, metaphor relieved and encompassed the theological notion of representation. This dialectic construction of metaphor gave it an unsettling breadth: in the face of the fading Nature, metaphor confused itself with allegory,³ but emerged as the evidence of the autonomous imagination of language. Romanticism may be conceived as having set this threshold of representation. It is not a reaction *against* the Enlightenment, against the absolute autonomy and self determination of reason, it is not the rejection of Kant, but its aftermath, its misconstruction, its amplified and perturbing resonance.

The ontological primacy of the natural object implied a conviction about the nature of both time and meaning. As a result of Kant's enquiry, after Enlightenment the intensity of the inherent conflict between the persistence of the natural object, and the sensations it arouses together with their *immediate and unbounded* temporality — which attests its endurance, its sense of timelessness, its history that lies beyond historicity — was heightened by an awareness of the paradox of representation: the subjective origin of concepts appeared as foreign to the logic of language and, as a consequence, the representation of time inherent in the autonomy of language acquired an elusiveness which pervaded the whole sphere of the meaning of language itself. Metaphor was seen to bring to light a disquieting contrast within the sphere of sense: a harsh distinction between two horizons of meaning — reference and sense — but also another unsuspected feature of language: its symbolic dimension, which arises from the assertion of its linguistic sovereignty, its uncertainty, its ambiguousness and the undetermined potentiality of meaning that pulsates when the word is uttered and displaces and dissolves the boundaries of truth.

But the main outcome of the recognition of the ontological primacy of the world is a radical turning aside of language from representation. Then the object- in-itself withdraws from displayed meanings, becomes foreign to them; its merely adumbrated

presence transforms itself into an evidence of the language's non-representational truth. From the centre of the Enlightenment itself, tensions grew which foretold the flustering of representational order: the exaltation of **sensations** and the simultaneous decline of the normative canons of visual perception; the emergence of a fracture between apprehending a figure and attesting to its truth; John Ruskin wrote, in his characterization of great art:

it includes the largest possible quantity of Truth in the most perfect possible harmony. If it were possible for art to give all the truths of nature it ought to do it. But this is not possible. Choice must always be made of some facts which *can* be represented, from among others which must be passed in silence, or even, in some respect, misrepresented.⁴

The eclipse of Enlightenment was also the time of the devastation of testimonial signs and of the paradoxical consecration, in the sphere of positive knowledge, of visible proof; observation appeared as a pledge of objectivity in the search for truth. These tensions were many and varied: the triumph of the eye and the declining power of form; the celebration of formalism and the distrust of sudden illumination and revealed truth; the advent of intuition as source of meaning and the resistance to the **seductions** of representation; the rejection of realism and the ecstatic hailing of efficacy —the culminating ascension of instrumental truth as a primordial value; the simultaneous exultant enthronment of the reflexive capacity of reason and its exclusion from the realm of self-cognition; the veneration of science and the jubilant admission of obscure, widely spread but deeply grounded myths bred by science itself; the darkness of the assumed infinite powers of science and the experience of the weakening of the fabric of life; the coexistence of disbelief in the plenitude of representation and the dissemination of utopian thought; the founding of present truth upon nostalgia for an ancient heritage and the radical negation of the present that incited the emergence of political fantasies the expressions of which were to find a prominent role in the modern expectations of collective fulfilment. Thus, Modernity emerged from a vast constellation of contrasting but entangled images and conceptions: the vindication of the nobility of the historical lineage of contemporary civilization and the acceptance of the animal ancestry of man; the confrontation between the deification of positive

knowledge and the secularization of divinity; the sublime nature of imagination and the organic stuff of which the mind's faculties are made; the ultimate value of subjectivity and the supremacy of sensation; the fusion of certitude and enigma, of eloquence and silence, of the potentially infinite power of reason and the finite nature of self, the denial of the divine and the ascension of theological hermeneutics which contributed to the vain apprehension of God's fading presence.

II. The emergence of silence as object: Condillac and the symbolics of sensation

There is also a history of silence. From the ancient silence of God to the silence of nature, word could be conceived as an accident of silence that emerged as a suspension of the divine will to revelation: a sign of human corruption or of sin. The nineteenth century encounters a threatening assumption: the silence of God turned into evidence of His death. Jean Paul, in a brief text which narrates a terrifying dream, announces the conviction of a godless universe, that precedes by almost half a century, Nietzsche's pronouncement of the dead of God:⁵

Jetzo sank ein hohe edle Gestalt mit einen unvergänglichen Schmerz aus de Höhe auf der Altar hernieder, und alle Toten riefen: "Christus! ist keine Gott?"
 Er antwortet: "Es ist keiner"
 Der ganze Schatten jedes Toten erbebte, nicht bloss die Brust allein, und einer um den andern wurde durch das Zittern zertrennt. Christus fuhr fort: "Ich ging durch die Welten, ich stieg in die Sonnen und flog mit der Milchstrassen durch die Wüsten des Himmels; aber ist keine Gott. Ich stieg herab, soweit das Sein sein Schatten wirft, und schauete in der Abgrund und rief: "Vater, wo wist du?" Aber ich hörte nur den ewige Sturm, der niemand regiert, und der schimmernde Regenbogen des Wesen stand ohne eine Sonne, die ihn schuf, über dem Abgrunde und tropfte hinunter. Und als ich aufblickte zur unermesslichen Welt nach der göttlichen Augen, starte Sie mich mit eine leeren bodenlosen Augenhöhlen an, und die Ewigkeit lag auf dem Chaos und zernagte es und wiederkäuete sich.- Schreite fort, Misstöne, zerschriet die Schatten, der Er ist nicht."

⁵ A noble and graceful figure, with inextinguishable pain, descended upon the altar. And all the dead cried: "Christ! Is there any God?". He answered: "There is none". The dead trembled, not just their chest; and the quivering tore them apart. Christ continued. "I went through the worlds, I climbed to the sun and flew along the

Nevertheless, Jean Paul's expression of despairing piety is not unprecedented. It might be seen as one of the many emerging symptoms which attested the sinking of theological warranties of truth. It reveals the visible face of the accumulating tensions produced by the enquiries which originated during the sixteenth century concerning the foundations of knowledge and which became evident during the last decades of the century of Enlightenment and the beginnings of Romanticism.

Condillac, following the philosophical path of Locke, and which may be seen as a prelude to the immense critical enterprise of Kant, after a brief discussion of his conceptual system of sensations — defined by him as a "modification of the soul" — asserts:

Toutes nos sensations nous paroissent les qualités des objets qui nos environnent: elles les représentent donc, elles sont des idées. Mais il est évident que ces idées ne nous font point connoître ce que les êtres sont en elle mêmes; elles ne les peignent que par les rapports qu'ils ont à nous, et cela seul démontre combien sont superflus les efforts des philosophes, qui prétendent pénétrer dans la nature des choses.⁶

For Condillac, sensations were in themselves representations, but the impossible aim of which, to convey a knowledge of the object, is definitively cancelled. It will be observed that this reflection echoes the propositions of sensualism and constitutes an anticipation of the *Ding-in-sich* of Kant, and of the boundaries within which the sphere of the faculties is confined. In consequence, the faculties will not appear as constituting a tight, integrated system, but as a displaced articulation of heterogeneous layers. It expresses the intuition not only of the pure silence of things but also of the essential silence that pervades the word itself, rooted in an untraceable complexity of mute sensations. In his analysis of Condillac's text, Derrida wrote:

Il existerait donc un premier matériau muet, un irréductible noyau de présence immédiate auquel surviendraient des modifications secondaires, qui entrerait dans des combinaison, des relations, des

Milky Way through the deserts of heaven, but there is no God. I descended as deep as the limits of the shadow of Being and I cried to the abyss: "Father, where are you?". But I only heard the infinite stream which nobody governs. And the shimmering Rainbow of Being stood above the abyss without the creating sun. And when I stared at the incommensurable world looking for the godly eyes, it gazed at me with its hollow, bottomless cavities; the infinity dwelling in Chaos, it gnawed and chewed. Cry stridencies! Scream shadows! For He does not exist! (My translation).

liaisons, etc. Et pourtant cette métaphysique, cette métaphysique sensualiste (on ne peut pas le refuser cet caractère) serait aussi de part en part une métaphysique du signe et une philosophie du langage.⁷

The clear emergence of a primary philosophical concern about the subject and the limits of the cognitive faculties, brought to light the fragile, mutable and uncertain morphology of language. Condillac's theory of sensations presupposes the possibility of a formal structure of language as the agent which incites invention, and is the sole means of achieving any valid taxonomy leading to knowledge. This formal structure is both a project and a myth; it involves the invention of a potential language and the speculative apprehension of its pure and distant origin; it postulates a primal logic, the logic of instinct which, by a radical inversion, transforms itself into logic as instinct.

Condillac remarks:

Nous avons remarqué que le développement des nos idées et de nos facultés ne se fait que par le moyen des signes, et ne se ferait point sans eux; que par conséquent notre manière de raisonner ne peut se corriger qu'en corrigeant le langage, et que tout art se réduit à bien faire la langue de chaque science. Enfin nous avons prouvé que les premières langues, à leur origine, ont été bien faites, parce que la métaphysique, qui présidait à leur formation, n'était pas une science comme aujourd'hui, mais un instinct donné par la nature.⁸

As Derrida has observed, this was not stated in simple, clear thesis. In Condillac's conception, the limits of thought are fixed by an *undecidable* assertion defining at the same time *the possibility of calculating, defining and molding language to achieve its perfect final form and the perfection of the original language rooted in pure instinct*. Perfection appeared both as an aim, as an attainable but distant end and as a point of departure, as a biological device inherent in man itself. These cardinal notions determine the dynamic displacement of Condillac's conception of understanding.

The work of Condillac exhibits some of the most important discursive tensions within the Enlightenment: the figure of a formal scheme of language modifiable at will, as the outcome of a voluntary act, contrasts with the conception of a vague symbolic force which thrives from an uncertain genealogy that hinders the subject's appraisal of truth and, simultaneously, makes knowledge possible. Condillac anticipates the

appearance of instinct as a central concept for the comprehension of knowledge throughout the nineteenth century. This concept fused the myths of origin with a positivistic conception which stemmed from Natural History. Instinct was thus conceived as an original, logical scaffolding of signs, both as material support and as manifestation of knowledge. But this original pure and eloquent logical scheme was to be degraded in the course of historical events. Condillac's thought prefigures also the violent irruption of Rousseau's cult of metaphor as the original and unblemished speech act which had suffered a progressive decay throughout human development.⁹

Language is confronted as a distinct entity, as an instrument. Signs were seen as foreign to their own grammar, even as moldable matter likely to engender sense out of the capacity of its elements to combine according to specific and definite rules. Moreover, the combinatorial power of language appears as a mirror image of those human faculties discernable in the light of Condillac's metaphysical allegories. A step was taken towards the invention of the radical conception of the autonomy of language, towards an irreversible uprooting of language from the sphere of subjectivity. The exile of language will, in fact, turn out into an exclusion of the subject — as a transforming agent — from the realm of symbol. In Condillac, language lacks identity: there is an inner cleft between the substance and the grammar of signs, as well as between the distortions of historical meanings and the formal precision of signs which is due to its **instinctual**, timeless origins; nevertheless, it preserves an unyielding generating power. Language is thought to engender knowledge through the mysterious faculty of human understanding to combine formal, abstract tokens; the restless transformation of the notions which aim at the phenomena of the world was then conceived as aroused from the set of potencies of a virtual grammar of sensations. However, this power of combining operations was neither envisaged as totally subdued by man's will, nor as absolutely freed from it: language was seen by Condillac to an intrinsic "disposition" of signs to combination. Signs were conceived as linked by an inherent **sympathy**. There should be an essential, analogical binding between some, and an essential rejection of formal proximity between others. This sympathy, although obscure in its qualities and its sources, could be created by a singular act of naming. A name, a complex denomination, could restore a broken congruity among signs, a congruity that

reflects the appropriate response of sensations to the boundless silence of things.

Condillac's conception of analogy — of sympathy — implied a fundamental though equivocal notion: *sympathy* as a force of attraction, as a binding force, as a gravitational attribute of signs. Newton's notions, constructed upon the idea of proximity and contact but also upon the evidence of efficient, *distant action*, revealed a delicate but intangible regime of interaction between bodies as well as a web of delicate equilibrium forces inherent in the whole universe of bodies.¹⁰ Condillac's fantasies preserved untouched or even magnified the force of Newton's allegories which became as contradictory and exacting as in Hume's thought and in the speculative imagination of Kant. Nevertheless, the concept of a distant, "gravitational" bond between the signs advanced by Condillac overflowed the boundaries of language and revealed itself as a singular articulating figure which embodied both the subject and his signs. The laws of attraction between bodies are universal, and this universality might be extended "figuratively" (Condillac), metaphorically, beyond the limits of physics. Thus, it should comprehend each movement, each measurable mass, each source of sensation, but also each contact and each relationship between the bodies: it encompasses syntax and affection, even to become also a principle of human action. In fact, as we follow Condillac, the essential nature of the notion of force confounds itself with the name of sensation. Sensations spring from bodily efforts and resistances. This immediate corporeality conditioned and founded —the figurative operation is inverted— the physical nature of the sensations which, in turn, gave rise to the material conception of spiritual worlds.

The works of Condillac exhibit the development of an "epistemological myth": the obscure nature of force, its position at the unattainable centre of contemporary thought around which revolves a paradoxical notion of language and, with it, a fragile image of self, already forged during the Enlightenment, displayed by signs which, paradoxically, announced its imminent collapse. Romanticism offered a first glimpse of the incurable wounds of the fragmented self. The depths of consciousness appeared as inhabited by an unfathomable animating geometrical, mute, and delicately balanced force: a source of enigma and misunderstanding, veiled in itself, but likely to define the position of self in the universe of matter.

Condillac thus prefigures both the culmination and the breakdown of the Enlightenment project. The historical conception of language which turned into a progressive acknowledgement of its autonomous regime, of the effective force of its signs, produced, as a sequel, its formalization as a system and the rejection of theological foundations of representation, but also aroused the exalted vision of sensibility, the broadening of the cleft between body and mind and the mechanization of the soul, and the inescapable conviction of the fading *presence* of the world. This image of language led to the dominance of scientific patterns of thought as models of philosophical comprehension, as the horizon defining its profile of argumentation and style, its rhetoric of evidence which founded conviction. It is not surprising that Condillac's *Traité des sensations* was to become a main text in the initial years of the positivistic project to teach a language to deaf-mutes. His words signal the dawn of the conception which saw aberrations of language not as theological tokens but as pathological symptoms. It also signals the definitive exile of language from the realm of sacredness, the invention of language as a system and the recognition of the autonomous dynamic systems of phonology and syntax. It foretells the methodological austerity of historical linguistics and, paradoxically, the final enthronement of sensibility, the definitive emergence of self as an uncertain entity, afflicted by the foreign nature of language, a self torn apart from his own sense by dreams.

III. Mesmer and the mystic rhetoric of secrecy

Twelve years after the publication of the *Traité des sensations*, in 1766, Franz-Anton Mesmer obtained in Vienna his degree as a physician. His thesis, *Dissertatio physico-medica de planetarum influx*¹¹, clearly showed that he was, like Condillac and Hume, profoundly influenced by Newton, but no less in debt to Paracelso or to Kircher. He was no less impassioned than Condillac in his search for a set of general laws governing bodies and phenomena, and the universalization of the principles of Newtonian physics. Mesmer and Condillac relied equally on a key rhetorical procedure: analogical reduction. Perhaps there were only two differences between them: Mesmer's capacity for faith and Condillac's awareness of the secretiveness of

sensations and of language. Mesmer had not yet experienced the advent of suspicion. Conceivably Condillac had.

Mesmer assigned a privileged place to the gaze —and observation as the main instrument for acquiring knowledge— and reinforced a dominant characteristic of eighteenth century reflection about nature, the hierarchy of the senses and sensibility integrated in a system. Indeed, the nature of sensations seemed to take roots in the autonomous constitution of the senses; however, it totally depends on the subject's capacity to apprehend and compose into a whole the vast and complex sphere of impressions:

L'homme est naturellement observateur. Dès sa naissance, sa seule occupation est d'observer, pour apprendre à faire usage de ses organes. L'oeil par exemple lui serait inutile, si la nature ne le portait d'abord à faire attention aux moindres variations dont il est susceptible [...] La plupart des sensations sont donc le résultat de ses réflexions sur les impressions réunis dans des organes.¹²

But Mesmer's meditations encouraged a definite fusion of the exaltations which accompanied the dramatic apprehension of Newtonian mechanics and need for the support of institutional policies. The outcome of this fusion was a complex knowledge: *le savoir médical*. Much more explicitly than Condillac — whose efforts were only indirectly incorporated into this twilight zone of knowledge zone between nineteenth century medicine and the erection of pedagogy into a distinct discipline —, Mesmer drew from this "Newtonian passion" direct conclusions about the nature of human bodies, the physiological performance of nerves, and adequate therapeutic procedures:

J'avançais, d'après les principes connues de l'attraction universelle, constatée par les observations qui nous apprennent que les planètes s'affectent mutuellement dans leurs orbites et que la lune et le soleil causent et dirigent sur notre globe le flux et le reflux dans la mer ainsi que dans l'atmosphère; j'avançais, dis je, que ces sphères exercent aussi une action directe sur toutes les parties constitutives des corps animés, *particulièrement sur le système nerveux*, moyennant un fluide qui pénètre tout: je déterminais cette action par l'intention et la rémission des propriétés de la matière et des corps organisés, telles que sont la gravité, la cohésion, l'élasticité, l'irritabilité, l'électricité."¹³

There is a metaphorical presence of *fluid* as the agent of irritability as well as of gravity

and electricity. By virtue of fluid, cohesion appears as a natural disposition of the bodies. Fluid becomes both a fable and an explaining principle, a narration formed by ciphered notions, patterns of thought drawn from different conceptual spheres and disciplines: physics and biology fused together in a surprising conception of physiology, neurology and the anatomy of the soul. The hydraulic metaphor was to remain as a fascinating, "magnetic" figure in the wake of the discourse of physics. Particularly at the boundaries of biology, physics remained as a model, as an idealized achievement of human knowledge.

But beyond the explicit beliefs of biology, *fluid* appeared as the explicit negation of the central position of seeing. Indeed, the notion of fluid implied a dynamic interaction, a proximity, a contact of bodies. Nevertheless, the metaphor of the *magnetic* fluid provides an image for the bond between bodies which lacks any visible substance. It was the victory of radical transparency. As an all pervading presence, as the substance that accomplishes the cohesive aim of universe, as a non-perceivable, non-visible acting agent, this volatile, spiritual fluid was to negate the power of sensibility; this conception envisions the material evidence of the senses subdued to the speculative profile of a universal and unfathomable presence. Moreover, this intangible substance, the fluid, had an additional power: it did not exert its influence over the body as a whole, but impregnated its intimate substances. The fluid metaphor dissolved the distinctions between inner and outer dimensions, the visible and the invisible, the animate and the inanimate, in a unified undifferentiated matter. The whole power of this conception had its source in the dissolving action of the rhetoric of secrecy projected upon the body of positivistic knowledge. The most significant outcome of the rhetoric of secrecy was the image of knowledge as semiotics: it brought about an hermeneutic of malady, a comprehension of affection only possible for initiates and the ciphered significance of symptom.

But the therapeutic consequences of this enthroning of secrecy, the fascinating imprint of the whole universe on the still fragile conception of the nervous system, were by far the foremost manifestation of this epistemological myth; for the myth simultaneously founded, upon this rhetoric of secrecy, both a delusive psychological doctrine and a physiological mirage: a notion of personality, a canon for the

taxonomies of the pathologies of the soul, upheld by the metaphor of fluid dynamics which inspired the image of concealed maps of bodily diagrams of the motion of energy.¹⁴ Moreover, Mesmer's fantasies also contributed to found a broad regime of institutional strategies, a new dominion of seeing and controlling: education, pedagogy.¹⁵

Mesmerism can be seen as the singular point at which several currents of European thought converge: a point of inflection, both a culmination and a beginning of an age, as an epigraph and an elegy, as a displacement of the patterns of seeing and the exaltation of sublime reasoning, as the founding of a scientific myth and an unsuspected source of uncertainty, as a new domain for faith likely to displace the old one, as the expression of an enthusiasm for the occult accompanied by the development of a positivistic "dynamic psychology" and as a therapeutic practice built upon the hitherto unacknowledged virtues of hypnotism. But this convergence took place within an all-encompassing delight in secrecy.¹⁶

Mesmerism was not an extravagance which intruded in the quietness and the hopeful serenity of the Enlightenment, nor an undermining of the certitudes of progress. Occultism was ingrained in the sphere of Mesmerism, and was a legitimate outgrowth of the driving forces of the Enlightenment: Newtonian physics, rationalism, religious fervour, devotion to progress, powerful biological models and Natural History, the tension between observation and imaginative inventiveness, speculative discourse, the political importance of new secret societies and sects, as well as social conflicts generated by the collapse of ancient institutions. Occultism sought in magnetism and in the enigmatic nature of energy, a refuge from Enlightenment itself. It sought this refuge despite sharing with science a passionate belief in the amazing magical power of positivistic knowledge, in imagination as an inherent promise of the future dominion of reason over nature and over man, and in a further, unfulfilled, yet legitimate promise of collective welfare. Occultism bloomed shielded by the exalted imagination of the French Revolution, by the enthusiasm it aroused; it appeared as the resonance of the praising of the sublime. Philippe Muray has vividly portrayed this facet of the nineteenth century:

Balsamo use de son pouvoir hypnotique dans le but de provoquer la Révolution. Le mystère Cagliostro passe dans le fond du décor, la cour de Louis XV se décompose, les sociétés secrètes manipulatrices sont menées sans les savoir par le bout du nez, Marie-Antoinette est sous l'empire de Mesmer, la Bastille tombe, les sectes jaillissent des pierres de la forteresse écroulée, la bacchanale des occultes au grand jour commence. La politique. Le gouvernement des masses par les mages et des masses des mages par les mages de la masse. Les jeux sont refaits, les âmes captivées, c'est le délire et les temps modernes.¹⁷

There is a primary social driving force in this mixture of insanity and exalted expectation: fear. "No passion —writes Edmund Burke— so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear"¹⁸. Fear reveals itself in an awareness of the uncertain significance of signs; it instigates an hermeneutical urgency the basis of which is the evidence of a presence without meaning: obscurity and secrecy have become themselves evidence. There is a recognition of the exacting dilemma of truth as a sign that defies decipherment, inaccessible, and yet as the seed of political action and of aesthetic experience rooted in pain and pleasure. Fear thus appears at the conjunction of memory and promise, of scientific devotion and the delusions of immediate experience, of the degradation of the divine and the speculative deifying of theological principles. The history of fear entwines itself with the history of the passion for secrecy. Fear, obscurity and concealment also coexist in the conception of nature and of scientific enterprise: the nineteenth century witnessed a relentless confrontation of the self with this obscurity. Perhaps it was Edmund Burke who best expressed the inextricable emotion aroused by mute but eloquent presence; names, objects, experiences, passions, conceptions and the inner conflicts within the boundaries of subjectivity. In his reflection on the sublime he writes:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the *sublime*; that is, it is the product of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. [...] The passion caused by the great and the sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of soul, in which all the motions are suspended, with some degree of horror.¹⁹

Thus, signs of nature exhibited a extreme condition which was seen as the source of

the experience of the sublime and its paralyzing quality. The word *astonishment*, which acquired a specific resonance since Descartes, named the arrest of the meaning of the natural sign which, we should see, stems from the original experience of pain. Horror that accompanies pain confounding itself with its emotions, with danger and darkness, lies deep in the inner, regions of the stifled expression of astonishment. Horror dwells within the expression, concealed by the overwhelming experience of the sublime. The deep sense of horror itself lies unexpressed but is nevertheless active in the sudden silence which signals the advent of the experience of the sublime. Thus, secrecy appears as a privileged sign: a significant, undeniable silence recognizable as sign; it is the uncertain sign of vacuousness the source of which are pain and horror, deprived from any possible interpretation; a clear presence the meaning of which eludes any encompassing expression, but nevertheless awakens vigorous emotions. Fear is exalted as a powerful passion and at the dawn of the nineteenth century it is driven by a semiotic impulse, centered on secrecy and obscurity.

IV. The intimate dissemination of anxiety: hermeneutics and the passions of history

A partir du XIX^{ème} siècle, le langage se replie sur soi, acquiert son épaisseur propre, déploie une histoire, des lois et une objectivité qui n'appartient qu'à lui. Il est devenu un objet de la connaissance parmi tant d'autres: à côté des êtres vivants, à côté des richesses et de la valeur, à côté de l'histoire des événements et des hommes.²⁰

This receding of language, induced by the recognition of the autonomy of signs as system, manifests the impact of the sudden social apparition of fear, not as a mere individual experience, nor as a recognizable response of a particular body to an identifiable agent, but as an object of the speculative mind. The Terror aroused by the political significance of the destruction of the bodies of the victims of the Revolution not only signified the abrupt transformation of the Regime, but also illuminated the

changing boundaries and meaning of the self. The violence of French Revolution, which shaped the new sense of enthusiasm and the new aesthetic weight of the exorbitant, of terror —the sublime as outlined by Kant's meditation on judgement—, emerged also as a complex object: that which by itself provokes horror, and reveals the limits of language and the boundaries of transcendental presence. This presence supports power beyond the will of man and is perceived as a nameless machine, a device capable of encompassing and obliterating the aims of divinity. It exhibits the transient, undefinable, boundary signs that confirm, paradoxically, the absolute dominion of codes over the uninterrupted silence of God. Fear became corporeal and the primary source of the sublime.

Fear dwells not on the boundaries of discourse but of language itself. The sublime does not reject discourse; rather it is loquacious; it excites an impulse to speech, as if the experience of having reached the limits of language, the immersion in horror, had unleashed a driving force that engendered a non-subjective, unending chatter, which deepened and in turn, exacerbated the hollowness of meaning. Words displayed for the first time the remoteness of their substance, now that they were free from the necessity for addressing an outer presence. Words appeared as both limitless in their capacity to represent and void of any essential meaningfulness. This vacuity is the root of both horror and the sublime. It is also the root of the attraction exerted by the despotic purity of revolutionary slogans. About the sublime proclamation of Robespierre: "Je suis l'esclave de la liberté", Claude Lefort has written:

Nous sommes passés très vite sur ces mots, quand nous avons jugé qu'ils faisaient entrevoir le gouffre de l'ancienne oppression, le danger d'une rechute dans les ténèbres du passé. C'est une autre gouffre qu'ils ouvrent à la pensée: l'affirmation absolue de la liberté se confond avec sa négation; le sens se vide dans le non-sens. Le dicible, en l'occurrence, serait que l'établissement d'un régime libre suppose le recours à des moyens terribles, que furent ceux du despotisme, pour en extirper les racines. Mais les mots de Robespierre portent la marque de l'indicible; ils brûlent la langue de leur contact; l'articulation est défaite. Ici, la Terreur parle dans la dévastation de la parole humaine.²¹

Meaninglessness is revealed as an essential feature of language. The autonomous voice of Terror has frightened the age as intensely as the massive and brutal, political death.

Perhaps this devastation of human speech and the sublimity of the sense it conveys, *la Terreur*, has not received the attention it deserved —not even Foucault, who has devoted some enlightening commentaries to the notion of limits at the threshold of the nineteenth century, has meditated cogently about this specific manifestation of the limits of language. This "word" uttered as Terror is but the sign, the *locus* of a convergence of the sovereignty of language and the absolute authority of the realm of law. At this point at which the absolute nature of signs meets the irrevocable sovereignty of the law, the work of Sade arises as a *sequel* of the same conditions that gave rise to the Kantian ethic revolution:

L'image classique ne connaît que les *lois*, spécifiées comme telles ou telles après les domaines du Bien et les circonstances de Mieux. Lorsque Kant parle au contraire de "la" loi morale, le mot *morale* désigne seulement la détermination de ce qui reste absolument indéterminé: la loi morale est la représentation d'une pure forme, indépendant d'un contenu et d'un objet, d'un domaine et de circonstances.²²

The moral law refers to nothing which might be presented to sensible intuition. It emerges as an absolute and independent principle. Thus, it has its own time, its own histories. It is loquacious, undecipherable; the mirror image of subjectivity, which becomes ever denser and displays its own imagination. Both understanding and moral behaviour are rooted in the extreme desolation of normativity: the autonomy of language was seen to reside in its impenetrable opacity. Secrecy is not a concealing strategy, but an inherent condition of the autonomy of moral law: it is the fate of sign itself; it involves the yielding of the subject to the Terror which has become itself part of this history of signs.

The awareness of the opacity of language is but the latest stage in the fragmentary and widely dispersed experience of the tenacity of memory. Henceforth, "history", conceived as a positivistic knowledge, becomes foreign to the experience of man, it rejects his most intimate perceptions and his imaginative invention of the past. Perhaps, the most brutal impact of the acceptance by society of Darwin's hypothesis was neither the expulsion of man from the summit of Creation, nor the infliction of an incurable wound on the narcissism of mankind —as Freud once insinuated—, but the acceptance

of a sublime notion of history: *Natural History*. *Natural history*, as a scientific realm outlined in the nineteenth century, settles the taxonomies vaguely stated during the eighteenth century. The new awareness of the fragmentary nature of beings and an unprecedented sense of the density of time led to the enthronement of analysis as a privileged operation. *Natural History* is an astonishing statement about an inhuman and non-human transformation of things. The world emerged not as an essential, fixed universe of biological morphologies, but as a series of decaying beings that had left as only testimony their own debris. Genesis became an accidental incident, as did the vanishing of whole species: time offers the certainty of radical destruction; there is a full awareness of the finite condition of experience. But this finite condition of beings exposes itself as a series of events, as a temporal succession without any witness. *Natural history*, as created in the nineteenth century, inaugurated the notion of a history without a memory, a history lying beyond any power of evocation, a history that transcended presence, testimonies, narrations, myths or even fictions. It exhibited a mysterious notion of time: one which required the disappearance of identity and which concealed an inhuman truth while rejecting also the mirage of fixed taxonomies, a fixed path of Creation. The truth about the past was not to be found in revelation, nor derived from the eloquence of an ancestral faith, but as an empirical knowledge brought to light by the methodic enquiry into the residues of the men's life. History emerged as a settled, non-subjective, dispersed and enigmatic memory the integration of which was beyond the sphere of collective and individual experience; history remained always as an unperceived and latent, albeit vigorous presence.

Thus, the development of archeology and its spectacular findings was not surprising. It emerged as another strand of knowledge, an intrusion into everyday life of the widely disseminated residual evidences of challenging origins, hidden from the eye, the supremacy of which had been affirmed by eighteenth century philosophy. It offered evidence of a truth which lay beyond the reach of the immediate and penetrating gaze. History became the justification of the existence of virtual signs that conceal an elusive truth: profundity became a feature of the experience of time; the virtual nature of signs expressed by the concept of history enclosed both a bounded memory and an exasperated unfulfilled promise.

If, as Foucault has proposed,

[since the Classical Age] la théorie de l'histoire n'est pas dissociable de celle du langage. Et pourtant, il ne s'agit pas, de l'une à l'autre, d'un transfert de méthode. Ni d'une communication de concepts, ou de prestiges d'un modèle qui, pour avoir "reussi" d'un côté serait essayé dans le domain voisin. Il ne s'agit pas non plus d'une rationalité plus générale qui imposerait des formes identiques à la réflexion sur la grammaire et à la *taxinomia*. Mais d'une disposition fondamentale du savoir qui ordonne la connaissance des êtres à la possibilité de les représenter dans un système de noms.²³

The fundamental relation between knowledge and a system of names was to be strengthened by the contributions of Natural History. Taxonomy appeared definitively bound up with the conceptions of time inherent in the modern conception of history. The bond between Natural History and language was to exhibit an unusual pattern due to the violence of the encounter with the conception of a non-subjective nature of time, the figure of a non testimonial history, the profile of an untraceable past restored only as a conjectural model, as a virtual system of rules and their successive transformations. But perhaps an even greater upheaval in the apparently harmonious relation between language and Natural History was to occur within the nature of language itself and the figures that congregated about it: its nominative and ordering power was no longer seen to stem from its monolithic contours. The systematic combination of the elements of language exhibited, like any other functional organism, the turbulence of life; languages themselves became distant objects, animated by a strange kind of vital impulse.²⁴

Yet there remained undeniable links between language and thought. The speaker was enclosed within the sphere of an historical, living language, indifferent to his fate. The implicit fusion of the *categories of understanding* —in Kantian terms— and the *names* conferred on them, exhibited its fundamental impact upon the Romantic conception of language, evinced, among others, by Schleiermacher's conception of understanding [*Verstand*] envisaged as a permanent struggle between two essentially autonomous spheres: language and psychology, each following distinct historical paths, each destined to distinct but nevertheless related fates:

In 1819, Schleiermacher wrote:²⁵

Wie jede Rede eine zweifache Beziehung hat, auf die Gesamtheit der Sprache und auf das gesamte Denken ihres Urhebers: so besteht auch alles Verstehen aus den zwei Momenten, die Rede zu verstehen als herausgenommen aus der Sprache, um sie zu verstehen als Tatsache im Denkenden.*

There is a rhythmical movement, a succession of moments, a distinctive set of accents, which characterizes each of these dimensions of understanding. Thus, understanding embraced —according to Schleiermacher— two closed spheres: the sphere of language, which existed as a whole, preserving itself as a non apprehensible but compelling identity, and the psychological sphere, which presented itself as the "totality of the thoughts". Understanding appears at the intersection of these historical totalities which themselves resist apprehension. This impossibility of apprehension is stated by Schleiermacher himself:²⁶

Sollte die grammatische Seite für sich allein vollendet werden, sie müsste eine vollkommene Kenntnis der Sprache gegeben sein, im andern Falle eine vollständige Kenntnis des Menschen. Da beides nie gegeben sein kann, so muss man von einem zu andern übergehen, und wie dies geschehen soll, darüber lassen sich keine Regeln geben.**

The rhythmic patterns of interpretation of language and of psychological expressions, do not lead to a definitive ending. This uncertainty incited in Schleiermacher the need to displace hermeneutics: he comes to apply its methods to the realm of art. But this displacement only intensifies the uneasiness: it removes understanding from the sphere of knowledge, only to root it in a universe governed by the impulse of sensations. This movement goes from truth to taste, from timelessness to rhythmic turbulence, from the observation and construction of evidence to faith and imagination. But the impossibility

*Just as every act of speaking is related to both the totality of the language and the totality of the speaker's thoughts, so understanding a speech always involves two moments: to understand what it is said in the context of language [herausgenommen aus der Sprache] with its possibilities, and to understand it as a fact in the thinking of the speaker [Denkenden]. (Edited and translated by Kurt Müller-Vollmer, *The Hermeneutics Reader*, New York, Continuum, 1985, p. 74)

**In order to complete the grammatical side of interpretation it would be necessary to have a complete knowledge of the language. In order to complete its psychological side it would be necessary to have a complete knowledge of the person. *Since in both cases such complete knowledge is impossible, it is necessary to move back and forth between the grammatical and psychological sides, and no rules can stipulate exactly how to do this.* (Kurt Müller-Vollmer (editor), p. 76. Emphasis added.)

of attaining absolute self-identity, leaves in interpretation slight warning signs when confronted to the impossibility of establishing the self-identity of language. The displacement of understanding [*Verstehen*] from the rational sphere to the domain of art hampers its endeavour; it does not attempt a synthetic comprehension of language, for it sees understanding as constrained by the subject's historical nature which embodies the whole domain of his experience.

Throughout the nineteenth century the experience of secrecy acquired an unsuspected, unprecedented profile. It became inextricably attached to the notion and the experience of limits. Like the social experiences of fear, of silence, of pain and of truth in which it is deeply rooted, secrecy underwent profound transformations. These transformations which chiefly occurred in the social conceptions of knowledge, slowly emerged from the conjunction of the Romantic imagination and the endurance of the certainties of the Enlightenment. The histories of silence and of secrecy which had remained distant, even foreign to each other, became indistinguishable: both silence and secrecy named a sense which resided beyond the perceivable substance of language. The limits of understanding, so strongly evinced by the Enlightenment, illuminated the elusive, almost unperceivable limits of language. But the exploration of the limits of language in which the Romantic age became involved, also cast a shadow upon the notion of truth. Secrecy dwelt at the crossroads of these two contrasting limits. The emerging experience of secrecy revealed in itself a sense beyond sense. It gave rise to the flowering of exegesis.

On comprend ainsi le renouveau, très marqué au XIX^e siècle, de toutes les techniques de l'exégèse. Cette réapparition est due au fait que le langage a repris la densité énigmatique qui était la sienne à la Renaissance. Mais il ne s'agira pas maintenant de retrouver une parole première qu'on y aurait enfouie, mais d'inquiéter les mots que nous parlons, de dénoncer le pli grammatical de nos idées, de dissiper les mythes que animent nos mots, de rendre à nouveau bruyant et audible la part de silence que tout discours emporte avec soi lorsqu'il s'énonce.²⁷

The exacerbated confrontation and the subtle fusion of the limits of truth and language might have moulded certain dominant patterns in the discourse of the nineteenth century. Visible signs revealed, by their mere appearance, an unfathomable sense

which abode beneath the surface of the signs themselves. There was an *inner boundary* of language. The limit of language no longer defined a foreign, excluded realm of sense. The limit itself was conceived as engraved in the body of signs. Silence ceased to be thought of as the casual collapse of language. It rather signalled not a voluntarily concealed object or sense, but an essential exhaustion of language, a cleavage in the substance of language itself. In the nineteenth century, the subject was constrained to face the empty voice of silence inherently embodied in the substance, the syntax, and the material evidence of signs. But he was also compelled to assume that this silence was not a contingency. Moreover, it was to be seen as pervading language, spreading out over its surface, leaving delicate, transient traces which lay unperceived on the visible substance of discourse.

Psychoanalysis finds its place at this point of convergence of limits. But it is not to be seen as a simple sequel of the passion for interpretation which gave rise to the endless series of techniques of exegesis which dominated much intellectual activity in the nineteenth century. Psychoanalysis can be seen, paradoxically, both an exacerbation and a negation of exegesis. Moreover, throughout the different stages of the historical development of psychoanalysis, the force of exegesis progressively declines; interpretation evolves into an uncertain search which disdains its own ground and ends. Psychoanalysis lacks the illuminating force of faith. Unlike exegesis, psychoanalytic interpretation has rejected the firm confidence in the existence of a primordial meaning which might have guided the whole enterprise.

Throughout the Nineteenth century the path of exegesis became increasingly distant from that of psychoanalysis. Even if both exegesis and psychoanalysis reject the existence of fixed limits of sense, psychoanalysis took this rejection to almost intolerable extremes. But while exegesis holds to the conviction of the essential nature of meaning, and devotes itself to the patient expansion of its boundaries, the confidence of psychoanalysis in the fundamental role of language dims. It is the invincible confidence in meaning that prompts exegesis to a hasty, and even peremptory confirmation of the invincible creative power of language. However, if exegesis cultivates and tends indeed each new sprouts of interpretation, psychoanalysis identifies the progressive expansion of meanings as a disquieting resonance of the inner tensions

of the spirit and, in the last analysis, as a misleading appearance of deep, inextricably confused conflicting forces within the subject.

Yet, exegesis arises from the subject's despair about meaning. It is also marked by the conviction of the unsurmountable foreignness of language. Each interpretation renews and confirms the elusive, unfathomable nature of meaning itself; it exhibits the supererogatory sense of interpretation, its vacuousness. Paradoxically, each new exegesis, instead of approaching the subject's consciousness to the sought after meaning, broadens the cleft between consciousness and language. Language seems to move away, to become progressively foreign to interpretation. This experience of a fading language, brought about by endless interpretation, in turn, seems to emerge from an irreducible, ambiguous oblivion inherent in language. Interpretation forges an image of a remote, challenging meaning which lies in the bottom of language; and the remoteness of meaning appears as evidence of an essential indifference of language, an indifference which confounds itself with oblivion. Thus, language seems to remain foreign to the demands of memory. The boundaries of memory appear to emerge from the inherent obstinacy of language, from its resistance, from its indifference to the subject's demand that he should be capable of saying everything, of recalling everything. Instead, memory and language decay, become exhausted, mute. Language remains both the site and the root of an essential irreducible oblivion. It scribes silence on the core of the subject's experience. It also dissolves any enduring trace of the *singular* relation of the subject to his language. Exegesis emerges as a lasting effort to overcome the delusive effect of the oblivion inherent in language, it arouses a relentless desire for memory. Exegesis becomes in itself a means of restoring evocation.

Paradoxically, the nineteenth century saw both an exaltation and an exhaustion of symbol. Both conditions incited a strengthening of the fervour for interpretation, and often became inextricably bound up with it. The prestige of observation and detached description of phenomena accompanied the less perceivable endurance and metamorphosis of exegesis which unfolded the dense matter of symbol. The imperative of non-subjective observation as a condition of the construction of evidence and as an instrument of proof evolved simultaneously with the growing necessity for a transcendental, even obscure universe of categories, taxonomies and procedures which

promised to unveil the subject's most intimate condition. The positivistic view of knowledge grew besides an obdurate conviction in the obscurity of sense, the shattering of language and the experience of the darkening of the soul.

Psychoanalysis is grounded in the serenity of the positivistic conception of the body, as well as in the exaltations of symbol, the dark roots of hypnosis and thermodynamics, and in the exegesis of intimate and fragmentary narrations, in the fine passions aroused by the discovery of the nervous tissues. Physiology shared the exultant vision of thermodynamics, and sought to build upon it the thorough classification of the maladies of language, of the patterns of its destruction —the studies on aphasia. But psychoanalysis also appeared as a echo of mesmerism, as an aftermath of the impact of the hypnotic recall of buried shreds of the past, unattainable to consciousness; it also had its origins in the archeological conception of memory which subtly pervaded the scientific approach to the nervous apparatus, nourished by symptoms which appeared as traces of language uttered by aphasic patients, and by the endless evolution of interpretation which enacted the social experience of the weakening capacities of evocation. Psychoanalysis encompasses two diverging, struggling visions: a positivistic, thermodynamic, material conception of the soul, and the elusive, daunting landscape of the wreckage of language, the thwarting of memory by the violent imposition of the necessities of life.

Psychoanalysis conceives meaning as unlikely to convey any certainty, any evidence about the subject's nature; it is this conviction that reinforces the final daring bid of psychoanalytic interpretation: it does not seek a sense, but strives after its own renewal. Language appears as an inner boundary of the self. Thus, psychoanalysis is in itself edified upon inaccessible ground: secrecy. But in the light of psychoanalysis this notion had to found a new definition: secrecy was to be seen not as an omitted theme, an obliterated episode, a twisted account of facts; a truth the unveiling of which has been deferred, but as an inherent condition of language, a sense which emerges from the experience of the limits of meaning, of the force of silence which constrains the expressive power of speech. Paul Laurent Assoun remarked:

Ce que Freud va découvrir n'était caché qu'en un sens. Il n'attendait pas dans l'ombre d'être débusqué: il était sous les yeux de tous, *impliqué* dans le langage de chacun des sujets. En ce

sense, Freud n'aurait pas découvert, mais désigné à chacun des "usagers" la présence de ce que s'y notifie, inversant le mouvement étrange de l'inconscient, qui consiste à *dire*, tout en maintenant ce qui est dit dans l'*insu*. En ce sens, il a moins découvert que *manifesté*, maintenant l'inconscient dans la pureté de ses manifestations, sans les entraver, "donant à voir" ce qui est visible plutôt que caché. L'inconscient était moins un "secret" qu'une *manifestation qui rend aveugle d'être trop claire* (image déjà œdipienne), Freud, on le voit, n'avait décidément pas à découvrir cette image, mais à inverser le mouvement qui tend à en détourner le regard, le rendant *lisible*.²⁸

Assoun distinguishes some fundamental features of Freud's disruptive contribution both to the sphere of interpretation and to medical discourse. According to Assoun, the unconscious does not relate to language as cause to effect, nor as concealment to revelation, but as the implicit to the explicit sense of utterances. This relation relies upon an unexpected trait of the act of speech: the perceived, apparent wholeness of the act implies necessarily an unrecognizable, seldom perceived, dimension of sense. Some essential sense of the utterance remains unexpressed, excluded from the explicit meanings conveyed by the words. However, this excluded sense is manifested by the fragmentary glitter of residual experiences, the fleeting appearance of evocations, of slivers of unwitting gestures which enact forgotten representations. The foundations of the self's identity involves an excluded sense which remains implicit acting as a foreign force upon language; it transforms the meaning of words and engraves a tangible hollowness in the core of language.

Moreover, Assoun refuses to assign to the unconscious the attributes of secrecy. He does not hesitate to affirm that the unconscious is rather a blinding—a dazzlingly clear—manifestation. However, as Edgar Allan Poe has convincingly shown in *The Purloined Letter*, secrecy is best hidden on the visible surface. Perhaps, Assoun's main contribution is his conception of the Freudian interpretation, not as a procedure for disclosing a buried meaning, but for "making readable" the senseless signs scattered over the surface of language. To make these signs readable, the act of interpretation must recognize and depict the processes which have rendered them senseless. Secrecy may be conceived as this rendering undistinguishable of the potentially meaningful signs scattered over discourse, implied in the ultimate hollowness of the act of

utterance.

V. Secrecy and the soul's affliction

In 1766 Haller published his *Elementa physiologiae*. In this work, the notion of "irritability" was a cardinal element in an argumentation the aim of which was to draw a sharp distinction between normality and pathology, between health and sickness. Irritability could be seen as a fundamental, primary and undeveloped means of survival of any living being. The complete development of this elemental resource in human beings corresponds to the complex structure of sensation. A contemporary of Haller, the Scottish physician John Brown, broadened this notion: he coined the concept of "incitability" and defined it as "the property that enables all live beings to be affected and to react". This incitability was the cornerstone for a taxonomical distinction which separated the normal and the pathological states.

I have shown that health and sickness are one and the same state and that they depend on the same cause: the incitation, which varies only in different cases and in different degrees. I have already demonstrated that all the powers that produce health and sickness—and that sometimes they act with convenient degree of energy, and some other with too much force or excessive weakness—are the same ones. The physician must be only concerned with the aberrations experienced through incitation, so as to carry them back by the convenient means to the point where the health resides.²⁹

Nineteenth century medicine was to engage in a profound meditation on the boundaries between health and sickness; a boundary which, by the virtues of observation and the contributions of the emerging taxonomies of physiology and anatomy, promised a radical solution to the mystery of the nature of malady. Freud was not an exception. Even at its later stage, Freudian text showed an openly confessed inclination towards a never clearly definite bond with biological thought and its fundamental categories. Throughout all his writings, from his early non-psychoanalytic papers to the *Abriss der Psychanalyse* (1938), there is an uncanny reappearance of the signals of the taxonomical universe of nineteenth century medicine; these are not meaningless residues, resistant relics, nor historical testimonies of a rejected theoretical construct.

These shreds of the biological discourse, these echoes of a weakened evocation aroused by the belief in a virtually faithful and truthful scientific discourse, are not just faint images imprinted on the psychoanalytic thought; they are dispersed yet key pieces of the text itself. They forge a "paratactic" pattern of argumentation—in terms of François Roustang³⁰—, this is to say, a non formal scheme of logical deduction which interweaves in various proportions personal experiences, clinical observations, anecdotes, literary quotations, according to changing and often incongruous conceptual frames and to unclear theoretical grounds. Nevertheless, this device proves persuasive by means of discontinuous conceptual patterns made up of severed fragments of heterogeneous texts and a peculiar, appropriate display of suitable evidences. Parataxis offered to psychoanalysis a formal *narrative* device founded upon repetition, analogy, allegory and silence, operations which displaced arguments and displayed discontinuous reasoning; moreover, it allowed the Freudian discourse to build itself upon a regime of elliptic allusions, of sudden digressions, of abrupt and unforeseen thematic appearances, of dazzling intrusions of the narrator's voice, often used as a refuge. However, this complex device does not undermine psychoanalytic images and the evokative power of its metaphors; it does not obstruct the capacity of Freudian reflection to illuminate unforeseen evidence of human behaviour; rather, it confers upon it an unusual elucidating quality; psychoanalysis appears as negative enlightenment.

For all this, psychoanalysis remained faithful to Biology, accepting its progressive alienation, its foreign procedures, its incommensurable notional structure. Despite these incongruities, Freud obstinately preserved its concepts, transforming them into founding metaphors, assuming and embracing the conceptual heritage of the medical sciences. Psychoanalysis could not help viewing itself, in its unsettling remoteness from medicine, as having made a definitive choice: to confine itself to the fringes of positive science, although longing for its legitimacy; a paradoxical legitimacy which implied a menacing distrust of its theoretical achievements, and that, in the long run, would also bear testimony to the accuracy of its conceptual insights. Biology appeared, from the Freudian point of view, as bearing an essential truth, only incidentally misguided by a doubtful conception of mind. Freud's personal myth of

knowledge involved—even against his declared epistemological convictions—, at the final stages of psychoanalysis, a lasting, an image of a harmonic alliance between biology and the psychoanalytic conception of subjectivity. Despite his explicit denial of the faith in transcendental truth, psychoanalysis silently aspired to pronounce a definitive word, to reveal and consecrate decisive knowledge, to build a cohesive body of doctrine. The psychoanalytic truth should emerge from the final enthronement of Biology, in spite of its dubious conceptions and its methods of constructing evidence. Freud believed that the notion of the psychical apparatus demanded a definite and peculiar approach which implied a fragmented, disjointed view of psychical phenomena, the truth of which might appear only in the oblique light of disperse evidence and discontinuous discourse [*lückhaft Sprache*].

The nineteenth century enthroned a positivistic notion of symptom. Emerging from the fusion of a consecrated regime of observation and the positivistic belief in the visibility of perturbations, symptom invoked a peculiar visual semiotic, a speculative hermeneutic determined only by the powers of observation, a hermeneutic which claimed to be free from any convention, rooted only in instinct and biological necessity. The signs of symptom were not seen to convey meaning as an outcome of linguistic convention, but to reveal the truth of malady; symptoms were comparable to emanations the obscure soil of which, the perturbed nature of the being, awaited naming. Symptom demanded an accurate expression which would describe the mute, arid tokens of the body and bestow on them the fully illuminated identity of disease. The disorder of nature offered an enigmatic effigy of the body which was to be completely revealed by the rationality of diagnosis. Each symptom was the visible announcement of a whole set of obtruding disorders, of the perceivable derangement of the biological concord. However, symptoms preserved their essential muteness. To the medical eye, they remained as an organized web of silent or even concealed or imperceptible, menacing signs. Symptom exhibited the body as a rugged, unevenly illuminated geological formation, a chiaroscuro which offered a detailed though somber profile of its diseases. Symptom appeared as having an intrinsic relation to figure, interpretation and observation. The discernible although opaque, defiant signs which characterized a specific malady and spread over the surface of body seemed to compose

a regular, uniform, exact universe. The dazzling logic of their repetition, the sharpness of their regular, emerging contours, the stillness of their physiognomy, all these features exacted a precise language. So did a fixed order of designation, a uniform and repetitive chronology, a neatly comprehensive, thorough and compelling taxonomy, a faithful depiction of the essential nature of malady. Condillac's utopia of a formal language seemed to culminate in a fixed "grammar" of designations, in a rigid grid of descriptions and classifications of the perturbations of the body, in the intimate relation between the eye and the word which expressed the truth of abnormality, between the signs of the body and the essence of malady:

Au-dessus de tous ces efforts de la pensée clinique pour définir ses méthodes et ses normes scientifiques, plane le grand mythe d'un pur Regard qui serait pur Langage: œil qui parlerai.³¹

Symptom was seen to appear on the visible body as an expressive outburst which exhibited the timeless geometry of pain, strictly determined by an inner bodily condition. However, the relation between symptom and the decaying organic substrate from which it emanates remained unclear; it was subject to a speculative transcendental reflection about the link between cause and effect. With the notion of symptom, the speculative trends of thought which made of representation an issue reached their limits. The impossibility of harmony between language and object was clearly exhibited; the quest for an expressive rigour of the taxonomy and the comprehension of the essence of malady through classification was revealed to be a vain one. Symptom, as a visible token, demanded a more ambitious conception, which would envision it as a pure, pregnant sign in itself. Foucault remarked:

Le regard qui observe ne manifeste ses vertus que dans un double silence: celui, relatif, des théories, des imaginations et de tout ce que fait obstacle à l'immédiat sensible; et celui, absolu, de tout langage qui serait antérieur à celui du visible.³²

These two orders of silence stressed the enigmatic need for an expectant, unperturbed gaze to acknowledge the elusive nature of the deviant behaviour of the body. The "double silence" which surrounds the gaze revealed itself as a fundamental attribute of clinical observation.

To remain faithful to its object, the eye demands a deliberate oblivion of

language, a calculated muteness, an undeniable rejection of its own inherited universe of words. The gaze appears to apprehend a primordial vision. The moment of the gleam of the gaze is that of a radical, vigorously sought after suspension of language. This moment of the fulfilment of the observation transforms itself into the renewal of the experience of the primal instant in which the incarnation of the creation myth occurs. The notion of symptom bore the theological weight of the man's original encounter with nature. The silent language of the gaze blooms on the fringes of language, foreign to the dense mass of inherited concepts, to reveal the limits of meaning, its failure, its dumbness, its vacuity. its useless effort in face of the emerging signals of a wounded nature.

The exaltations of the gaze made evident the presence of secrecy which pervaded the intrinsic silence of words. Gaze was seen to expose an original speechless language which claimed to have been able to seize the essence of an absolute, irrevocable evidence of disease; it claimed to hold the key to the apprehension of the declining, vital force of the living being. Gaze seemed to strengthen the breeding power of secrecy only to expand its own pure, receptive capacity, to exhibit its full, silent power of recognition and its faculty of comprehension.

Another crucial event contributed to enhance the captivating force exerted on the scientific mind of the nineteenth century by the compelling precision of the disciplined apprehension of gaze: the invention of the "physiology of reason" which followed upon by the discovery of the thermodynamic regulation of the brain, the medical capture of the soul. This capture was to reveal an uneasy condition of knowledge: the formal language of reason informed by the *passion* for taxonomy brought about the description of the nervous system and its related domains. Reason sought to explore its own material ground, to reveal its own physical limits, to plunge into its own soulless, spiritless dynamics. The soul disease had finally exposed its tangible root, a visible abode. There was a perceptible, yet hidden anchorage for its distorted functions.

Nervous maladies, especially aphasia, were thoroughly described and classified: a map of the soul disease was drawn according to the faithful and detailed grid of conjectured

trajectories of excitation, of named territories of illness; a whole conception of the anxious muteness of the aphasic seemed to recognize its own imaginary territory in the sharply defined regions of the tissues of the brain. The measurable destruction of tissues accounted for the attested, numerous manifestations of muteness.

The metaphysical conception of mind yielded to the arduous testimony of thermodynamics. Positivistic thought had achieved the surrender of language to itself. The taxonomical powers of the naming faculty subdued the image of language as a spiritual force. The weakening of the belief in linguistic transcendence provoked a more intimate anxiety: as language revealed itself as a physiological emanation, as a material echo of an effusion of energy, a firm shelter against fear also crumbled. The experience of the absolute limit of the human nature emerged from the description of language diseases in terms of energy.

The biological conception of mental faculties, implied by Condillac's theory of sensations, was to encompass the entire biological domain. Gall took it to a definitive turning point, and later, the localisationist theory of language centers strengthened the speculative implications of this conception of mind: first Brouillard (1825) and then Broca (1861) established a definite correspondence between language and neurological stimulation; language became a part of the physical world, a thermodynamic process, an endless chain of physiological processes of charge and discharge of energy.

Silence appeared obliquely: as an illness. The distortions of language behaviour, aphasia, the malady of muteness, revealed brain damage. A new neurological topography emerged from underneath the landscape of a typology of silence. The works of Helmholtz and Fechner, the onerous mystique of energy processes promoted by Ostwald, Hebart and Mach all laid bare a new and daunting paradox: the promise of knowledge paralleled the sense of strangeness provoked by the reduction of meaning to the silence of matter.³³ Ernst Mach, in his influential book about sensations wrote:³⁴

Ich kann den Verlauf eines physikalischen Prozesses durch einen sensiblen Nerv zum Zentralorgan verfolgen, von da seine verschiedenen Wege zu den Muskeln aufsuchen, deren Kontraktion neue physikalische Veränderungen in der Umgebung bedingt. Ich muß hierbei an keine Empfindung des beobachteten Menschen oder Tieres denken. Was ich untersuche, ist ein rein

physikalisches Objekt. Ohne Zweifel fehlt hier sehr viel zum Verständnis der Einzelheiten, un die Versicherung, daß alles auf "Bewegung der Moleküle" beruhe, kann mich über meine Unwissenheit nicht trösten und nicht täuschen."

However, the new "material" typology of silence, of a meaningless process which engenders meaning, of energy displacements that underlie the subject's utterances, strictly obeyed the rules of nineteenth century science. The exclusion of the immediate realm of the senses and the privilege accorded to physical process involved a singular, almost secret set of names, a foreign taxonomy of measurable but concealed processes, the presence of which was only to be testified to by a few initiates. Foucault describes the imperative rule of medical thought:

La description, dans la médecine clinique, n'a pas pour sens de mettre le caché ou l'invisible à la portée de ceux qui n'y ont pas accès; mais de faire parler aux seuls qui soient initiés à la vraie parole.³⁵

The description of aphasia and muteness did not acquire a deep, obscure sense: it was a simple matter of drawing the correspondence between wounds on the folding surface of the brain tissue and the observed barriers of language; it was a description of the disintegration of the cohesive structures of language. The distinct profiles of the different patterns of degradation of language led to the recognition narration and naming of brain areas that had been destroyed.

As biology seemed to empty language from its own aura, to exhaust its idealistic resonances, to dissipate the mirage of deepness that veiled the physiological processes which burst upon the consciousness transformed into meaning and representation, it took advantage of a new visibility; it laid down the rules for a new hermeneutic: an exploring eye, a permanently unfixed gaze, the domain of which was to be the whole realm of acts of language.

This move from depth to surface, the transformation of secret meanings into

³⁵I can follow the development of a physical process through a perceiving nerve into the central organ, and from there on I can seek its different paths to the muscles, whose contraction will condition a new physical transformation of the periphery. For this, I must not think of any sensation of the observed man or animal. What I am looking for is a pure physical object. There is no doubt that there is still a long way to go for the understanding of the individual, and the insurance that all reference to the "movement of molecules" can neither comfort nor mislead me about my own ignorance. (My translation)

mute signs, the metamorphosis of the unfathomable essence of language into almost imperceptible marks; the restless displacement of the mystery that had translate revelation into reading, can be seen to be a central but obscure feature of Freud's enterprise: the radical metamorphosis of the silence which had remained inviolated at the very core of language. As we have already remarked, Freud's notion of symptom did not seek to unveil the presence of an obscure, buried agent of psychical malady, but to render into meaningful signs the complex and disperse manifestations of the perturbed soul. Freud sought to build symptoms out of apparently undecipherable, slight and unrelated traces.

The transformation of blinding evidence into readable signs, the challenge of the luminosity of matter, is the operation that transfigures secrecy into symptom and thus allows the discernment of meaningful silence. However, there is an interval between the former state of blindness and the sudden recognition of signs on the surface of acts, of language itself. This hiatus insinuates a silent, unformulated hermeneutic strategy. It is the overlapping of signs over signs, signs over language, signs which emerge from the dissipation of language, from silence: inaudible tokens converted into visible, readable signs. A supplementary force operates the metamorphosis of silent evidence into a sign over deep layers made of signs.

This uncertain hermeneutics, these new conditions imposed upon the deciphering of the visible signs, the abolition of the semiotic density of the visible physiological surfaces gave rise to the germ of psychoanalytic discourse. One additional piece contributed to this loquacity of the visible fractures of speech: the analogy between hysteria and aphasia. Hysteria appeared as the immediate manifestation of the subject's non-articulable narration of his own past experiences, as a sudden arrest of evocation, a distressing desertion of memory, as an unwilling abasement of speech, as a sort of mute display of the language of the body which revealed itself in the opacities of the flesh, which was evinced by the distressing power of silent and unrecoverable but devastating words.

VI. Writing silence

The late nineteenth century experienced unforeseeable manifestations of silence: a conscious and even lucid rejection of the possibility of writing, the cessation of literature, the exaltation of silence as the final, manifest destiny of the poetic voice.

Keats wrote:

A Poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no Identity — he is continually in for — and filling some other Body — the Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute — the poet has none; no identity — he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's Creatures. It then he has no self, and if I am a Poet, where is the Wonder that I should say I would right write no more?³⁶

Furthermore, the modern origins of literature foreshadowed, from the twilight of Romanticism, its outcome, both the suspension of the public consecration of literature and its rapturous enshrining. As early as 1823, De Quincey wrote:

Oh mighty poet! Thy works are not as those other men, simply and merely great work of art, but are also like the phenomena of nature, like the sun and the sea, the stars and the flowers, like frost and snow, rain and dew, hail-storm and thunder [...]³⁷

Later, in 1895, Mallarmé will take to its highest point the exaltation of the disappearance of the poet, clearly anticipated by Keats. We can read in his *Crise de vers*:

L'oeuvre pure implique la disparition élocutoire du poète, qui cède l'initiative aux mots, par le heurt de leur inégalités mobilisés; ils s'allument de reflets réciproques comme une virtuelle traînée de feux sur des pierreries, remplaçant la respiration perceptible en l'ancien souffle lyrique ou la direction personnelle enthousiaste de la phrase.³⁸

Writing affirms its own evanescent identity; it exposed in an unprecedented way, through the echoes of its harsh symbolism, the violence and distressing social decay of the certitudes, allowing itself to fully display its negative action. Language appeared through literature as a pure *negative regime*; the words did not carry an implicit statement on the plenitude of meaning, but displayed themselves as a material limit, a

sovereign force foreign to the reach and will of the subject. Speech exhibited itself as a force able to dissipate the illusions of meaning and to uproot any truth foreign to that implied by the pure act of writing. As Romantic hermeneutics, as historical philology, as the Fichtean ego, the dominant conception of literature throughout the nineteenth century progressively pushed the writer into an unfulfilled and even shattered will to identity. Writing was conceived as the expression of a pure desire, grounded in a complex web of the conflicting powers of language. The longing for a literary identity, which in Romanticism often turned back towards ancient models, had to face the paradoxical triumph of the expressiveness of the poetic *I* built upon the mounting dignity of a shattered self. The paradox of the self paralleled that of the simultaneous triumph and wreck of symbolism as the privileged means of achieving the social transcendence of the utterance lured by solipsism. Keats had written:

Well — I compare human life to a large Mansion of Many Apartments two of which I can only describe, the doors of the rest being as yet shut upon me — The first we step into we call the infant or thoughtless Chamber in which we remain as long as we do not think — We remain there a long while, and notwithstanding the doors of the second Chamber remain wide open, showing a bright appearance, we care not to hasten to it; but are at length imperceptibly impelled by the awakening of the thinking principle — within us — we no sooner get into the second Chamber, which I shall call the Chamber of Maiden-Thought, than we become intoxicated with the light and the atmosphere, we see nothing but pleasant wonders, and think of delaying there for ever in delight: However among the effects this breathing is father of is that tremendous one of sharpening one's vision into the heart and nature of Man, of convincing ones nerves that the World is full of Misery and Heartbreak, Pain, Sickness and — whereby. This Chamber of Maiden Thought becomes gradually darken'd and at the same time on all the sides of it many doors are set open — but — all leading to dark passages — We see not the ballance of good and evil. We are in a Mist — We are now in that state — We feel the 'burden of the Mystery'. To this point was Wordsworth come, as far as I can conceive when he wrote 'Tintern Abbey' and it seems to me that his Genius is explorative of those dark Passages.³⁹

In the final years of the nineteenth century, the sequel of Romanticism was clearly perceptible: perhaps for the first time, writing exhibited the word as a material, autonomous, foreign but disquieting resonance. Since Romanticism, the identity of literature is to be sought not in the unsuspected eloquence of meaningful constructions,

but in a *negative* devotion of poetic voice to writing, to a writing bound to abandon itself to the turbulence of the poetic matter, to the folding back of language upon itself, to the darkening of its own contours.

Criticism, conceived as a deep reflection on the limits of language and a meditation on the ultimate foundations of expression, appeared then as an inherent disquieting facet of the poetic expression. Criticism revealed itself as the tragic fate invoked by the subject's awareness of the expressive limits of language, and, paradoxically, as the manifestation of his conviction regarding its purifying aim. This reflective movement became indeed the intrinsic, definitive trait of writing: "tout ce qui commande à la fois la littérature comme auto-critique et la critique comme littérature"⁴⁰ This double movement, this intrusion of criticism into literature and the abrupt metamorphosis of criticism as inherent in literature, this *negative folding back of the imaginative force of language upon language itself*, was implied by the reflexive, distorting action exerted by poetic writing. The negative alliance of criticism and literature was conceived neither as the expression of the writer's simple, passing need for self-illumination, as a transient self's passion for confining itself within its own language, nor, on the contrary, as a simple circumstantial transfiguration of the poet's temper, a momentary intruding of discordant obscurity into the self's inner, meditative voice. Also, this movement was not the intrusion in the text of the equivocal serenity of a confessional appetite whose imperative voice enacted the poetic impulse, what Keats himself named "egotistical sublime".

Rather, each of these conflicting facets of writing, yet intimately bound together (literature experienced as self-criticism, and criticism conceived as an intrinsic power of writing), revealed a profoundly disquieting quality of literature. Romanticism disclosed the *necessary*, relentless confrontation of forces in writing. However, these two dominating forces —criticism and literature— shared a common distrust of meaning. Since Romanticism, literature had ceased to be the ideal identity which embraced, in a single, synthetic, unperturbed expression, the conflicting exigencies of expression, art and criticism; despite their alliance, both criticism and literature, rejected any possible synthesis of their antagonistic aims. If literature evolved as an ambiguous experience it was perhaps because it could only heighten to an obscure

dignity the equivocal nature of language itself. Thus, literature emerged from the self's disquieting awareness of the boundaries of language, of the struggle between diverging, even contradictory, disrupting qualities of meaning. Inevitably, the poetry of the post-Romantic period was bound to become aware of its own implicit, negative, unfathomable ground, the pervading insubstantiality of meaning which, paradoxically, upholds the self-engendering impulse of literature, the relentless self-unfolding of poetic writing, the all-embracing aim of its symbolic action. Consequently, a cleft was perceived in poetic utterance between its uncertain, non-apprehensible grounds and the precarious glitter of its words; the silence became tangible, ingrained in the weave of poetic words.

On the other hand, if criticism was to be considered not as a genre, but as an essential force in literature, the inextricable yet unsurmountable duality of poetry—the agonistic entanglement of both criticism and literature—should inform also its reflexive utterance; moreover, this duality of poetry, its expansive cleft in the midst of utterance, should inform language itself. Romanticism exhibited, in this inaugural moment of the modern concept of literature, with its *essential* impossibility of achieving a definite identity, the pervading vacuousness of language. Furthermore, it settled the impossibility, later exalted by symbolism, of conceiving language as pure meaningful matter; it made it possible to conceive writing as the purification of language from the contamination of representation. After the dimming of Romanticism, literature made of its own impossibility not only an obsessive, disquieting motive, it often turned this obsession into a mystical force, into a search for redemption in the essential hermetism of language.

Therefore, the modern existence of literature might be seen as entirely built upon the paradoxical conception of language as both meaningful matter, and as the absolute limit of expression. Literature emerges as the enigmatic expression of this exile of language from meaning.

Enigma remains latent in the impossibility of literature to say its own truth, in its silence about the truth of its own limits. Silence in literature has been usually portrayed as the scandal of the willful though sombre retreat from writing, rather than as an extraneous, non-apprehensible body thrust into literature itself: Rimbaud,

Hölderlin, enact despair or madness, disenchantment or a glaring, bewildered wandering. Their rejection of literature is surrounded by the aura of the exorbitant. Their silence is conceived as an exceptional deed, yet delusive and obscure. In modernity, the unuttered source of the awareness of the negative horizon of language, of the absolute, intrinsic limit of the writing act, mixes itself inextricably with the secret, inexpressible urgency involved in the "deliberate" rejection of writing.

The election of silence by the most articulate is, I believe, historically recent. The strategic myth of the philosopher who chooses silence because of the ineffable purity of his vision of because the unreadiness of his audience, has antique precedents. It contributes to the motif of Empedocles on Aetna and to the gnomic aloofness of Heraclitus. But the poet's choice of silence, the writer relinquishing his articulate enactment of identity in mid-course, is something new. It occurs, as an experience obviously singular but formidable in general implications, in two of the principal masters, molders, heraldic presences if you will of the modern spirit: Hölderlin and Rimbaud.⁴¹

Silence appears as a *meaningful* choice. The "election" of silence—if we can so call the madness of Hölderlin or even the revulsion which seems to have incited Rimbaud's rejection of literature—has frequently outweighed the violence of their veiled though intimate recognition of the boundaries of expression, of the traces of the apocalyptic rotting of language which might be clearly perceived in Rimbaud's frantic rhythm of metaphors and his obstinate naming of limits. "Je suis le maître du silence", writes Rimbaud in *Les Illuminations*, and later, "Assez vu [...] Assez eu [...] Assez connu [...] Depart dans la affection et les bruits neufs."⁴² Rimbaud's writing is full of signals of silence, of the negative gestures which stem from a self-reflexive movement of language, pointing towards its own extinction. Metaphors crowd in Rimbaud's evocation of limits, plagued by the obsession of silence:

Rouler aux blessures, par l'air lassant et la mer; aux supplices, par le silence des eaux et de l'air meurtriers, aux tortures qui rient, dans leur silence atrocement houleux.⁴³

Finiteness appears as a dense set of metaphors of pain imprinted in the body: *tortures, blessures, supplice*; the alliance of writing, flesh, silence and pain, is simultaneously sheltered and eclipsed by visible signs of limit, of decay, of death. The transience of being, its finiteness, appears not only as a fatal condition of existence, "C'est cette

époque-ci qui a sombré", states Rimbaud; but as a constellation of signs, of expressive metaphorical stresses, as written images of the infliction of suffering: secrecy is the mysterious signal at the end of expression; it evolves as a sudden and unutterable perception of the exalted, lavish, decaying meanings of language.

Literature announces, in the late nineteenth century, the decay of the plenitude of consciousness in modernity. Hofmannsthal, with astounding insight, reveals through the words of his character, Lord Chandos, an imaginary disciple of Bacon, the intense affliction involved in the loss of the meanings of language. Lord Chandos writes in his letter:

Mein Fall ist, in Kürze, dieser: Es ist mir völlig die Fähigkeit abhanden gekommen, über irgend etwas zusammenhängend zu denken oder zu sprechen.

Zuerst wurde es mir allmählich unmöglich, ein höheres oder allgemeineres Thema zu besprechen und dabei jene Worte in dem Mund zu nehmen, deren sich doch alle Menschen ohne Bedenken geläufig zu bedienen pflegen. Ich empfand ein unerklärliches Unbehagen, die Worte "Geist", "Seele" oder "Körper" nur auszusprechen. Ich fand es innerlich unmöglich, über die Angelegenheit des Hofes, die Vorkommnisse im Parlament, oder was Sie sonst wollen, ein Urteil herauszubringen [...] die abstrakten Worte, deren sich doch die Zunge naturgemäß bedienen muß, um irgendwelches Urteil and den Tag zu geben, zerfielen mir im Munde wie modrige Pilze.⁴⁴

Hofmannsthal clearly describes the exhaustion, the ruin of words, the triumph of silence, the language rendered barren by the dazzling perception of the world, the brutal, baffling intrusion of immediate evidence, born of perception, into the fading realm of words. In Hofmannsthal's allegory, the power of the senses, the boldness of perceptions overwhelms the capabilities of language; experience and desire reject even the pronunciation of words simply to find an absolute fulfilment beyond the urgency of language.

To Lord Chandos eyes, no space surrounds the dazzling objects. Their glare

⁴⁴Briefly, my case is this: I have completely lost the faculty to think or speak coherently of anything. First, it was progressively impossible for me to speak of an elevated or even a common topic, and later, to utter such words of which every man make use without even noticing it. I felt unexplicably restless when pronouncing the words "spirit", "soul" or "body". I find it intimately impossible to state any judgement on the affaires of the Court or the events in Parliament, or whatever you may think of. [...] the abstract words of which any tongue must naturally make use, to state a judgement or to give the date, dissolved in my mouth like rotten mushrooms. (My translation).

eclipses everything beyond their own contours; the eye beholds nothing other than this captivating image and its inherent metamorphosis. The words desert him at this radiant moment. The advent of silence is the last stage of experience which, once it has been reached, makes the return to language an impossible endeavour. The indescribable, immediate contemplation of the object engenders the vertigo of truth, of the full apprehension of the senseless but immediate nature of the object, it plunges the consciousness into aimless expectation. The abrupt outburst of blazing hollowness invigorated the self's resistance to the intrusion of words whose presence would impede the consummation of the confined but exulting perception. Secrecy exhibits itself—in Hofmannsthal's universe—as the imperiousness of perception. The wordless eye becomes the sole, immediate, invulnerable source of truth. The world is just a dispersed emergence of radiant, inert, arresting figures; words grow into violent, degrading presences, or into the deceiving and disquieting menace of the others' voices and actions. Language fades in the presence of the overwhelming intensity of the mute, inner experience.

Moreover, Hofmannsthal not only narrates the allegory of the triumph of a mute perception over the fragility of language; Lord Chandos' luminous episode also refers to the imperiousness of the destruction of the symbolic force of language: the shattering of the bond between words and remembrance.

Mallarmé, in turn, seems to have a similar experience of the decay of the meaningfulness of language. He recovers language not as a positive force at the disposal of man's will, but as secret, delicate, meaningful matter which has undergone a brutal distortion; a distortion called everyday meaning. The alienated word does not conceal an inner and unaccessible truth; its substance exhibits and veils the essential foreign condition of meaning. For Mallarmé, writes Blanchot:

rien de plus étrange à l'arbre que le mot arbre, tel que l'utilise, pourtant, la langue quotidienne. Un mot qui ne nomme rien, qui ne représente rien, qui ne survit en rien, un mot qui n'est même pas un mot et qui disparaît merveilleusement tout entier tout de suite dans son usage. Quoi de plus digne de l'essentiel et de plus proche du silence?⁴⁵

The word has been abused by usage which rends bare its essentially foreign, sterile,

silent nature. The potency of word to name has been completely lost. Only poetry recovers the power of language to name, but its meaning acquires a distant, resistant meaning. However, the violence of usage is intrinsic to the nature of word; Mallarmé does not draw a sharp distinction between the precarious nature of the ruined meaning, and an unattainable essential core of language. It is the radical opacity of the intimacy between the meaningful word of poetry and the foreign sense of common usage, which paradoxically impedes any apprehension of the real nature of the word. What the pure word solely states is its the foreignness of its own material density, a substance which rejects transcendence, the plain, absolute evidence of its constitutional muteness.

la parole poétique n'est plus parole d'une personne: en elle personne ne parle et ce qui parle n'est personne, mais il semble que la personne seul se parle. Le langage prends alors toute son importance; il devient l'essentiel; le langage parle comme essentiel, c'est pourquoi la parole confiée au poète peut être dit parole essentielle.⁴⁶

In the poetic experience the solitude of the poetic voice, the evanescence of its identity, the vacuousness of the poetic self, ally themselves to the power of language which acquires the appearance of a indifferent, foreign yet essential voice. However, the nature of poetic language—as Blanchot has stressed—is not its immutable condition, its untouchable, sacred purity, but a transient stage of words, a fragile vision of the sheer absence of language which provokes a bewildered shudder of the identity of the self. The purity of poetic language is this trespass of meaning upon the intimate hollowness of speech. Paradoxically, the purification of language involves the fading of the uttering self, the definite isolation of language as a pure creative potency. The purification of language through poetry involves an exorbitant ritual which empties language of its human resonances, only to transform it into a purified, foreign, animated, meaningful presence. This is a radical action: language endures the silent gesture of the poetic utterance, which leaves no other trace in language but the memory of the potency of poetry itself. Furthermore, the poem, which remains as the sediment, the verbal reminiscence of the poetical action, forges a strange mirage: language offers the deceiving image of poetry as the privileged means of the expression of the self. Deracinated from its original ground, verbal imagination, language resembles a

deceiving mirror: it seems able to reflect the recondite matter of the self, and to unveil his unacknowledged passions; language appears as a mouldable substance which conforms its expressive powers to deep states of the soul. This mirage is profoundly grounded in the concept of representation, which constitutes one of the columns which support the Romantic imagination; a notion which crumbles with the advent of the crepuscular philosophy of the twentieth century.

The rejection of writing imprints on language an imperceptible sign, a sign made of an abrupt silence, of the non-said, of potential but extinguished meanings. The interruption of language is readable only in this balked impulse, in the traces of its sudden extinction. Its meaning relies in the frangible, but potentially enduring memory of an act which leaves behind no other sign but that of cessation, of a violent silence. The mere extinction of the act of writing implies a peculiar unexpressed passion of the subject, an unfathomable urge to dissipate; it enacts the self's cleavage; the self's brutal fracture implied by writing remains as a tangible silence on the margins of the readable matter.

Secrecy looms out from language as an aftermath of the obscure appearance of silence, which suggests the intimate rejection of language by the self. The non-said of this rejection becomes the driving force of the endeavour to interpret what has remained untold, to render this silence into a conceptual whole, to recognize the uncertain horizon of the self's unreachable intimacy conjectured through the scattered signs which adumbrate the limits of text. The non-said, enigma, silence and secrecy do not remain beyond the limits of sense. However, they obstinately congregate at the frontiers of the utterance; they constitute an elusive hollowness which shapes the act of writing.

VII. Freud's silence: the crepuscular writing

Throughout his life, Freud struggled against the desire to endow his work with literary power: literature was to him an ideal, a loss, a motive for rivalry; also a shelter, a horizon, a means of demonstrating the poignancy of his theoretical insights as a

privileged object of analysis; even as a symptom, as the privileged means for the knowledge of passions, instincts, perversions. However, literature is ingrained in Freud's text as an authoritative, suffocated voice able to back up numerous crucial, though extremely uncertain speculative postulates. Writing was also experienced by Freud in his everyday work as a challenging, opaque act impossible to master: his will to style was constantly foiled and his seldom yet lucid rejection of this will, determined Freud's infrequent, but intransigent choice of boldness over elegance, of sobriety over exuberance, of austerity over passion. These tensions are tangible in the fabric of Freud's writing—which was to win him a puzzling, conflicting award (the Goethe Prize, "the only important recognition given to Freud's work during his life"⁴⁷)—, writing that would reveal several superficial yet meaningful aspects of the unsettling relation between "literature" and the psychoanalytic text.

Much more important than Freud's stylistic conflicts is the inner epistemological, unresolved, conceptual discord, which often went unperceived, between the moulding pressure exerted by his literary experience and the bare imperatives of the positivistic mirage. Bowie has stressed Freud's ambiguous consciousness of the uncertain and singular nature of his own text:

At the end of *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud uses the term **theoretical fiction** [*theoretische Fiktion*] to describe a state of affairs that a given theory seems to require or predict but for which no supporting evidence could be found. Among epistemological categories the 'theoretical fiction' was a sorry amphibian with a low chance of survival, but its sturdy-looking neighbors—theories proper— were themselves constantly threatened by predatory invaders entering science from the worlds of fairy tale and romance.⁴⁸

In fact, Freud struggled obstinately and uselessly against those theories which, in his view, lacked the support of clearly observed and depictable evidence, or of empirical proof. This struggle occupies a cardinal place in the Freudian text. According to Bowie,

[Both Proust and Freud] Even as they discuss the limitations under which the creative writer labours, their desire-laden writing presses beyond them. Even as they trace the boundaries beyond which their text have nothing to say, their assimilative and expressive powers are calling these boundaries into dispute.⁴⁹

This tracing of the boundaries of the meaningfulness of the theoretical writing produces a discontinuous, self-reflexive, restrained writing which Freud turns against his own stylistic passion, to tame his own proclivity to abrupt digressions. Freud embeds in his argumentation, a self-criticism—in the Romantic sense—and this criticism becomes a narration, a *compte-rendu* plagued by an obsessive and reiterative reinterpretation of his own texts. Freud is impelled to an obsessive retrograde reading, which he carried out unrelentingly, turning this backward glance to his own intellectual and theoretical path, into reiterated corrections which introduced an enigmatic punctuation in his texts. Therefore, Freud's writings display rhythmic delays, thematic deflections, visible hesitations and frequent withdrawals from the main stream of his narrative exposition, which hint at unsuspected resonances of the theoretical insights, or even suggest perturbing conceptual counterpoints to the explicit meanings of his theoretical insights. In Freud's writings the theoretical endeavour joins a subtle and dismembered narration; this narration presents a lavish universe of traces which unveils the resistances, fears, unresolved challenges which inform the Freudian writing; perhaps, it is this broken fiction that creates a narrative atmosphere close to that of an epic tale. The epic fiction of psychoanalysis is the site of an unrelenting struggle among Freud's partial and often contradictory views, experiences, analysis, reflections and intimate myths and romances. Also, his writing shows the effects of the constraints imposed, in the nineteenth century, on the the rules and habits of the gaze, on the distinct therapeutic, medical and moral universes, on institutional policies, and on the emerging crisis of language and meaning. Moreover, Freud's discontinuous, fictitious invention of himself revealed the pervasiveness of literature in his intimate sphere. The self-reflexive obsessions of psychoanalysis became the theoretical enactment of the passions of literature. As Shoshana Felman observed:

Literature, in other words, is the language which psychoanalysis uses in order to *speak of itself*, in order to *name itself*. Literature is therefore not simply *outside* psychoanalysis since it motivates and *inhabits* the very names of its concepts, since it is the *inherent reference* by which psychoanalysis names its findings.⁵⁰

From the initial moments of Freud's psychoanalysis to its end, from his initial studies on aphasia and his early neurone model of the psychical apparatus, to the posthumous

Abriss der Psychoanalyse, the image of a broken language seems to command the Freudian enterprise, distorting and deferring its aims of enlightenment. Freud seems to have been engaged, throughout his whole life, in an endless meditation on the extinction of language, of its limits, its obscurities, its silences, its fractures; Freud's privileged insights refer to the withdrawal of language from meaning, to the unfathomable rarefying of sense in speech.

The late nineteenth century has been called *the age of suspicion* (Sarraute). It has been thought of as the announcement of the twilight of an age dominated by the conviction of the wholeness of subjectivity, of personality, of language itself. Psychoanalysis sprang from the passing trembling of European thought which preceded the definite shattering of the idea of man as unity; it is the moment of the supreme, and perhaps last and vain effort to heighten the social belief in the dominion of consciousness upon action, knowledge and self-reflection. It also marks the culmination of the illusions of consciousness, and the dawn of its definitive darkening.

Psychoanalysis emerges at the breaking point of Western rationality. Several events prepare the sketch of its final portrait: the nineteenth century moves rapidly from the firm position of a notion of subjectivity enthroned by the sequels of Rationalism, to the fading shadow cast by the Kantian conception of transcendental subject upon the notion of reason. From Descartes to Hume, and then from Kant to Schlegel and Fichte, the tension between the sense of the notions of knowledge and subject grew; the progressive incongruity between the claims of the dominating images of reason and the figures of passion, between the power attributed to imagination and the uneasiness provoked by the unfathomable notion of taste became perceivable, tangible. The contrast between the conceptions of sensation and the powers attributed to consciousness seems to have been exacerbated.

Thomas Mann once recalled a troubled assertion made by Freud himself, referred to the future judgement on his work.⁵¹

Freud hat zwar gemeint, die Zukunft werde wahrscheinlich urteilen, dass die Bedeutung der Psychoanalyse als Wissenschaft des Unbewussten ihren Wert als Heilmethode weit übertreffe.

⁵¹Freud's opinion was that the future, apparently, will judge that the meaning of psychoanalysis as the science of the unconscious outweighs by far its value as a therapeutic method. (My translation)

Mann stresses an infrequent and even unpopular vision of the psychoanalytical discovery. For him, one and perhaps the chief value of psychoanalysis, is that it has exacted from its cultural universe the perturbed though quiet awareness of the intrinsic tensions of soul:⁵²

ein heiterer Argwohn [serene suspicion] ist mit ihr in der Welt gesetzt, ein entlarvender Verdacht [unmasking distrust], die Versteckheiten und Machenschaften der Seele betreffend.*

The outstanding statement of Thomas Mann is built upon a single nuance, a slight, strategic displacement of his reflection away from the main thematic *leitmotives* of the nineteenth century. According to Mann, the synthesis of Freud's interpretation exposes an incurable disquieting affliction of the soul. *Serenity* and *suspicion*, *unmasking* and *distrust*, the lucid deferral of sense and the quiet skepticism —the suspension of the imperative of truth—, are expression of the encounter of thought with the image of an impending death, ingrained in the soul as a serene presence which rejects forgetfulness. The force of secrecy seems to support the theoretical significance of Freud's writing.

*With him a serene suspicion has come to the world, an unmasking distrust relative to the concealment and the machinations of soul. (My translation).

NOTES

1. Friedrich Hölderlin, 'Wenn der Dichter einmal des Geistes mächtig...', in *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed. Michael Knaupp, 3 vols (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1992), II, pp.98-99.
2. Beda Allemann, *Hölderlin et Heidegger*, 2nd edn revised (Paris: PUF, 1987), p.85.
3. "Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie/et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs", writes Baudelaire. (Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du mal*, in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Claude Pichois, 2 vol (Paris: Bibliothèque de La Pléiade, Gallimard, 1975), I, p.86.
4. John Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, in *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, 2 vols, ed. by Frank Kermode and John Hollander (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), II, p.954.
5. Jean Paul, *Der ewige Frühling*, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), pp.102-103.
6. Etienne de Condillac, *Extrait raisonné du Traité des Sensations* in *Traité des Sensations (1754). Suivi de: Traité des animaux (1755)*, (Paris: Fayard, 1984), p.305.
7. Jacques Derrida, *L'archéologie du frivole. Lire Condillac*, (Paris: Denoël/Gonthier, 1973), p.25.
8. Etienne de Condillac, *La logique*, II, p.413, quoted by Jacques Derrida, *L'archéologie du frivole*, pp.24-25.
9. In fact, in spite of Rousseau's severe judgements on Condillac's assumptions about the absolute precedence of language, there is an extreme proximity between these two thinkers who share not only a common mythical conception of the origins of language, but also the conviction of a progressive evolution of language into its absoluteness, its conventionality, its formal autonomy. See, for a very suggestive development of this issue, Jean Starobinsky, 'Rousseau et l'origine des langues', in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: la transparence et l'obstacle*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp.356-379.
10. Even a thinker like Edmund Burke, seemingly foreign to the powerful influence of mesmerism, when writing about *sympathy*, remarks: "I am afraid it is a practice much too common in inquiries of this nature, to attribute the cause of feelings which merely arise from the mechanical structure of our bodies, or from the natural frame and constitution of our minds, to certain conclusions of the reasoning faculty on the objects presented to us." (Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.41)
11. Franz-Anton Mesmer, 'Dissertation physico-médicale sur l'influence des planètes', in *Le secret d'un magnétiseur* (Paris: Navarin, 1990), pp.17-31.
12. Franz-Anton Mesmer, 'Mémoire sur la découverte du magnétisme animal', in *Le secret d'un magnétiseur*, p.44. (Emphasis added).
13. Franz-Anton Mesmer, *Le secret d'un magnétiseur*, pp.45-46.
14. "La maladie, pour le mesmérisme —writes Rausky—, est l'obstruction de la circulation du fluide vital; donc, ce que définit la condition morbide n'est pas le symptôme, mais un *blocage*" F. Rausky, *Mesmer ou la révolution thérapeutique*, (Paris: Payot, 1977), quoted by Alain de Mijolla, 'Aux origines de la pratique psychanalytique', in *Histoire de la psychanalyse*, ed. Roland Jaccard (Paris: Hachette, 1982), p.20.
15. See Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique* (Paris: PUF, 1963); specially chapters 8 and 9.

16. The historian Robert Darnton has written: "the mesmerist movement provides a guideline to the subtle transformation of popular attitudes during the periods generally labeled the Age of Reason and the Age of Romanticism; in fact, it has outlived this period and survives to this day on the *grands boulevards* of Paris, where the occasional mesmerist will still manipulate his fluids for a price." Robert Darnton, *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press), p.161.
17. Philippe Muray, *Le 19e siècle à travers les âges* (Paris: Denoël, 1984), p.243
18. Edmund Burke, p.53.
19. Edmund Burke, p.36 and 53.
20. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), p.309.
21. Claude Lefort, 'Le Terreur révolutionnaire', in *Essais sur le politique. XIXe.-XXe. siècles* (Paris: Seuil/Esprit, 1986), p.96.
22. Gilles Deleuze, *Présentation de Sacher-Masoch. Le froid et le cruel* (Paris: Minuit, 1967), p.83.
23. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, p.170.
24. Foucault has stressed the fact that life conceived as "history of species or beings" is but a recent acquisition: "L'histoire naturel, à l'époque classique, ne peut se constituer comme biologie. Jusqu'à la fin du XVIIIe siècle, en effet, la vie n'existe pas. Mais seulement des êtres vivants. Ceux-ci forment une, ou plutôt plusieurs classes dans la série de toutes les choses du monde: et si on peut parler de la vie, c'est seulement comme d'un caractère —au sens taxinomique du mot— dans l'universelle distribution des êtres." (Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, p.173).
25. F.D.E. Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutik und Kritik*, ed. Manfred Frank (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), p.77.
26. F.D.E. Schleiermacher, p.81.
27. Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*, p.311. (Emphasis added).
28. Paul-Laurent Assoun, 'Les grandes découvertes de la psychanalyse', in *Histoire de la psychanalyse*, ed. Roland Jaccard (Paris: Hachette, 1982), p.160.
29. John Brown, *Eléments de médecine* (1780), cited by Georges Canguilhem, *Le normal et le pathologique* (Paris: PUF, 1966), p.43.
30. For a thorough development of the reflection on the paratactic structures in Freud's text, see François Roustang, *...elle ne le lâche plus* (Paris: Minuit, 1980).
31. Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique*, p.115.
32. Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique*, p.108.
33. An eloquent description of this period, of its epistemological tensions, of the specific weight of energism in the intellectual climate of these years, and also and chiefly of Freud's relation to this dominant physicalist doctrine is to be found in Paul-Laurent Assoun, *Introduction à l'épistémologie freudienne* (Paris: Payot, 1980).
34. Ernst Mach, *Analyse der Empfindungen* (1885) (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), pp.34-35.
35. Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la clinique*, p.116.

36. John Keats, 'To Richard Woodhouse', October 27, 1818, in *Letters of John Keats*, ed. by Robert Gittings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 157.
37. Thomas de Quincey, 'On the knocking at the Gate in "Macbeth"', in *The Oxford Anthology of English Literature*, p.735.
38. Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Crise de vers' in *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. by Henri Mondor and G. Jean-Aubry, (Paris: Bibliothèque de La Pléiade, Gallimard, 1945), p.366.
39. John Keats, 'To John Hamilton Reynolds', May 3, 1818, in *Letters of John Keats*, p.95.
40. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *L'absolue littéraire. Théorie de la littérature du romantisme allemand* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), p.27
41. George Steiner, 'Silence and the poet', in *Language and Silence* (Harmonsworth: Penguin, 1969), p.68. (Emphasis added).
42. Arthur Rimbaud, *Œuvres Complètes*, ed. by Antoine Adam (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1972), p.129.
43. Arthur Rimbaud, p.143
44. Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 'Ein Briefe'(1902), in *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. Bernd Schoeller (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1979), VII: *Erzählungen. Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe. Reisen*, pp.465.
45. Maurice Blanchot, *L'espace littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1955), p.35.
46. Maurice Blanchot, p.38. (Emphasis added)
47. See Wladimir Granoff, 'Freud écrivain: traduire ou standardiser?', *L'écriture du temps*, 7 (1984), p.17 [Mimuit].
48. Malcolm Bowie, *Freud, Proust and Lacan. Theory as Fiction* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.6.
49. Malcolm Bowie, p.97.
50. Shoshana Felman, 'To open the question', in *Literature and Psychoanalysis. The Question of Reading: Otherwise*, ed. Shoshana Felman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), p.9.
51. Thomas Mann, 'Freud und die Zukunft' (1936) in *Freud und die Psychoanalyse. Reden, Briefe, Notizen, Betrachtungen*, ed. Bernd Urban (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1991), p.90.
52. Thomas Mann, p.91.

Chapter II

Invocations of Secrecy

I. Boundaries of language

Secrecy appears as the foundation of the subject's experience of an untimely arrest of the act of speech brought about by the reflexive awareness of the inherent impossibility of the self to apprehend its own identity.

Conceived so, it implies an uneasy awareness of an intimate, untraceable impulse both to disregard, to dim or to uproot memories, as well as to stress, illuminate, or even to create them. It emerges from the subject's hesitation between reminiscence and the sense of oblivion, between the permanent invention and distortion of the past inherent in reminiscence, and the will to deny the fading of memory which foreshadows oblivion.

The experience of secrecy involves the tension between the failure of the *will* to forget, and the failure to endure the sovereignty of forgetfulness. It conjoins the *necessity* and the *inevitability* of forgetting; they both forge the contours of the images it evokes. Furthermore, secrecy evidences the tension between the hampered *will* to remember, and the *ineluctable* experience of remembering.

Thus, the singular expressive force of secrecy stems from the defaced image of the self —of the experience of its limits— and from the exhausting tension between remembrance and forgetfulness, informed by the exacting demands of language. Kafka has expressed with stark clarity the inherent tensions of language:

Ich schreibe anders als ich rede, ich rede anders als ich denke, ich denke anders als ich denke soll und so geht es weiter bis ins tiefste Dunkel.*

It is this darkness that adumbrates the nature of secrecy. It is the tension among these

* I write differently from what I talk, I talk differently from what I think, I think differently from what I should think, and so I sink in the deepest darkness. (My translation)

incommensurable layers of speech and expression that shapes the figures and the narration of reminiscence. Language imposes on secrecy its own inherent constraints which shape the contours of its expression. Reminiscences settle the contours of the self, of its history, also of its desire. Thus, the narration of reminiscences signals the limits of experience: that which defines the identity of the self. It imposes on the intimate impulse to reminisce, the foreign order of language and its cardinal impulses, the deflection of speech from its reference to the world and its intrinsic indifference to the necessity for expressiveness. Narration exposes through its autonomous relations and constrains the arduous boundaries of the expressiveness of the uttered reminiscences.

Moreover, this narration is the outcome of both the inherent traits of the order of language and the moulding pressure exerted on speech by the intrinsic symbolized presence of the community. The force of the community bond defines not only the nature and physiognomy of reminiscence; it also determines the force, the direction, the contours of speech which respond to the original impulse. Yet, it is not the other's presence, but its anticipated disappearance, which rules the utterance itself, which portrays the omitted territories, the shaded zones of speech, the dim, weakening allusions which signal the crepuscular convictions conveyed by the utterances. The actual reminiscence is a resonance of the memory of the other. It echoes his expectations. It enacts his disappearance, yet it also anticipates the self's own disappearance.

The community bond, built upon the symbolized absence of the other, stresses the fictive, anticipated experience of death; its images become the driving force of reminiscences. These images enact the dominant force of the linguistic bond: words express only the finite, transient nature of the self; they are bound to unveil the bond of community as founded in the common experience of the other's disappearance. Their only expressive force is drawn from this experience of transience, it refers to it. Words neither refer to an individual nor define an identity. The foreseen images of death —the experience of the *absolute* absence of the other— enact the bonds of reciprocity. They dissolve the contours of the self. However, the phantasy of death frees language from the attachment to the subject; the words cease to bear the

resonances of the subject's identity; liberated from expressiveness, from the constraint of the other's presence, they are addressed to nobody; uttered by the fading voice of the extinguished identity, language acquires a peculiar force. Perhaps, the images aroused by the anticipated experience of death stir a mixture of affects and inclinations, piety and fear, identification and rejection, acceptance and revolt, praise and blasphemy. The experience of the disappearance of the other also involves the disappearance of *the self* as other, the experience of radical solitude. Language ceases to be rooted in the self. Utterance does not have its source in an identifiable voice. It is freed from a closed universe of reminiscences. Speech appears as an arbitrary set of ruled utterances which rejects expression only to narrate; yet, it narrates nobody's experience; it embodies nobody's voice. It is a perceivable, clear voice which rises from the background of a rarefied, harsh sound, from an empty body; it is a wandering voice which is capable of undergoing any transformation, of adopting any physiognomy. However, narration remains attached in an uncertain way to the reminiscences of the self, having already abandoned its expressive claims. It is this unfathomable relation between this pure, impersonal, inexpressive language and the imperatives of reminiscence that constitute the core of secrecy. Secrecy can also be thought of as the resonance of the inherent, extreme tensions of language in the subject's narration, as the manifestation in it of the experience of the limits of language. Secrecy, regardless of the intangible constraints it imposes on the subject, appears as an evident, absolute, intrinsic limit of language; it is the act by which language disappears as a meaningful resource of expression and becomes, by its sheer non existence the most significant force of subjectivity itself. In secrecy, silence has been driven to its paroxysm, signalling the extreme moment at which it meets its own impossibility to achieve expressiveness. As an invincible silence inherent in the relations of the self with its own reminiscences and in the limits of the expressiveness of language, secrecy confounds itself with enigma; both share timelessness, a challenging opacity, an irreducible, intruding, disquieting force; also, they exhibit the frontier of language at which it confounds itself with the exhaustion of life. Thus, secrecy emerges as both the yielding of the subject to the exigencies of its own disappearance, evoked by the exacerbation of silence, and a *constraint on self identity*

imposed by the naming *force* of language. I will try to argue, in the following pages, that psychoanalysis has built one of the most vivid contemporary reflections on the destiny of this relation between the subject and its own language, on the perturbations aroused in the subject by the exhaustion of language, by silence and the force [*Kraft*] of negation of secrecy, inherent in language itself.

Modernity, Richard Sennett suggested, has been built upon an enduring, yet disrupting regime governed by the imperative of secrecy, which plays a definitive role in the moulding of contemporary profiles of subjectivity. This social regime has exhibited also the political usage of secrecy, legitimated by the intensified contrast between the public and the private; also it has allowed the exasperation of the need for a definite, recognizable profile of the subject's public identity. Secrecy became a social dominant condition imposed on the social patterns of expression. This regime progressively took hold of the collective habits of relation in the nineteenth century. The dominance of secrecy in social life derived not only from the structural conditions of a thriving bureaucracy, as Max Weber has convincingly argued,¹ but also from a particular collective anxiety, from an uncertainty about the grounds of reciprocity, in a peculiar orientation of the perception of the meanings of language and gestures, and the reconstitution of the patterns of sensibility. In his perceptive analysis of the sources of modernity, Sennett remarked:

[In nineteenth century Paris] In "public", one observed, one expressed oneself, in terms of what one wanted to buy, to think, to approve of, not as a result of continuous interaction, but after a period of passive, silent, focused attention. By contrast, "private" meant a world where one could express oneself directly as one was touched by another person; private meant a world where interaction reigned, but it must be secret. [...] *The belief that secrecy is necessary when people are fully interacting gives the key to a second of the barometers of psychic distress in the society: the desire to withdraw from feeling in order not to show one's feelings involuntarily to others. Only by making your feelings a secret are they safe, only at hidden moments and places are you free to interact. But precisely this fearful withdrawal from expression puts more pressure on others to get closer to you to know what you feel, what you want, what you know. Flight and the seed of compulsive intimacy are absolutely joined: the sheer expression of an emotion, any emotion, becomes ever more*

important as so much work becomes necessary to penetrate another's defenses to the point where he is willing to interact.

The world of retail commerce indicates the terms of the most basic of these puzzles, the effects and the limits of capitalism on public life, in terms of mystification and in terms of privatization. [...] The seeds of modern life are there, but there is struggle; nothing as yet could be taken for granted.²

Secrecy, as a social imperative, gave rise to a radical transformation of the expressions of individual anxiety, which involved a vivid experience of the limits of language and of the sharp distinction between the meanings of intentional and unintentional expression; it also called for more severe attention to the disciplines of self-reflection; it involved a stress on the conflict between the expression of intimate experiences, sensations, and feelings, and the conventional meanings of signs; it exacerbated the distinction between the sphere of intimacy and the limits of the abstract exigencies of the public domain. Secrecy, as a growing social necessity engendered an unprecedented perception and a persistent experience of the boundaries of language and of corporal expression.

However, as a socially relevant driving force, secrecy seems to emerge in the public sphere from a fundamental source, an intimate struggle of the self against his own language, a struggle bred by the constitutional tensions which shape language itself. The exacerbation of this struggle appears as an aftermath of the devastation of traditions entailed by Modernity as one of its principal means of achieving political legitimacy. Silence thus revealed itself as an ethic imperative which stems from the debasement of the expressiveness of the subject, from the restriction of the public expression and its confinement to the private atmosphere, and from the breakdown of the patterns of reciprocity in the relations of interchange.³

Modernity has made of the ethics of secrecy both an unperceived, deep-rooted condition of the satisfaction of the individual's need for identity, and a universe of values which protects the subject from the social risk of the immediate visibility of an intimate and feeble image of the self. Thus, secrecy acquired throughout the nineteenth century an ambiguous sense: it appeared as an equivocal pattern of dialogue originated by the wilful exclusion of the other from certain risky knowledge, while displaying the specific, visible tokens which establish the imaginary boundaries of the self: but it also

appeared as an condition of the private, individual identity, of the particular paths followed by the genesis of subjectivity itself; the identity of the subject was confined by secrecy to the fringes of language.⁴

This conception of the subject's identity, brought about and implanted in the social sphere, settled as a vague atmosphere which seemed to emanate from the devotion of European culture —encouraged by Enlightenment— to the rational construction of the self.⁵ Also, it was to be a definitive support for the invigorated legitimacy of the policies of Modernity. However, these policies soon uncovered an unsettling series of paradoxes: in Modernity, the discursive strategies of secrecy were evidenced as an unrelenting device of political dominance. By an unexpected turn, the daunting emotions aroused by the effective use of secrecy as a delusive resource of political legitimacy, instead of undermining its political efficacy, contributed to the strengthening of simulation as a privileged political strategy.

The public exploitation of secrecy for the ruling of the relations between citizens fostered, paradoxically, the deceiving belief in dialogue both as a privileged source of social legitimacy and as the characteristic domain of truthfulness. In this light, secrecy appeared merely as a pure, conscious, even meditated, strategy of concealment and as a sustained regime of calculated reflexiveness and analysis of the self. It is our aim to argue that secrecy goes well beyond the immediate boundaries set by the policies of Modernity and that it eludes any calculability, that it constrains the nature and development of meaning itself, that it constitutes an essential condition of the shaping of subjectivity.

Secrecy takes roots in self reflection, which stems from the inquisitive gaze of the other. It is mainly from the other's obscure astonishment aroused by the expressive reticence readable in the subject's utterance, that secrecy forges its own profile and acquires its peculiar harshness. Therefore, secrecy might be interpreted as an odd, *exacting* gift, bestowed on the subject by the other; a gift which allows the vertigo of language to fully display, and consecrates, paradoxically, the abrupt exhaustion of language. The veiled and deceitful language of corporeal mimicry and gestural simulation overweigh speech as the dominant trait of self expression. Where words were expected, only uncertain, anxious, corporeal signals were to be elicited from the

spectacle of bodies, and stressed the imperative of silence. Those were revealing signs; they compulsively exposed silence, a surface of vacuous expressions, of eclipsed words; an unwitting, yet intrusive silence was imposed on the subject's expression as a condition of achieving his own experience; this silence might only be acknowledged as the signal of the potential presence of an absent other; the presence of the other is foreshadowed by his own silence. Missing words would implicitly be addressed to this imaginary presence.

The recognition of secrecy requires the subject's total awareness of the signs which indicate, as disseminated residues, the covert presence of sense, the veiling of the mute meanings borne by the utterance. It is from the signs spread over the fragmentary and rarefied matter of language —voice, writing or image—, only perceived as resonances of an empty utterance, that the dense relevance and the equivocal meaning of secrecy arise. But it is chiefly from the other's unacceptable absence —the-not-being-there-anymore of the other—, that the unarticulated but foreshadowed words of secrecy acquire their disquieting impact. Secrecy brings to light the relevance of an absence rendered visible only through the discontinuity of speech; the urgent need for the presence of the other is experienced through the traces of his eclipse, with the evocation of the primordial eclipse of the loved presence. The signs of this absence reside in the most profound layers of the subject's memory; the signs silently foretell the future death of the other and of the self, the experience of lost love.

Secrecy evokes, by the intensity of the affection aroused with silence —and not by the mere appearance of silence itself—, the limit of expressiveness, of the bond of speech. The acknowledgement of this limit becomes the condition that secrecy must satisfy to reveal itself as an enduring link between two subjects; thus, this link, paradoxically, founds its identity upon a common experience of the hollow expressiveness of signs. But a cardinal facet of secrecy, which is the violence of a non signified experience of death, remains unarticulated.

Secrecy seems to involve an *awareness of the silence* produced by the seemingly willful concealment of a certain statement. The moment of interpretation is thus essential to the recognition of secrecy. Indeed, *it is interpretation that signals the*

emergence of secrecy. It is interpretation that turns a perceived silence into secrecy. This is the moment at which the image of a conjectured transgression inherent in secrecy and shared by the hearer and the speaker, emerges from interpretation. Transgression becomes a negative but necessary link. The common recognition and acknowledgement of transgression, the violent trespass into an indefinite though compelling sphere of expression, creates a potential, undetermined, relation. Secrecy seems to emerge from the infringement of the maxim "Thou must have said this"; "*this*" points towards an undefined, ignored, non specific object; but the maxim transforms itself insidiously through language usage into a general, vague though compelling imperative: "Thou must say *all*, nothing must be excluded from your words".

The grim ethics which emanates from this imperative relies itself on an obscure, imaginary trait of language: a boundless expressive capacity. The ethics of language evokes an imaginary, potentially infinite realm: "everything can be said". The rule, when it confronts the awareness of the deep roots of secrecy, exhibits speech as an indefinite enacting of transgression. Transgression becomes intrinsic to language, to the mere act of speaking. It is the mutual consciousness of transgression that confers upon secrecy its power to create a violent, intimate bond, which prevails over the tension inherent in the acknowledgement of concealment.

The ethical condemnation of secrecy involves chiefly the act of concealment, of exclusion; it relegates the sense and the moral quality of the excluded utterance, to a secondary role. It becomes a contingent testimony born of the transgression. It is unimportant if it be false or true; it is the act itself, this pregnant, threatening silence, which must be signalled and proscribed. In this sense, secrecy is to be sharply distinguished from the lie, which involves the utterance of a false assertion. Unlike lie, secrecy calls up the prevailing, shapeless experience of senselessness and the scandal of a visible act of concealment.

Thus, secrecy involves a peculiar interpretation, neither of transgression itself nor of the significance of the uprooted meaning, but of their specific relation: it is this relation that is determined by pain and the memories of absence which leave no perceptible traces other than an impregnable silence, a relation which suggests the existence of an intolerable limit of expressiveness beyond the tokens of silence and of

concealment.

Anyhow, the transgression of the ethic norm of *saying it all* does not involve the rejection of the norm. It seems to be only the outcome of a reflexive movement, an acknowledgement of the frail rule which determines the boundless capacity of speech. However, the mere existence of this rule as an ethic imperative entails the existence of the unarticulable. Thus, transgression involves both an exasperated recognition of the rule as well as of an experience the source of which resides beyond meaning.

The interpretation of secrecy reveals itself as the evidence of transgression and complicity, as the unveiling of the limits of morality and language, as the vain endeavour to discern the sources of concealment. It forges a disquieting link between the speaker and the hearer, a paradoxical link moulded by an experience foreign to language, forged against or even beyond the boundaries of the norm of speech. Paradoxically, this interpretation both links and isolates the involved subjects. It confines them to an absolute solitude provoked by the broken solidarity of language and by the mutual acknowledgment of transgression.

The aim of secrecy, from the moment it appears, is to endure, to persevere, to remain endlessly unveiled; thus, the solitude born of secrecy becomes an absolute condition of the self, the condition of an exclusion provoked by the subject's exile from the expressiveness of language, and impossible to overcome. The aim of the speaker is an impossible one: to establish and preserve the bond of expressiveness beyond the community of language. Secrecy breaks this community of language and finds it again upon the paradoxical link of the mutual acknowledgment of transgression. Placed beyond the boundaries of the norm of speech, beyond the community informed by language, beyond a community conjoined by voices, which originates from fading identities, from the luminosity of death, the subject is confined to the singular language of secrecy. Keats had brilliantly foreshadowed this dominant experience of the subject shaped by the conception of self in Modernity, the joyful though brutal disappearance of the identity of the self in the spread voices of the others. Keats admits as his own, those voices which emerge from beyond language, from beyond the boundaries fixed by transgression.

When concealment lacks this essential ground —the limits of expressiveness, the prevailing force of pain, the experience of this paradoxical community—, and it appears just as a conscious, deliberate strategy of speech, the aim of which is to distort evidence, to get a peculiar benefit, then, secrecy becomes a masquerade, a strategy to exert power on the hearer.

A hasty approach to secrecy has made of it a wilful, individually envisaged strategy aiming to veil, to defer the appearance of truth on the equivocal surface of discourse. Thus, secrecy has often been conceived as a mere strategy of speech and not as an essential condition of language; it seems only to veil momentarily an utterance which later might be brought to light. It has been thought of as the result of a concealing maneuver, as the expression of the subject's reluctance to confess a senseless or harmful guilt. From this point of view, secrecy only exposes a previously calculated failure of meaning, a voluntarily ruined interpretation. Secrecy appears as a way of concealing even a harmful, unacceptable, impure, yet neatly representable object, or a shameful incident. It also implies heavy assumptions regarding the autonomy of the self, or the ego as the absolute origin of any evocation, any remembrance, any representation, or any thought.

According to this deceiving conception, any reminiscence must be created by a sovereign self and is confined to the subject's own memory; it remains within the inaccessible realm of his private experience, having had its source in a singular, autonomous, unconstrained self.

However, secrecy remains foreign to the masquerade; it appears to the self as the evidence of a boundary of language revealed to him by the scandalous images of his own death. It signals the actual, unrelenting presence of death on the subject's horizons. In last analysis, secrecy stems from the experience of the absence of fellow men, an absence which distorts the mirage of a still, transcendental, all embracing language. As we shall see, Freud seeks the origin of the subject's constitutional experience of absence in an unsatisfied primal necessity, in the experience of the definitive *eclipse* of the primordial object of love, early in the subject's life; this early experience of absence foreshadows the representation of death. It is from this early, nameless, unspeakable intuition of death that the presence of the other gets its intrinsic

relevance, its meaningfulness; yet, it is this *nameless*, yet dominant intuition which anticipates the experience of the hollowness of language, of the limits of its naming and illuminating power. This early intuition seems to be the ground from where the singular identity of the self springs. Blanchot wrote:

Si la communauté est révélée par la mort d'autrui, c'est que la mort est elle-même la véritable communauté des êtres mortels: leur communion impossible. La communauté occupe donc cette place singulier: elle assume l'impossibilité d'un être communautaire comme sujet. La communauté assume et inscrit en quelque sorte l'impossibilité de la communauté [...] Une communauté est la présentation à ses membres de leur vérité mortelle [...] Elle est la présentation de la finitude et de l'excès sans retour qui fonde l'être-fini.⁶

If the experience of community is constituted by the mutual bond of language, then language itself must embody the crucial experience of the other's death as a cardinal feature of its own nature. However, this feature remains foreign to any expression; there is no communion in the experience of death, the bond between the dead and the survivor reveals an invincible asymmetry; the sense of death emerges from the perceptions of pain and the self reminiscences of disappearance, of the missing presence of the other. Death lacks any proper image or sense. The community bond—as Blanchot has remarked—is built upon the scandal of the certainty of the other's death, and upon the affection aroused by the early emergence of self-identity; an identity engendered not by the mere presence of the other, but by the primal certitude of his annihilation. Death appears on the horizon of the self as an appalling experience of the early absence engrained in the core of thought and of language itself.

In the light of these reflections which refer secrecy to the experience of the limits of language and to the inexpressible experience of the other's absence as an anticipated representation of death, the ordinary use of the notion of secrecy reveals itself as a mirage. Secrecy, conceived as a *deliberate* concealment of certain event, as a wilful exclusion of a definite statement, remains alien to a reflection upon the inherent limits of expression involved in the notion of secrecy and its subjective foundations.

The eloquence of Bataille's simple, disquieting confession, "ce que je pense, je ne l'ai pas pensé seul", is enough to shatter the self's image of autonomy and to arouse

the consciousness of the brutal, delusive, yet unavoidable mirage of solipsism. The decay of this mirage, which accompanied the breakdown of the domain of the "philosophies of consciousness", has conferred an unexpected meaning upon secrecy.

The distrust of these "philosophies of consciousness", which has become a distinctive feature of twentieth century thought, involves the vague but deeply rooted feeling that the spring of secrecy, of "concealment", remained foreign to the subject's decisions, informing his speech surreptitiously. In this light, secrecy is not to be conceived just as the result of an intimate but wilful decision; perhaps it is not even governed by a will to exclusion. In secrecy, the words seem to lose their relation to the world. The capacity of fiction, often conceived as an ancillary feature of language, becomes dominant, almost oppressive. The word ceases to refer to a specific object, to a clearly determined event, or to certain discourse; it is driven not by the object itself, the nature of the event, or the intrinsic meaning of discourse, but chiefly by an effective yet unfathomable compulsion. The source of the force of fiction which sets the boundaries between the impure and the pure, the unspeakable and the admissible, the conceivable and the unthinkable, escapes experience. Words seem to be uprooted from subjectivity and imposed on the consciousness as if they were derived from an ageless, timeless regime. The subject's perception of his inner tensions also faded with the eclipse of the expressiveness and the references of language.

However, the unconditional surrender of the word to the plenitude of fiction arouses the memories of absence. The *absolute* plenitude of fiction seems to arise from the experience of the eclipse of the primal human link, from the early experience of the fading away of the loved object, *originally unnamed, unnameable*; the force of fiction seems to spring, paradoxically, from this non-relatable catastrophe, from a non-signified affliction; even if it remains as an unacknowledged, suffocated, yet indelible reminiscence.

The non-signified absence of the other culminates in the signified denial of the identity of the self. This denial has two main facets: the ruin of its sovereignty and, simultaneously, his experience of isolation, an isolation which is not the confinement of the subject to its own identity, but the dissipation of identity, the encompassing experience of a pervading pain, the acknowledgement of the failure to preserve itself

from the violence of the primal, silent experience of absence.

This absence shapes the identity of the subject, while preventing it from immediate communion with its fellow men, while pervading his own language with the echoes of the denial of the identity of the self. Blanchot writes:

L'être cherche, non pas à être reconnu, mais à être contesté: il va, pour exister, vers l'autre qui le conteste et parfois le nie, afin qu'il ne commence d'être que dans cette privation qui le rend conscient (c'est là l'origine de sa conscience) de l'impossibilité d'être lui-même, d'insister comme ipse ou, si l'on veut, comme individu séparé: ainsi peut-être ex-istira-t-il, s'éprouvant comme extériorité toujours préalable, ou comme existence de part en part éclatée, no se composant que comme se décomposant constamment, violemment et silencieusement.⁷

The existence of the subject derives from an original negation, Blanchot claims, echoing a negative, Hegelian conception of the subject's existence. This Hegelian view lightens the emergence of human identity; it stresses an enigmatic condition of the moment of emergence of self. A primordial origin of a consciousnessless being animated both by desire, which involves a demand of love, and by the necessity for preserving desire; it is this relentless search for the other's love which involves the paradoxical necessity for perpetuating an unsurmountable difference between the subject and the other, the need to remain foreign to the other's sphere, to remain a desiring being foreign to the other's identity; it is this original impulse towards the other which demands its rejection as a means of preserving the tensions of love. And it is this rejection, this painful, unspeakable abolition of the original impulse of desire, brought about by the other's rejection, that forces a *reflexive movement of the individual*; consciousness emerges from the apprehension of the signification of rejection. A deeper recognition than the mere acceptance of a demand for love originates from this experience of strangeness. It is neither love nor absence, but rejection that the being demands at this primal moment. Consciousness arises from an original condition alien to language, founded upon the paradoxical impulse which drives him towards the other.

Thus, consciousness arises from a primordial negative experience of meaning. This denial, this *negative expression of the other*, which engenders the identity of self, turns into a sundering of the self from the other; it abides in the meaning of language and confers upon the subject's word a contradictory force, at once a condition of

reciprocity and an essential, unsurmountable barrier.

The kind of negation to which Blanchot alludes, the denial of recognition, involves a strong paradox. The construction of the singularity of the self requires the recognition of a most singular feature, that which defines the self's own identity, and remains unmitigatedly foreign to the other, escaping the communion of speech. It must arise from its recognition by the other, must be pronounced by the other's voice. This paradox lurks in the core of secrecy: the unutterable feature which defines the identity of the self, while remaining meaningless to the other, has been afforded to the self by the other's negation, by the other's disquieting rejection, which constitutes both an acknowledgement and a demand for identity; the unutterable identity of the self appears as a *gift* from the other.

However, this "negative" gift, received by the self from the other, provokes a contradictory effect: the word received from the other inevitably bears the certitude of his death; it arouses the subject's awareness of the extraneous signs which are a prelude to the other's disappearance. The singularity of identity exhibits in its silent, undecipherable signs, its own foreign and unfathomable provenance. The *paradox of identity* is this: there is no self reflection which can restore the meaningfulness of the signs of the subject's own identity, the signs which separate him from his fellow men; yet these signs stem from the other's disappearance which defines, in last analysis, the identity of the self. The other's negation intrudes as an extraneous body; thrust into the self, it creates and shapes the identity of the self. Secrecy confounds itself with this intrusive negation; it appears as the very source of language. It abides in its core.

Negation seems to have its origin in an unperceived *folding back* of speech upon itself: the act of naming involves the subject's undepictable awareness of the language's inherent, yet unexpressed reference to a missing, unapprehensible universe of objects, the presence of which is only foreshadowed as a vague atmosphere which surrounds any interpretable, symbolic expression. As Saussure emphatically argued in the early years of this century⁸, the signs of language presuppose an inherent, concealed but manifold negative relations among signs.⁹ The meaning of each sign involves the meanings of other existent, potentially present but unuttered, silent signs; these non-manifested meanings, in turn, drift along, implicitly, with the utterance; they remain

nebulous spheres of sense, indirectly lightened by the gleam of explicit signs. Negation embodies some of these shadows of sense, it confers upon them a material presence, it transforms them, in turn, into evidence. Negation brings to light the implicit sphere of unarticulated but intrinsic meanings of signs. The looming of these potential, obscured utterances, marked with the signal of negation, renders into recognizable signs the intrinsic limits of language.

The power of negation to *create* the expression of intangible but efficient meanings and to render visible formerly imperceptible tokens of language implies both the capacity of language to allow the reflexiveness of speech, it reveals the ability of phrases to fold back upon their own expression, to unfold them, to impose on them an analytic grid or to constrain them to fiction. The reflexiveness of language implies the capacity of acknowledging these tenuous, almost unfathomable, divergent meanings, and the force exerted upon speech by their unuttered density.

Secrecy thus is informed by the force [*Kraft*] of negation, by this potency of speech to evidence the frontiers of its own explicit utterances. Secrecy proper implies a reflexive, self enveloping movement of speech; this folding back of speech upon itself can be thought of as provoked by the determining experience of absence, by the nameless rejection at the origins of language, by the pain which abides at the margins of speech —at its source—, transformed into a mere intangible yet undeniable presence ingrained in the experience of language itself. However, this reflexive movement of speech, in turn, leaves its own signals on the sequence of articulated signs. As speech folds back upon itself, it displays a series of traces of a meaning which will remain uninterpreted, and which will be preserved as a tacit, never elicited evidence of this reflexive movement. Secrecy exhibits, through the signs inherent in negation, the reminiscences of the primordial absence which bear the tokens of the subject's singularity.

In this light, the *paradox of identity* is not the only one to be involved in secrecy. Two more paradoxes inform the ethical frame of secrecy; the first one of them is *the paradox of expressiveness*: the violence of the ethical imperative and the impossibility of meeting its conditions arouse, in turn, emotions which must remain unexpressed,

and which will emanate from the collapse of the ethical frame brought about by either the deliberate or the unwilling rejection of the aim to wholeness that rules the expressive utterance; the second one is the *paradox of concealment*: for secrecy to exist it is necessary that the traces of the concealment are clearly, unequivocally interpretable from the surface of discourse, but for this interpretation to be reliable it would require an impossible, intimate appraisal of the correspondence between the subject's inner impulse and a conjectural interpretation of his own utterance.

This conjunction of paradoxes gives rise to an ethical scandal which broadens the breach between the impossible exhaustiveness of narration, its fictive fairness, and the abstract violence of the imperative of faultless veracity. The shattering of the ethical frame which supports the identity of the self, also obliterates the profiles of the subject's identity, and renders its inherent signs irrelevant.

Oddly enough, the subject builds up his own identity upon this crude weave of paradoxes. The physiognomy of speech mirrors that of a community settled upon the subject's delusive desire for the other; if the subject's desire aims at rejection, then the truth of his own assertions lacks the ethical support of the vision of meaning as truth. His own frail identity looms from the mirage of a sovereign self. The subject is forced to build his own moral sphere from the remains of the ethical frame of his own speech.

This weave of paradoxes exhibits the different moments which characterize the dynamics of secrecy. Rejecting his own identity and accepting his own intimate, unarticulable, ethical stigmatization, the subject outlives the actual destruction of his own chimerical identity while admitting the deceiving essence of speech.

A cardinal experience is involved in this struggle to preserve the self despite the wreck of his identity in the broken sphere of ethical paradoxes: the subject's acceptance of secrecy as an intrinsic limit to the community bond —of the speech itself—, derived from the loss of the primordial affective attachment, signifies its silent impregnation in the flesh; secrecy as a limit experience involves the silent, corporeal memory of an elementary pain.

Therefore, secrecy holds to the disquieting experience of pain engraved on the primal grounds of subjectivity, a stealthy pain which emanates from the negative sources of identity, and from the testimony of the other's disappearance, the other's

death. Secrecy exhibits itself as a foretoken of the disappearance of identity.

However, the irreducible silence of secrecy has nothing to do with the ineffable. Rather, the tangible signs of negation and silence in its expression disclose and exhibit the limits of the expressiveness of language; they reveal the *tacit* exhaustion of language which breeds secrecy; they render into meaningful expressions the shapeless yet brutal experience of absence.

The experience of absence expresses itself as a negative imperative: the subject is constrained to experience the limits of language, the meaningless expression of the outburst of pain. Pain is rendered meaningful and has a privileged expression in the narration which visibly enacts the impending absence, an absence inflicted on the subject by the other whose presence conveys an implicit menace; it foretells its impending disappearance; its spectral, anticipated death, shatters the subject's fantasies of identity; yet, it stirs the essential affects of community —the community in death—, which do not hold to any particular feature of the other, save its mere presence. Thus, it is the unreserved acceptance of pain that reveals the yield of the subject, and of the sense of his own words, to the sole absence of the other; it is the experience of pain that exposes the utmost weakness of the identity of the self, the untruth of his sovereignty. The experience of pain ends inevitably in the rejection of the illusion of identity.

The ruin of identity can be conceived as an aftermath of the subject's inability to signify the primordial remains of the early shattered image of the loved presence: the traces of a bodily movement, of a vocal discharge, of the sounds of his own scream which signals the disappearance of the other. These unsignified remains, which refuse any deliberated evocation, can be thought of as the sources of secrecy. Thus, the transgression of the ethical rule of "saying it all" seems only a stratagem to elude a painful experience, which, however, *has already taken place*; it can also be conceived as an effort to veil, to weaken the degrading force of this primordial memory, as the attempt of memory to surrender to an as yet non-existent identity —the identity of the self—, and to suffocate the unrelenting need for the other's presence.

II. Secrecy and forbiddance

However, secrecy, as a symbolic expression of the rejection of a primordial pain, is foreign to a mere strategy to lessen the intensity of an actual pain or to achieve welfare or happiness.

Writing about the nature of secrecy, Descombes argues:

Ce ne serait donc pas pour me protéger, comme on dit, que je cache mes pensées ? On ne se tait que par intérêt: telle est la compréhension utilitariste du secret, selon laquelle l'homme cherchant en toute autre chose son intérêt "bien compris", calcule sa conduite dans le sens de ce qui lui est avantageux, à l'occasion mentir ou dissimuler.¹⁰

A very restricted notion of interest attributed to utilitarianism gives Descombes the occasion for a weak argumentation against the, so interpreted, demanding stiffness and shortcomings of these conceptions of ethics. However, chiefly due to Bentham's reflections and Mill's programmatic works which explored a complex ethical dimension of utility, this notion broadened its former, reduced, bounded meaning. The notion of *interest* was firmly associated first with happiness (Bentham) and later with pleasure (Mill). Descombes argues against utilitarianism, following Poe's notion of *perverse*.

an innate and primitive principle of human action, a paradoxical something, which we call *perverse* [...] it is, in fact, a *mobile* without motive, a motive not *motiv*. Through its promptings we act without comprehensible object.¹¹

Descombes argues, following Poe, that it is possible to conceive, on inductive grounds, that it is the "faculty" of perversion which induces the subject to secrecy, ruling it and overweighing the potency of pure rational calculation. In this light, it is not *interest* which determines secrecy, but perversion:

C'est la faculté *perverse* de se précipiter, non dans ce qui semble bon, mais bien dans ce qui semble mauvais.¹²

For Poe, the ruling power of the faculty of perversion becomes evident not by the force of an ethical *deduction*, but by inductive lucidity. It escapes any derivation from ethical principles. Descombes remarks: "Le bien être du héros de la nouvelle de Poe consiste

à ne pas avouer un crime parfait, accompli en lui, dont personne ne peut soupçonner."¹³ Descombes fails to discover in Poe's remark a negative impulse of secrecy: the subject's longing to regain the absolute sensation of the primal pain. Poe's text, depicts an irresistible, aimless impulse, an awkward kind of pleasure, which drives the self to destruction. It emerges from the *pleasure* provoked by the preservation of the secret of the murder of the other. In Poe's text, the unveiling of an evil secret is in itself the source of a dark pleasure which fuses in a common experience salvation and death.

However, Descombes' explorations and proposals about the ruling efficacy of the *faculté perverse*, based upon a dubious reading of Poe's text, does not contravene the premises of utilitarianism which define interest as the founding driving force of secrecy. A feature of Poe's conception, disregarded in Descombes' reading, is his stress—readable in the stark repetition of the word—on both the *unmotivated motives* of perverseness—its lack of a comprehensible aim—, and the deceptive, shapeless character of *right* or *wrong* (in Poe's words). The particular sense given by utilitarianism to interest, conceived in the light of ethics, goes beyond a naive contrast between *good* and *bad*; pleasure can be conceived as the aim of the ethical action which renders the meaning of the notion of *bad* completely foreign to rigid, general calculations and universal strategies to achieve what is conceived of as *right*. An ethic governed by pleasure aims to exhaustively rule the exploration of the singular traits of the individual's behaviour. Poe's recognition of the ethical relevance of *reflexive perverseness*, driven by the vertigo of transgression (indifferent to the fact that it might lead to self destruction), only exposes a yet unexplored facet of the utilitarianism imperative: the self's experience of the symbolic manifestation of absence, of death, may be thought of as an essential and compelling condition of identity. The yielding of the self to its own will to destruction is not envisioned either as evil, or as fatal; rather as a contradictory, vain striving to achieve a full, yet negative identity: an identity achieved by this aimless transgression. Thus, identity appears as a deceiving vision: a fascinating yet barren visage which hinders the acknowledgement of the impossible autonomy of the self.

Forbiddance seems to be the force which impells the subject to turn to the symbolic sovereignty of secrecy in his exhausting, sterile struggle against the

supremacy of absence. Forbiddance, as a singular act which negatively represents acts, exerts on the subject a crucial force, symbolically expressed. Its object —often unfathomable, as happens with secrecy— is pure representation. Forbiddance, in the last analysis, seems to be bred intrinsically by the need for language to define its own boundaries, not by rejecting deviances and unacceptable utterances, nor by settling the patterns of legitimate usage, but chiefly by banning expressions and representation which must not be apprehended as language proper. Language turns back upon itself, by a reflexive operation, to fix its own limits, to define the absolute, unsurmountable outerness which, in turn, shapes its own unfathomable yet positive identity:

la locution interdite, qui niera qu'elle ne soit aussi de langue? S'il n'en était pas ainsi, elle serait simplement cette limite où la langue se suspend et se confirme en Tout: point besoin alors de règle qui la qualifie comme exclue; bien conçue, la fonction de la langue y suffirait. Or il faut toujours un jugement explicite, car rien autrement de la locution incorrecte ne l'annoncerait comme telle; c'est d'être à certains égards dans la langue, qu'elle réclame d'en être écartée. Or, qu'on y prenne garde, telle est bien la structure de toute prohibition, et la prohibition de langue ne se distingue pas de ce point de vue de celle qui pèse sur le sexe.¹⁴

The intimate need for secrecy stems from this original forbiddance that constitutes language itself. Moreover, the reflexive impulse of the language does not restrain its effects to its own sphere, it drags along with it the whole *spectrum* of images which shape the identity of the subject. Without forbiddance, there is no experience of limit. Without forbiddance, the subject would be doomed to exhaustion, suffocated within the boundless wholeness of language, lost in its vastness and imaginary unity.

However, forbiddance *signals* the limits of language from within language itself.¹⁵ What remains unsaid, unuttered, even unimaginable, is the origin of the subject's obsession with the forbidding utterance. Yet, the need for forbiddance is not incited solely by language; it arises from the subject's experience of limits. It is the limit experienced by the subject, his confinement to an experience of community foreign to the meaningful force of language, which seems to incite the sentence of exclusion. As Milner has remarked, *forbiddance cannot be seen as a purely exclusive rule*. It does not confound itself with the mere pattern which allows the recognition of a unacceptable use of language, or a transgression of grammar. Forbiddance does not

preserve the subject from misunderstanding or from the miscarriage of a performance rule. It even does not have an essential relation with taboo or the exclusion of an issue or meaning from linguistic interaction. Forbiddance seems to emerge from the paradoxical expression of the subject's experience of an impossible utterance; it is the expression of the experience of senselessness posited from within sense itself. Thus, forbiddance exhibits the paradoxical identity of language: it confirms the illusion of the wholeness of the symbolic universe, of the intimate unity of language; it also exposes its broken regime of expression.

Therefore, forbiddance might be conceived as a primal moment of secrecy. Despite the fact that secrecy may also appear as an occasional, marginal expression, dependent of incidental, consciously designed strategies of speech and argumentation, it remains, through its essential link to forbiddance, an oblique expression of the inescapable exhaustion of language. However, secrecy cannot be taken as an abrupt collapse of language. It is not a rash silence thrust in the smooth stream of speech. Unlike explicit forbiddance, secrecy seems to express an unpronounced sign alien to meaning, which abides, nevertheless, within the boundaries of language.

Perhaps, the acquisition of language is neither —as some linguists might posit— the imposition of a foreign grid, imposed on the subject's experience, shaping and ruling the structure of linguistic behaviour, nor a definite and finite set of rules of lexical units and grammatical categories intrinsic to our cognitive processes. Language does not seem to be an inner, transcendental gift to the human soul, entangled in the thread of the subject's faculties. Indeed, language does take the appearance of extraneous, immutable matter, able to subdue the acquired experience to its unrelenting logic. However, *language is entirely engendered by and its effects are totally comprehended in utterance*. The enigmatic force which compels the subject to acquire language remains foreign to its matter and logic. Julia Kristeva has distinguished sharply between the symbolic and the imaginary dimensions of language, following Lacan's conception. In the sphere of the symbolic, Kristeva counts "l'exercice du discours selon les règles logiques et grammaticales de l'interlocution"; while she ranges among the imaginary manifestations "la représentation de stratégies d'identification, introjection et projection, qui mobilisent l'image du corps, celles du moi et de l'autre,

et qui utilisent les processus primaires (déplacement et condensation)¹⁶. These domains do not remain foreign to each other. Imaginary relations preserve their oblique and indeterminate relation to the formal elements of language and speech, although they cannot be reduced to them; they also exert a deranging influence on language itself.

L'imaginaire est un kaleidoscope d'images du moi à partir desquelles advient le sujet de l'énonciation. Cela ne doit pas nous faire oublier que l'imaginaire prolonge ses effets jusqu'aux modalités psychiques antérieures à l'identification spéculaire, c'est à dire jusqu'aux représentations psychiques des affects soumis aux règles fluctuantes d'assimilation et du rejet, de la condensation et du déplacement¹⁷

The particular identities of those subjects involved in speech, the peculiar subjective positions taken by speaker and hearer by means of the pure appearance of the word, are defined by the singular profile of their imaginary images of the self. Moreover, Kristeva is inclined to recognize a regressive effect of this imaginary relations and their topography of speech on the reminiscences of primal wordless relations and even on the deep primordial grammar of representations—in Freud's terms, condensation and displacement. Thus, imaginary relations shape the different patterns of symbolic performance and confer upon the primordial grounds of language their particular psychical force.

The three stages, implicitly distinguished by Kristeva in the emergence of the contours of the evoked topography of speech, reveal the complex temporality of the images of the self. Also, they unveil the paradoxical condition of the notions of *condensation* and *displacement*, which seem to appear both as operations of symbolic nature, and as disquieting non-symbolic representations; these non-symbolic representations manifest themselves as mute, meaningless but powerful means to create the primal memories of psychical objects. They emerge from the subject's intimate, unattainable inner sphere, as psychical powers displayed prior to any identification; they also involve traces of perceptions with which they build representations of objects and memories of fading images allowing for the reminiscence of emotions which antecede and prepare the incorporation of language itself.

Furthermore, the imaginary facets of speech originate in these primal psychical, wordless representations, in this protean displacement and lodgement of affective

energies, in this shifting of the mutable intensities of sensation and desire, in the perennial yet unrecognizable mourning for an ancient, nameless loss. They cannot remain imprisoned in the compelling bonds of language. Kristeva's *imaginaire* represents certain limits of language: it both precedes and follows language; it anticipates it and later it falls back upon it to disrupt the regularity of its boundaries; it does not yield —according to Kristeva— to the ruling aims of conventional symbolism; rather, it surrenders to "fluctuating", adventitious rules which stem from the moving intensities of the subject's relations to foreign or intimate objects, to foreign or intimate emotions; it emerges, in last analysis, from the "rejection" of painful perceptions or the "incorporation" of the perceptions of satisfaction; from the lasting memories of singular sensations, governed by desire and aroused by the perception. The rejection of a representation can emerge only from the early reminiscence of pain ingrained in the act of representation; it does not involve the memory of the actual painful object, but the memory of the sensation of pain itself. Thus, language may be conceived as bounded up with and shaped by these margins of silent representations, of an uncertain web of intensities; consequently, it appears as a universe of signs composed by the convergence of heterogeneous symbolic —one stable and conventional set of rules— and non-symbolic, "fluctuating" rules, invigorated by the fundamental, subjective intensities aroused by the experience of loss of a primordial, fading presence. Thus, the "fluctuation" of the *imaginaire*, as Kristeva names it, exposes desultory, rhythmic patterns of affection, mute experiences of absence referred to the singular, uncertain profile of the primordial, painful object relation.

Kristeva's assertions on the primary nature of displacement and condensation, and on the fluctuating nature of their rules entail consequences for the reflection about the conception of silence and secrecy inherent in language.¹⁸ It forces a redefinition of the conception of both silence and secrecy, and of their relation.

A special quality of silence is that it appears with the tension between language and the subject's perception of himself; the silent affections, the oblique reminiscences aroused by the subject's reflection on his own thoughts, emotions and desires, about

his own inclinations and atavisms, about his own darkness and abjection, are irreducible to the endurance, the conventionality, the diffuse yet recognizable boundaries which shape the meaning of words; this tension emerges as a perceived halting of speech, as an often veiled, undecipherable vanishing of the utterance, originating at the convergence of symbolic and non-symbolic subjective determinations; this silence is rooted in the opaque residues of the speaker's early experience of absence. It is this quality of silence that reveals secrecy. Secrecy appears at these margins of reflexion, it is readable in these silences, in these mute tensions, which shadow the enigmatic, pervading presence of pain, the barren, timeless shudder of mourning. Silence then becomes an imprinting of secrecy upon language.

However, silence unlike secrecy, exhibits itself as an *expressive, meaningful, decipherable* suspension of language. It is a neutral substance, a void yet recognizable, *conventional* sign. For silence to become a relevant expression of secrecy it must emerge from an abysmal turning back of silence upon itself. Silence must evoke silence; it must appear as an inextricable, dense sediment of mute signs. Consequently, in secrecy silence is cast upon silence by forbiddance. The expressive power of words, language itself, is pervaded by this dense silence which arises from the grounds of forbiddance, of the intrinsic limits of language; it is from its disperse presence in speech, that silence acquires equivocal, disquieting meanings and a vague but powerful expressiveness. Unlike meaningful silence, secrecy appears as an ominous emptiness, an almost intangible veil which encumbers the perception of speech. But the consequence of reflexive perception is not the subject's dominion of the meanings of speech; rather, it is uncertainty. An uncertainty which might drive interpretation to an endless circle or perhaps suspend in indefinite astonishment the attempt to decipher the weave of silence.

Margins of silence, which in turn, surround the experience of forbiddance, might incite a restless, drifting evocation. Therefore, silence, when built upon the remnants of language, is not experienced only as missing words, or as a weakness of language, but as an obscurely determined shattering of the expression in actual dialogue. Silence as a crude token of secrecy, emanates like an intangible, pure sensation, from the deeply fragmented but apparently uninterrupted flow of speech,

from the mirage of the plenitude of meaning, from the full accomplishment of the act of speech. This singular, dense, reflective silence of secrecy can be understood as the resonances of the self's intimate, primordial experience of pain, rendered into a barren symbolic matter, into an absent significance of actual signs.

Language then reveals itself neither as an inner source of identity, nor as a permanent and stiff frame, imposed by a transcendental, foreign power on the inner realm of the subject's experience, a frame able to define by itself the present and future profile of the subject's identity. The fabric of language, made of a weave of forbiddance and silence, is but an edge of the mirage of the subject's identity, a perpetual boundary of his history, the resistant substance of his reminiscences, the texture of his enduring atavisms. Secrecy, indeed, remains within the sphere of apprehensible meanings; it is neither surrounded by a sacred prohibition, nor threatened by the infliction on the subject of unbearable stigma. Yet, pain sets the boundaries of speech and ceases to be just a necessary condition of secrecy; then, secrecy and forbiddance become almost indistinguishable. It attains the force and prevalence of law and determines the fate of the subject's identity.

Secrecy condenses the violence implied by the entangled temporalities of speech, which drag along with them the representations of excluded and yet intruding remembrances, and the tireless threat of a brutal fact, of an obscene, abject and unsuspected truth. It is the key notion of *experience*,¹⁹ that condense these temporalities of speech, the emergence of remembrances and the wilful rejection of a truth intrinsic to the subject's own history.

III. Inessential secrecy: from enigma to power

1. Secrecy and enigma

There is a necessary, yet paradoxical relation between interpretation and secrecy. Interpretation does not dissipate secrecy; it spreads out its signs over the entire discourse; it disseminates through the whole text its perturbing power. The inner

fissures and margins of meaning are rendered visible. Interpretation unfolds the silence of *the intrinsic, boundless effusion* of a mute, expressive force in the linguistic expression. Interpretation proliferates. It branches endlessly. It provokes an endless generation and dispelling of discourses, out of a single feature of speech; it expands the surface of meanings. It does not fill the clefts in the fragile spirit of words. Rather, it multiplies their implications: in each unfolding of discourse, in every equivocal expression, in any potential ambiguity of the words, interpretation engenders unprecedented, unreadable opacity; it preserves, as an evocative wake, shreds of signs which remain foreign to or untouched by interpretation itself, signs which circumscribe revelation, seeking to assert the plenitude of its meaning while unveiling its impossibilities, exhibiting the enfeebled impulse of deciphering.

Interpretation has often been conceived as a means of achieving enlightenment, as a revelation. But interpretation is nothing more than an attempt which never obliterates the tensions in speech which emerge with enigma; rather, interpretation propagates through discourse its own fractures and strains, inscribing them in its tissue.

Enigma appears to be the magnetic centre of interpretation, it has been understood even as its absolute origin. Simultaneously, enigma represents a rarefying of meaning which names and conceals the truth of text; it preserves this truth as an actual horizon of meaning; Eventually, interpretation evokes the revelation of enigma as the actual disclosing of a potentially comprehensible meaning. It is the simultaneous invention of the impossible centre of the meaning of text and the narration of its mythological origins.

Paradoxically, interpretation must preserve the enigmatic force which lies in its origins. It must maintain an intimate relation with it; it must preserve the traces of an original enigma. These traces are the features which define its identity, which confer sense upon interpretation. Without them interpretation loses its imaginary illuminating force, it becomes an indifferent, plain discourse, a dispensable gloss. Interpretation is recognizable as such only because it entangles in its own weave of meanings, the names and bounds of enigma and declares its invincible opacity.

Secrecy shares with enigma the virtues and the potencies of this pervading opacity, which convokes interpretation. However, each of them implies different

temporalities. Secrecy appears as a weakened, transient enigma. Indeed, secrecy is not conceived as an unsurmountable opacity but as an obstinate silence embedded in discourse, a silence which veils what should have been said. Silence appears only as a non essential enigma, as a contingent barrier in language which can and will be finally overcome. Nevertheless, the intensified, different senses of temporality involved in secrecy imply the intense force of history foreign to the timelessness of enigma. History involved in secrecy appears as a dense atmosphere of reminiscences and residues, as ciphered territories of evocation and as a promise of a narrative expansive eloquence: secrecy is another facet, an obscure one, of the lure of eloquence, the incitation to an infinite interpretation.

But interpretation involves the recognition and the naming of the different temporal layers of discourse. Enigma and secrecy confer a different mythical meaning on their own concealment. The timeless and subjectless, collective nature of enigma joins the sacred representations, veiled by ritual, concealed to the profane gaze, preserved from the presence and even the proximity of the impure. Secrecy, in turn, preserves significant tensions comparable to those of enigma, yet it founds its own creed: it allows a personal history to intrude upon the fabric of narration, and it shelters in its silence a brief and transient belief. Interpretation, thus, deepens the fissure between enigma and secrecy. It exhibits secrecy as a finite, historical and ethically burdened enigma. Concealment has been established by interpretation as the common feature of enigma and secrecy. This feature bestows on interpretation the timeless and finite, the challenging purity of enigma and the perturbing moral resonances of secrecy.

Thus, interpretation can appear as an effort to elucidate, both in secrecy and in enigma, the springs of concealment, the obscure name shielded by silence. This effort never dissipates the discursive tensions aroused by the mere appearance of enigma or secrecy. Moreover, interpretation is seen to embody the concealed as a fixed magnetic lacuna in its own textual unfolding. Around this still, unreachable centre, whirls the moving web of interpretation. The centre is this hollowness which remains invincibly foreign to signs. Interpretation signifies the mythology of enigma, the opaqueness of secrecy. Therefore, the concealed remains both inside and outside the limits of the

interpreting text: it appears as a foreign, distant, extrinsic token; and simultaneously, as an inherent creature of interpretation, sheltered by its own restlessly proliferating discourse. However, it is interpretation that creates concealment as its own centre. Interpretation appears with the formulation of enigma, with the expression which conceals the secret token. Concealment does not precede interpretation, rather it emerges with it. The pace of interpretation is, from the beginning, uncertain. It is impossible to recognize the origins of enigma and the founding interpretation of secrecy. Interpretation appears always as an echo of the concealed, as its emanation. Nevertheless, the concealed emerges only with interpretation, it is bound up with it. The concealed is never perceived other than as a distressing, vague, symbolic breach, a daring, mute universe of signals without any definite origin or profile.

An uncertain alliance, an inextricable fusion between secrecy and enigma arises from the hermeneutic act. Secrecy seems to rely upon the potential boldness of sense, upon the existence of a visible path which goes from the unutterable to the asserted, from the unknowable to certainty, from the ellipsis to explicit syntax, from conjectural histories to exhaustive narration, from enthymeme to syllogism. Nevertheless, hesitation defines this region in which enigma and secrecy meet, in which the sense of absence emerges as an ambiguous signal both of the unapproachable, primordial loss, and the intimate misapprehension of the non-said. Secrecy bears a solid conviction of an actual, deep-rooted sense; it exhibits itself through those shreds of signs scattered through the text of interpretation, as a shadow of the debasement of a potential sense; it incites just a ventured guess as to the nature of a fading presence.

2. Secrecy as the political use of concealment

Secrecy exerts still another perturbing effect which relates it to the exercise of power, with the strategies of simulacrum: concealment as the sheer exhibition of concealment; concealment as the mimicry of concealment; concealment of the concealment of nothing; concealment as the sheer exhibition of the power to conceal, the reckless concealment of the impossibility of concealing. Concealment, then, folds back upon discourse to impress on its surface the features of the masquerade of concealment. It

develops its power to create its own image out of the smooth surface of meaning.

Descombes has suggested a paradoxical feature of secrecy: it should be sayable. What has remained secret must be meaningful to others. The missing utterance should be painlessly brought to light. However, this condition would render interpretation useless. Yet, despite the intelligibility of the concealed utterance, the need for interpretation persists. The relevance has nothing to do with the eventual disclosure of the concealed object, but with the exposure of its profound, obscure sense. Interpretation seeks to elucidate *the springs of the relation* between the *act* of concealment, and the explicit meaning of the concealed. It is this relation that confers its most singular traits upon secrecy. It is this relation that resists any interpretation which aims to exhaustiveness, that escapes the eloquence of signs, that renders interpretation simultaneously sterile and imperative. It is this relation that remains obscure, inaccessible, secret beyond secrecy. It renders comprehensible the singular, inexpressible ground of secrecy; not of the veiling, concealing discourse, but of the explicit signs which would denounce the will to conceal.

In secrecy, the sense of the utterance experiences a profound metamorphosis: concealment ceases to evoke an oblique, equivocal sense; its meaning ceases to be the uncertain, dim luminescence irradiated by the dispersed residues of the concealed. The prohibition involved in secrecy seeks to exclude an utterance from the universe of the other's expectations. But this utterance must leave on the surface of language pure traces which should alert the interpreter about the poignancy of what has been banned. However, here prohibition is but a mirage. It seems to reduce secrecy to the pure, autonomous act of concealment. The utterance adopts a definite sense; it exhibits an apparently explicit, though bewildering meaning: it restrains the whole meaning of an utterance only to stress the will to preserve secrecy, to exalt the fictive possession of the truth. The whole utterance turns into nothing but the opprobrious expression which flaunts the will to conceal, and the full, exclusive possession of the silenced truth. Secrecy reveals the exertion of power as a dreary discursive strategy; it becomes a reflexive gloss of the concealing utterance. It reveals a negative significance of its own expressive signs:

On le voit, la question du secret est bientôt politique. C'est même *la question politique* par excellence, puisque le pouvoir est le *pouvoir de dire*. [...] Le secret donne à celui qui le détient du pouvoir de le dire ou non, donc de séparer ceux qui l'entendront des autres.²⁰

This manoeuvre renders meaningless what has been concealed; rather, it is the very *act* of concealment that has been illuminated. Secrecy as strategy reveals itself as a paradoxical, *positive force*: as the force of the concealed declines, its relevant sense is replaced by sheer action; meaning emerges only from the violent excluding gesture of concealment which exhibits its paradoxical capacity to create meaningful signs out of the pure exhibition of its negative power. By the ambiguous *act*, secrecy can be made to appear as a *spectacle* which extenuates the force of its own opaqueness. The spectacular nature of the ritual action which informs secrecy creates an unusual bond between the visible and the invisible; unexpected signs are rendered perceptible, but only as meaningless, enigmatic signs, which might be thought of as sprouts of the concealed. The ritual of secrecy alone, the collective acquiescence in the concealment, confers upon secrecy a meaningful force which thrives with the image it evokes of the potential disclosure of the concealed. Secrecy reveals itself as a futile, vacuous but invincible strategy to achieve power; it builds upon a meaningless statement the whole masquerade of concealment. Nothing relevant has been veiled, but the simulacrum of veiling is enough to engender power. Revelation dissipates the compelling force of strategic secrecy. It provokes the exclusion of the self from the site of power. Yet, strategies of secrecy acquire an uncertain dignity by fulfilling the intrinsic promise of secrecy: its own extinction. The power of secrecy, when it emerges as a sheer discursive, political stratagem, is founded upon an oblique paradoxical menace: to comply with the ethical dictum of saying it all.

IV. Secrecy: rhythm and time

1. Time and memory: the mechanics of forgetfulness

By a strange effect, secrecy transforms concealment into a paradoxical *will to forgetfulness*, and, in turn, it informs the privileged memory of experience. The rituals

of secrecy thus appear as a relevant but constantly metamorphosized resources of memory. As Descombes has remarked while trying to elucidate some of the peculiar traits of secrecy:

La volonté d'oublier comme la volonté de ne pas savoir signifient
l'impossibilité d'oubli, le savoir trop lourd à porter.²¹

This difference stressed by Descombes between *forgetfulness* and *will to forgetfulness* becomes the crucial trait in the inextricable relation between memory and secrecy: while forgetfulness implies silence as an uncertain, yet effective suppression of a representation intensely charged with affection, a violent response to the urgencies of life, will to forgetfulness involves an impossible oblivion; it incites the subject to break down the resistances of memory; it manifests the subject's intimate struggle to dissipate an undesired memory, an attempt to suffocate the images aroused by early experiences, the obstinate presence of what should have been completely banned from the experience of the self.

Secrecy also involves the ambiguous expression which confounds will to concealment, will to forgetfulness and will to ignore. *Will to forget* and *will to ignore* arouse discordant emotions. The will to ignore reveals the previous existence of a desolate state of mind, which refuses to acknowledge any further disquieting perception. Yet, the subject's will to ignore knows nothing about its haunting, fictitious object; it vaguely glimpses it; its spectre looms out from the images the subject fears; secrecy must faintly adumbrate the meaning and nature of what has been excluded from speech.

Both, the will to forget and the will to ignore, seem to converge in the most radical manifestation of secrecy as a stratagem of power. The excluded truth becomes a tangible substance, the possession of which appears as the privilege of an illuminated group. After having gone through the path of purification until its ultimate stage, revelation which comes with sacredness dissipates secrecy. Yet, it demands a restricted, ciphered language likely to exhibit the violence of its intrinsic, brutal limits. The subject's imaginary capacity to expose the limits of language becomes the root of power, it confounds itself with the possession of truth which uphelds the right to exclude, to uproot the other's from the sphere of transcendental sense, to annihilate

them as symbolic, meaningful presences.

However, ritual action announces the revelation brought about by the proximity to sacredness and its language which, by itself, holds an absolute, unrestrained power and adumbrates the path into truth. Descombes sees in mathematics the modern example of a sacred language acquired by ritual initiation:

ce secret que le vulgaire *ne peut pas* entendre n'a besoin d'être défendu, il se protège tout seul. On aurait beau crier partout que personne n'y comprendrait rien, hormis les purs. Par conséquent, seules les *mathématiques pures* sont véritablement secrètes, parce que mathématiques.²²

True [*véritables*] secrets, Descombes suggest, are sheltered by a barrier of language, which can only be broken by initiation. Initiation as a ritual becomes an intimidating spectacle, the enacting of sacredness, the visibility of purification. The ritual initiation to the deciphering of the concealed is a privileged source of power. Interpretation then becomes a gift. The subject achieves the power to break through the barriers of language into the sphere of speechless illumination. Thus, sacred interpretation conjoins concealment and unveiling; initiation bestows on the subject the clue to the hermeneutics of secrecy. The limits of language are stridently, exorbitantly exhibited, only to consecrate their transgression; sacred interpretation both lightens and shatters the limits of language; it reveals the unarticulable nature of truth. Initiation demands purity which also involves the contempt for and even the forgetfulness of vulgar language. The access to truth excludes the profane, and the plenitude of sense is only revealed to the chosen, to those illuminated by divinity. Only the consecrated can be admitted to the presence of truth; all others are doomed to remain beyond the reach of its glare. Descombes considers *true secrecy* as a strategy to achieve political efficacy, through the acquisition of secrecy as an instrument of intimidation in the exercise of power.

The visible weave of the signs which announce secrecy appears to be the outcome of an intimate ritual in which *secrecy* and an *aim to purity, to the sacred* converge. Secrecy thus involves an intimate relation between *negative promise*—secrecy as a complicity in muteness, which signifies the acknowledgement of the promise to suffocate any allusion to a shameful, abject item—, and *explicit prohibition*;

between the subject's intimate, yet stale promise to unveil an unutterable painful image which abides in the core of self, and the conviction, aroused by a thorough reflexiveness, of the existence of a forbidden sphere of sense, preserved from profane words, ciphered in a private language. Secrecy then approaches mysticism. However, mystic rapture is not an exceptional moment of ritual, devotion and prayer: perhaps it is only the exaltation of certain of the moment of the dissipation of sense inherent in extreme fervour, when silence becomes sacred, timeless; it confounds itself with secrecy and revelation.

However, strategic secrecy, publicly exposed and recognized, does not illuminate the nature and the force [*Kraft*] of negation of secrecy conceived as an inherent expression of the self's experience of limits.

Secrecy mixes the inherent force [*Kraft*] of negation embodied in prohibition and that of the imperative. Thus, its force thrives from the exhaustion of the meaning of speech transfigured into a promise of oblivion and an imperative of silence; yet, it defers its full comprehension until the subject's own atavistic, regressive impulse has not restored the primal sense of prohibition which somehow signals the strange but frightful time of absence; a primordial prohibition without rules which springs from the subject's early, meaningless impotency. Secrecy becomes the sheer, vain expectancy for the advent of sense, of revelation. Unlike promise which entails the sense of its future fulfilment, secrecy has only one final aim: to preserve itself undeciphered until its own extinction, which should occur only with the death of those who possess the clues to the relief of truth. The intimidating power of the concealed should be extinguished by revelation. The powerful image of death should eclipse the intrinsic horizon of language. Thus, secrecy must pronounce simultaneously *the promise of the imminent unveiling of mythic truth*, and *the promise to resist revelation the imminent of adumbrates death*. Perhaps the alliance of secrecy with death appears as the deep root of language, and remains as the main feature of concealment ruled by pain.

The two promises involved in secrecy imply separate and conflicting senses; each of these promises imposes a different shape on the subject's experience of time. There is no undivided subject of secrecy. There is neither a singular force in the

meaning of words nor a definite identity likely to embody an agonistic, ruinous, incongruous exigencies of both promises. While promise demands the deliberate commitment of the subject to its fulfilment, secrecy exacts the disappearance of any intention to uncover the deep core of secrecy.

In secrecy, the speaker faces the unrelenting awareness of the risk of an *impending betrayal* of the yet non-confessed. He experiences the violence of the abrupt hermeneutic relevance of proliferating, untimely emerging traces of concealment. In secrecy, the dim stimuli that surround the keeper of the secret turns into potentially meaningful presences. Thus, secrecy intensifies the significance of the perceived through expectation. It stresses the hermeneutic relevance of immediacy. An urgent need for sense, coherence and completeness impels the subject to the hermeneutical endeavour which gets hold of every shape, every contour, every token which emerges from his environment; the interpretation that stems from secrecy seeks to apprehend the potentially discernable significance of a growing crowd of objects. Nevertheless, this avidity for interpretation demands, in turn, the fading out of the subject, the absolute primacy of the concealed, a longing for what has been definitively excluded. It forces the subject to admit the extreme paradoxical experience of time which defines the hermeneutic endeavour; it compels the subject to acknowledge the moment of concealment as that which sets the boundaries of self only to intensify the radiance of its crepuscular image. Secrecy exacerbates the subjective tension which emerges from the demand of the disappearance of the other as the necessary condition of the extinction of the self.

The experience of secrecy calls to mind Freud's quotation of Schelling in relation to "the uncanny":

Unheimliche nennt man Alles, was im Geheimnis, im Verborgnen... bleiben sollte und hervorgetreten ist. (*Das Unheimliche*, SA, 1919, IV: 248)*

Secrecy demands, not the revelation of the occult but its mere visibility of its traces, the visibility of *negative images*, images of that which did not have any previously

*"Unheimlich" is the name of everything that ought to have remained ... secret and hidden but has come to light. (PF, 14: 345).

conceivable or perceivable shape; images of a feeble, conjectured object or state of things; images of what was only a gap, a hollow, nothing; the concealed rises with the stigma of its non-existence: it exhibits the dark, contrasting profile of the excluded object. In secrecy, as in the uncanny, speech signals the contours of the missing object, and *exhibits the traces of the act of exclusion*, it exposes the shade which has become the vacuous promise of presence and, simultaneously, the marks which call the attention of the will to concealment. The experience of the uncanny is woven with the thread of a primordial passion, a sombre, daunting attachment to disappearance. It is the nature of the experience of the uncanny that supports the stupor which shapes the structure of secrecy.²³

However, unlike the uncanny, secrecy does not exhibit an immediate allegory, a tangible representation of what has been excluded; its allegory is harsher, brutal. The sign which represents the exclusion is silent, stale; it challenges the attempts of comprehension; it rejects the quiescent, petrified assurance of a name.

An act leaves no other traces than its effects. Then, it must be inferred from its consequences. Thus, there is no proof of secrecy but secrecy itself. Silence is equivocal, manifold. Associated with oblivion, with disregard, with blindness, none of them inherently bound to secrecy, silence is no proof of it. There is no other guarantee of secrecy than the intimate, painfully experienced limits of language. But this guarantee is paradoxical. It convulses the whole experience of language; it overturns the certitude of the intrinsic wholeness of sense. Secrecy loses its specific meaning; it contaminates the whole language. It disappears in the disappearance of the firmness of sense, of sense itself. Thus, secrecy confronts the subject, not only with physical and symbolic death, but with an appalling promise, that of the essential disappearance of meaning; secrecy is the vivid experience of the forgetfulness inherent in language.

The rhythmically scattered tokens of secrecy evoke the rhythms of exclusion, but they also anticipate the extinction of time forecast by the imminence of revelation. Secrecy refers implicitly to the rhythms of silence, to the pace of its appearances, to its dissemination, to the successive branching of its series. Secrecy appears as an inherently equivocal act: as a strategy of speech and as a narration ruled by the

paradoxical striving of the self for identity.

Secrecy invokes and demands the other's awareness of a missing sign, of a gap which makes the utterance uncertain. It defers indefinitely the meaning of language; it postpones indefinitely the advent of certitude. Secrecy appears as a never fulfilled *promise* of a future sense; for secrecy to appear, interpretation must rely on the expectation that the scattered tokens of the concealed, the shreds of silence which exhibit themselves dispersed over the speech, will lead to the final discovery of the concealed. Beyond the transgression enacted by secrecy, there must reside the purity of sense. However, the guarantee invoked by secrecy must not be a fragile, passing one. The desperate aim of secrecy is perhaps never to be forced to yield; it longs to preserve an endless silence, to perpetuate it, to shelter without relief the concealed, painful vacuousness of sense. A metaphor of timelessness and of impregnable purity is ingrained in secrecy. It must imply the acknowledgement of an actual, yet non signified act which has built up unsurmountable boundaries to the apprehension of meaning, an act that indicates the existence of a suppressed meaning which has been kept beyond reach.

It is the experience of the contrasting, agonistic experiences of time, that betokens the inscription of hollow at the centre of the subject's symbolic universe. Secrecy consequently appears as an expanding web of rhythmically spread traces of silence, as an unavoidable, symbolic enactment of negation and as the preservation of hollow evidence of the limits of intimacy and speech: secrecy exhibits a manifold temporality which involves the atavistic, primal attachment of the subject to the non said and to the disappearance of the other, embodied and signalled in language and exhibited as a quality of mere acts of speech.

V. The frontiers of representation: secrecy and abjection

As we have already suggested, secrecy can be conceived as different both from silence and from enigma, although inextricably entangled with them. However, its singular ethical condition confounds itself with the *moral repulsion* involved in the significance

of abjection. Like secrecy, the singular intensity of the affections aroused by abjection is neither referred to unequivocal identifiable sources, nor does it hold to ciphered meanings within the boundaries of the self. Abjection implies an invincible ambiguousness of the boundaries of intimacy, which makes impossible to recognize the sources of abjection. No object is essentially abject; like the sublime, abjection seems to define a singular *position* of the subject which confronts its object; abjection shares the intimate nature of passion; it appears as a singular emotion which emanates from the subject's sombre, undefinable attachment to a perceived feature of the object. Like the sublime, like language itself, abjection seems to define an intrinsic, ethical, mystical condition of the object itself. Abjection, "like the sublime", renders into a recognizable physiognomy a lavish, inner affection; thus, abjection seems to emanate from the object, to intrude upon the subject's intimacy, to ruin the mirage of a benign environment. Abjection incites the subject to misinterpret his perception of intimacy, to confuse the inner and the outer. Accordingly, the object of secrecy frequently assumes the figure of abjection; it affects its ethical coarseness, its equivocal perception. However, as Descombes has keenly remarked, there is a sharp distinction between secrecy and the abject, which in turns swerves from the essential patterns of the non said. He writes:

La définition du secret est contradictoire, elle en fait un dicible indicible. L'interdit au sens de l'abject est aisé à comprendre, puisque *je n'ai besoin de savoir, donc de dire, ce à quoi je répugne pour y répugner*, vu que *je l'évite* du fait même d'avoir dit autre chose, cette autre chose dont il est l'abjection. En autre, je peux *dire* que je condamne ce propos comme insensé, telle action comme honteuse. Il va de soi, en revanche, qu'on ne peut *demande* le secret qui a celui qui est dans le secret. Impossible de publier partout 'qu'il ne faut surtout pas dire que le roi est nu'. *La condamnation porte et sur le dit et sur le dire.*²⁴

The abject, suggests Descombes, may be named, but secrecy may not. The sole articulation of the name of the secret dissipates secrecy, but, Descombes claims, naming the abject does not dissipate it. However, silence is not foreign to abjection. In secrecy, the concealed seems to be pervaded by abjection, and its name must be avoided. It rejects any familiarity or proximity; the advent of the name of the abject strikes speech like a catastrophe. It appears as an abrupt, yet transient shuddering of

language, a wreckage of communication, a territory of speech in which the affection must not linger; indeed, the abject is a cardinal, negative force which sets the framework of speech; it is also a daunting representation, the source of which remains, however, foreign to language. Although it also shares its intimate nature with the experience of the sublime, the subjective origins of abjection are clearly distinguishable from the roots of terror and of sublimity.

The abject lacks any conventional anchorage, it does not obey any recognizable rule, it inevitably gives rise to an experience which cannot be shared or even communicated faithfully; it is a sheer subjective experience which condenses manifold past events, fusing reminiscences of different ages, of contrasting affective intensities. Like secrecy, the singular experience of abjection is not aroused by a tangible, characteristic feature encountered in an actual action or object; it is not a reply to a mere violation of the law; moreover, the experience of abjection emerges as a resonance of an extreme, unspeakable violence, of a trespass that extends into an ethical territory beyond the mere violation; often, the experience of abjection is awakened by the evidence of the *intolerable* magnitude of the transgression. It is this unspeakable nature of an action, or the *arbitrary* —yet significant or even allegorical— feature of the object of abjection able to arouse crude rejection; the experience of abjection can be seen as a peculiar response of memory, of the vast and incongruous residues of representations which inform the intimate narration of our own history, to the perception of the unspeakable nature of an act or its tangible traces.

However, the tension between the silence implied by the abject and secrecy does not reduce to a simple opposition between two different strategies of concealment. As Descombes stresses, the abject is nameable; however, there is an intimate force which restrains or even suffocates its appearance in speech. Indeed, this unusual conjunction brings to light a seldom contemplated enigma of speech: the anxiety and eagerness involved in naming. The enigma of silence frequently veils its negative counterpart: *the enigmatic condition of the speakable*, of what can be named, or referred to. Paradoxically, what can be spoken of insinuates, *through the force of its sole existence*, a stealthy weakening of the certainty of sense. The enigma of secrecy casts a shade on the purity of speech. It reveals the negative source of its force. The force of utterance

springs from the potential force of meaningful silence, of secrecy.

But the naming of the abject, its open, explicit condemnation —contrary to Descombes' assumption—, might be thought of as a ritual which renders into conventional symbols the evil nature of the condemned. Having yielded to the collective ritual of purification, that which has been abject turn into an evil token, foreign to secrecy or abjection. It transforms itself into a specific, political facet of the act of exclusion. The naming of the abject frees the object from its original, intimate, intensity; it admits a conventional profile and takes on sharp contours with a definite name; it is identifiable by means of clearly recognizable social categories; its origins seems to take roots in an atmosphere extrinsic to the subject's intimacy. The social ritual of condemnation involves intimate emotions but it enacts repulsion by the means of conventional, regular attitudes. Moreover, the deep force which keeps the abject on the fringes of the subject's symbolic sphere, and charges it with an exceedingly negative, unspeakable sense, is subdued by the collective stigmatization itself; the intimate repulsion transforms itself into collective purifying violence, through the act of condemnation. The naming of the abject illuminates the condemned object to definitively conceal the real source of the subject's repulsion. The exorbitant matter of the abject experience remain untouched by its open condemnation. Not only does abjection remains beyond the reach of political efficacy, it perturbs the subject's political acquiescence. Abjection reveals an irreversible breach within the inner tensions among the strategies to achieve power; it reveals the vacuousness of the strategic endeavour to impose political control on the symbolic dimensions of subjectivity.

Thus, the abject appears as a singular, extreme manifestation of secrecy dominated by fear and which becomes apparent in the subject's will to preserve himself from an appalling presence:

Il y a, dans l'abjection —, une de ces violentes et obscures révoltes de l'être contre ce qui le menace et qui lui paraît venir d'un dehors ou d'un dedans exorbitant, jeté à côté du possible, du tolérable, du pensable. C'est là, tout près mais inassimilable. Ça sollicite, inquiète, fascine le désir qui pourtant ne se laisse pas séduire. Apeuré, il se détourne. Écoeuré, il rejette. Un absolu le protège de l'opprobre, il en est fier, il y tient. Mais en même temps, quand même, cet élan, ce spasme, ce saut, est attiré vers

un ailleurs aussi tentant que condamné. Inlassablement, comme un boomerang indomptable, un pôle d'appel et de répulsion met celui qui en est habité littéralement hors de lui.²⁵

The abject names the irreparable dissipation of the settled boundaries of the identity of the self. Residing neither inside nor outside the self, the abject object threatens the certainty of its identity; it charges it with menacing, overwhelmingly intense affection. The affection itself becomes a menace to the imaginary boundaries of self. It is the presence of a menace which arouses the intensity which defines the experience of abjection. This experience provokes in the subject, as in Winnicott's psychotic, "a shudder at the advent of a catastrophe that has already occurred" (Barthes).²⁶ The abjection not only obliterates the sharp boundaries between the inside and the outside, but between the real and the fantasized, between the already experienced and the mere anticipation of the experience. It is this sudden collapse of the temporal and spatial limits experienced by the self and referred to an abject —thus painful, threatening, marginal— object, which makes the experience of abjection, a privileged manifestation of secrecy:

l'abject, objet chu, est radicalement un exclu et me tire vers là où le sens s'effondre.[...] je la supporte car j'imagine que tel est le désir de l'autre. Surgissement massif et abrupt d'une étrangeté qui, si elle a pu m'être familière dans une vie opaque et oubliée, me harcèle maintenant comme radicalement séparée, répugnante. Pas moi. Pas ça. Mais pas rien non plus. Un "quelque chose" que je ne reconnais pas comme chose. Un poids de non-sens qui n'a rien d'insignifiant et qui m'écrase.²⁷

For the subject to endure the pain aroused by abjection, he is bound to admit the violent role of desire, a desire that fractures his identity. The object fades away outweighed by the experience and the *significance* of pain, an experience which dominates the entire subjectivity and involves the definitive shattering of the subject's profile, confounding it with its object. This strangeness emerges from the subject's attachment to the painful disappearance of a tangible figure and his repulsion. The identity of the subject is overcome by the force of an *absolute* menace. The menace involved in the experience of abjection is impersonal, an abstract destiny imposed on the subject as an inherent condition of his existence; it resembles a tragedy whose hero would hurl himself to destruction driven by an inescapable godless will. Menace stands

as a tangible evidence, as a presence in itself. It occurs in the subject's experience as a betokened fate.

The act of speech which expresses the experience of abjection reveals the intensity of an atavistic sensation, of an unacknowledged history engraved upon the subject's speech. The experience of abjection is built upon a fantasy of an actual presence—a revolting presence—which becomes a source of sense, a "real presence", a figure which condenses the subject's incongruous history and offers a distressing guarantee, not of truth but of a brutal, yet lasting certainty. Thus, the experience of abjection, like secrecy, conceals deep perturbation. It calls for an unrelenting endeavour of regressive interpretation. Both experiences implicate the belief in the impossible promise of historical redemption. They settle the conditions for a historical, symbolic expression of time.

VI. Secrecy and the paradox of initium: exclusion and seriality

Pierre Boutang²⁸ has mentioned a meaningful attribute of secrecy:

le secret se donne ou refuse comme tel, se réfère à un *initium* qui sera figuré ou représenté, non aboli; par là chaque secret instaure, avec la séparation entre les choses, *une séparation du temps: il est au principe d'une suite, ou d'une série.*²⁹

The interpretation of secrecy forges both the presence of the concealed and the speech patterns of its exclusion. The act of interpretation suppresses the distance between two facets of secrecy: an atavistic shadow cast upon the universe of the symbolized experience, and the *representation* of a yet unfathomable presence. The act of interpretation confounds these two facets: it presents secrecy both as an impure, ambiguous symbolism expressed through metaphor or ellipsis, *and* as sheer allegory.³⁰ The banishment of things created by secrecy involves divergent chronologies. Boutang remarks: it separates the concealed from the evident, the representation from the represented, the original statement of concealment from its successive interpretations; also it draws a boundary between the subjects which might bear the inherent silence of

secrecy and those which shall remain foreign to it. Furthermore, it signals the difference between the non-signified universe of actions and the secret proper. It demarcates the manifestation of secrecy as a strategy of speech which confers upon silence its specific efficacy, from silence which remains as the essential core of language, as the clue to significance which informs the intimate experience of hollowness.

Accordingly, secrecy comprehends a manifold, paradoxical representation of time: it unfolds as a heterogeneous series of signs, of utterances, of accents, as well as a mute succession of enigmatic and proliferating traces spread over expression. As Boutang insinuates, the series of signs which expands itself about the mythical, timeless source of secrecy—this *initium*, mentioned by Boutang—, exposes the radical paradox of a *timeless, primordial event which gives rise to a turbulent entanglement of divergent threads of discourse*. Secrecy lays bare the paradox of an endless and changing series of interpretations and discursive objects which exhibit the finiteness of language.

The emergence of secrecy out from the primordial vestiges of experience unleashes the dissemination of silence over the whole universe of signs; it engenders, claims Boutang, *series* of signs, constellations of manifold expressions of time which might grow endlessly. Interpretation stirs this serial movement while displaying its own mythology of origins; but it still preserves the force of this mythological origin as the potential centre upon which the series of interpretations should converge. Interpretation *reverses* the mythological genesis of secrecy. It exhibits itself as a secondary moment, as an effect, as a resonance, as an ancillary resource in the struggle to restore the purity of sense, to recover the lost object in the origins of the act of concealment. Nevertheless, interpretation not only *creates* the concealed nucleus of enigma and secrecy; also it evokes vague emotions linked to a non-depictable, archaic age. An image of primordial time, associated with the mythical centre which has emerged from faded memories of the subject, *seems to precede* the interpretation of secrecy. Secrecy involves fictitious images, the mirage of an origin of secrecy and of a primordial episode as the source of concealment. Interpretation presupposes this mythological source of the concealed; moreover, it portrays the mirage of its own path: interpretation seems to appear as a sequel of secrecy, a reply to it.

Moreover, after its emergence, a single interpretation of secrecy does not inhibit the utterance of new interpretations; on the contrary, the interpretation of secrecy becomes a lasting source of new interpretations. Even when such interpretations which seem to have finally brought to light the original truth —chiefly those interpretations that emerge and present themselves as both the origin and conclusion of an enigma—, are able to assert only their own contingency; in the last analysis, they emerge from the same mythological centre, from the mirage of a timeless ground, a mirage that has been forged by interpretation. Therefore, interpretation is submitted to a paradoxical tension which obliterates its own sense without alternatives: once it has delineated the indistinct contour of the concealed and signalled it as its own origin, it avers, by this sole act, the derived, secondary sense of the origin. The image of the origin emerges as an outcome of interpretation itself. The primordial condition of the origin of secrecy is reversed by the interpretation itself. The image of the origin rises as the aftermath both of the attempt to interpret and of the decay of its elucidating force. Secrecy embodies this hermeneutical paradox: interpretation yields to secrecy that which has been entirely constructed by an hermeneutic endeavour; however, secrecy turns the interpretation of its own veiled, concealed object into a mere adventitious commentary, or gibberish. Lacking a centre, each new turn of the interpretation distorts its original source or recreates an imaginary new origin; it "discovers" a new and profoundly concealed object; paradoxically, it creates, by the force of its own assertion, an unforeseen atavism. Secrecy becomes a manifold constellation of manifold enigmatic sources, which, in turn, does not call for one interpretation, but for a series of distinct and often discordant images and utterances. The peculiar attributes of secrecy disintegrate: their temporal references endure a permanent, disquieting derangement and their evocative gleam dims. The sense of their narrative sphere lacks a necessary mythical anchorage.

Secrecy involves the weakening of the specific profiles of interpretation. As secrecy loses its own unique, essential origin, the interpretations it begets confound themselves in an inextricable expanding web.

The act of secrecy does not give rise to a single prototype of interpretation: each paraphrase, each new translation of the unveiled text of secrecy obeys no fixed rules. Once secrecy has emerged as virtual centre of a textual universe, it exhibits a lavish imagination. Its regime goes indetermined.

Secrecy does not prevail over interpretation. The ruins of interpretation announce the decline of secrecy. The uncertainty of the outcome of interpretation does not reside only in the invention of a virtual, hollow centre, of the enigmatic object, but in the actual construction of its inaccessibility. It is interpretation that creates the perception of a destroyed continuity of meaning. It is a truism to say that neither a definite interpretation has privileged objects, nor that a specific object has a particular interpretation. Any object breeds countless interpretations. However, the bonds between different interpretations are weak. Each interpretation breeds its singular opacities. Incommensurable silences are implied in the encompassing and unfolding movement of the cycles of interpretation. When interpretation claims to have unveiled the concealed meaning, when it claims to have restored the absolute continuity of sense and dissipated all the lacunae, sealed the accomplished meaning of the word, envisaged its truth, then interpretation itself vanishes, fades before its own revelation, becomes indifferent, sinks in the shade of the dazzling apparent truth. Interpretation ceases to exist as such with the triumph of the unveiled. Interpretation becomes a simple attestation, a testimony, perhaps a discovery: its conjectural force decays and might be extinguished. Its pretension of annihilating the meaningful force of the concealed is consummated by its own failure and crumbling. The obliteration of the concealed, which can be conceived as an utter hermeneutic achievement, transmutes the interpretative text into a plain presentation of evidence, it prepares its own forgetfulness. As truth confounds itself with evidence it falls into indifference: interpretation and its fictional truth both hurl itself into extinction.

Yet, interpretation indeed threatens secrecy. As secrecy persists, the avidity of interpretation creates hollows in every object, in each layer of language, in each utterance; interpretation can forge opacity in each feature of speech and the act of speech. There is neither a privileged object of interpretation, nor a singular destiny for it. Its destiny, in a strong sense, is to utter a vagrant sense; interpretation is nomadic,

it lacks any attachment, it only arouses a fleeting certitude and passing oblivion.

Secrecy even allows the emergence of those texts that long for the forgetfulness of secrecy. The oblivion of secrecy is the moment at which the hermeneutic impulse is unleashed, in which silence is imposed on silence; it is the oblivion of oblivion, the exclusion of exclusion. The silence about secrecy is the significant folding back of silence upon itself, upon the concealed core of secrecy. The silence imposed on the tangibility of silence appears as the sudden cessation of the compelling power of secrecy. Secrecy preserves itself as an impregnable uncertainty, as the exacerbation of a meaningful though puzzling silence.

However, secrecy and its own forgetfulness both unfold as a single series of traces spread over discourse. Secrecy may disappear in its own silence; furthermore, the equivocal significance of silence may be outweighed by the evidence of secrecy. Still, there is a clear distinction between them: the obstinate swelling of the series of interpretations which encircle secrecy contrasts with the fragility and evanescent force of the interpretations of silence. Secrecy, even if partially revealed, preserves its cardinal residues, significant facets of enigma, untouched by proliferating interpretation.

To forget secrecy is not to suffocate it but to displace it, to enliven its stealthy fertility. Thus, this forgetfulness does not cancel secrecy, it only defers its appearance or transforms it into a pure potentially meaningful trace of a dissipated presence. However, each vast, encompassing sphere of reminiscences which strives to achieve the oblivion of secrecy remains as a prisoner within its own dense, tacit sphere.

Moreover, a denser concealment is the result of the successive sediments, foldings of interpretation; concealment, invigorated by the encompassing movements of commentary and paraphrase, of elucidation and invention, is not a definite end. Paraphrase or elucidation, commentary and the achievement of an invention do not culminate in an identifiable, definitive sense, in a proper meaning; rather, its only possible epilogue is either silence or gibber, jargon which seek to screen secrecy, the wreckage of evocation, the exhaustion and disappearance of secrecy, the extinction of community beneath sound and fury. The interpretation of secrecy, thus, transforms itself into the imagination of emptiness, of a faltering of utterance, of its own

dissipation and the proliferation of its own resonances. It states the radical question of the boundaries of speech. The limits of interpretation appear as the core of the uttering act. The interpretation of secrecy emerges, as it faces its own enigma, as the testimony of the exile of sense beyond expression.

VII. Rhetorical utterance as a limit of language. The shades of allegory

Rhetoric has frequently appeared both as a discipline and as a means of language: as the radical exaltation of its powers and a tacit acknowledgment of its limits. It both disdains and exposes the boundaries of language; it debases the expressive power of current speech and seeks in the exaltations of style and in the "material imagination" of words the means to overcome its own limits. Conceived so, rhetoric is seen to distort the experience of language, to make out of it a scandalous yet disquieting, exacerbated use; to heighten of its expressive potencies and its formal features. Rhetorical expressions, conceived naively as a distortion of the "natural" regime of expression, attest to the capacity of language for an inordinate expansion of the expressive capability of certain symbolic actions and gestures. Moreover, from an ethical point of view, rhetorical utterance has often been envisaged as the verbal means to conceal and to lie without openly trespassing upon an intolerable ethical domain. Rhetorical utterance, thought of as an instrument of persuasion, has not vainly been associated with sophistry and suspected of distorting the direct meaning of language, of evading the implicit statement of what has actually been said. In this light, the rhetorical utterance broadens the hollow territories of language. Rhetorical expressions enacts the inner force which seeks to discompose language, which compels it to become foreign to itself, *constrained to its own singular, autonomous resources*.

Yet, rhetorical utterance can also be conceived as an exemplary exhibition and exploration of the limits of language, indeed, as the most striking evidence of the manifold nature of these limits. Rhetorical utterance exhibits, both the intrinsic, immanent boundaries of language, and the inherently limited conditions of speech which emerge from the nature of symbolic interchange. Rhetorical utterance both

settles and defeats the structure of language. For them to exist, language must offer the illusion of the existence of a definite sense of utterance, which must be delineated as an autonomous, but nevertheless intrinsic territory of meaning. Therefore, rhetorical expressions appear as enacting expressive intemperance, as sudden, subtle but evident deviations of language, as unessential, violent deflections of speech, which testifies the deceiving qualities of meaning. The usual image of rhetorical utterances encompasses every identifiable "deviation" of language; it appears as both art and treachery. However, there are some elusive traits of rhetoric: every *trope* or *figure* involves a hesitation, an uncertainty, a sudden loss of the usual frames of meaning. I.A. Richards wrote:

where the Old Rhetoric treated ambiguity as a fault in language, and hoped to confine or eliminate it, the new Rhetoric sees it as an inevitable consequence of the powers of language and as an indispensable means of most of our most important utterances.³¹

Moreover, the ambiguity to which Richards alludes is neither a special case nor an accident of language, nor a well defined condition of linguistic usage; besides, its relationship to rhetoric is only vaguely stated. Indeed, ambiguity seems not to be an ancillary concept of rhetoric; rather, it appears to define an intrinsic trait not only of rhetoric but of language itself; it is a negative concept: it exclusively names the *loss* of the definite contours of meaning. Ambiguity in any of its manifestations does not name only two or more neat, definite, sharply defined though simultaneously evoked meanings. It also calls forth a zone of uncertainty of beclouded or darkened meaning. Ambiguity stirs up the feeling that something is missing in speech, that an inner bond of language has been broken. However, the missing link, the suppressed feature of speech, the unnamed and unpronounceable definite matter which language lacks, multiplies its virtual meaningful resonances.

Rhetorical utterances turn into significant features both the perceived emptiness of language, and the profusion of its accumulated layers of significance. They exhibit the desegregation of language, its fragile clustering of transient, fading contours of words. The passion for rhetorical utterance is always accompanied by the glittering violence of astonishment. To the subject's consciousness, the unuttered, which threatens the sense of speech, is outweighed by the potential proliferation of the

unfolding of language. Thus, the non said remains a concealed, violently opened fissure in the imaginary homogeneity of language.

What rhetorical utterance uncovers is not only the extreme fragility and curtailed nature of the patterns of language usage, but the framing force of negative tensions within language. Rhetorical utterances exhibit an intimate, deep relation to secrecy. With secrecy we confront the immanent limits of language and the pressure of the non said upon interpretation.

As we have previously recalled, according to the crucial intuition of Saussure, language [*langue*]³² is the outcome of the reciprocal action between negative relations which settle the boundaries of signs: "la valeur de n'importe quel terme est déterminée par ce qui l'entoure", writes Saussure. And immediately he adds: "Ce qui est dit des mots s'applique à n'importe quel terme de la langue, par exemple des entités grammaticales."³³ The set of negative relations that defines signs, suggest Saussure, shapes also the entities in every domain of linguistic expression. The sign, and with it the total structure of linguistic entities, is conceived by Saussure as the material result of the cluster of negative relations which determine the structure of language. Thus, the entities of language have no essential identity; their specific profile emanates from the spectrum of various negative relations. Therefore, meaning, according to Saussure's interpretation, is but a spectral figure, a concept shaped exclusively by the negative relations which structure language.

I.A. Richards, from a completely different point of view, still defines meaning in terms of a pure negative relation, this time, between word and context:

What a word means is the *missing part* of the contexts from which it draws its delegated efficacy.³⁴

These contrasting points of view agree upon the negative nature of meaning. This image of meaning illuminates, from a different angle, the notion of rhetoric. The conception of rhetorical utterance ceases to insinuate the idea of a superfluous deviation from an immediate, straight, transparent language. In this light, the rhetorical utterance enacts, turns into visible, tangible signs, the negative tensions of language. Meaning "draws its efficacy" from a certain kind of *generalized elliptic relation*: it is a sort of "complementary" ellipsis, a sphere of implicit, unarticulable, uncountable meanings that

remain unpronounced, yet inextricably allied to the words. That which disappears from the context is to be found in the meaning, and the meaning of word appears as an elliptic expression of the complete significance of the missing objects and actions of the context. Besides, ellipsis entails interpretation as a crucial moment of the emergence of meaning. Therefore, the time of interpretation is ingrained in the material presence of word. Ellipsis imposes on the meanings of signs a new accent: it transforms the relation between speech and time. It involves a deferral of the sense of speech; it introduces a delay which disquiets language, blurring its immediate relation with a potential, transcendental realm of sense.

This new relation of rhetoric and the subject's experience of time makes possible to apprehend the intimate relation between rhetoric and secrecy. Secrecy becomes apparent not only through an ellipsis in speech, but through a *generalized ellipsis* which informs language itself.

However, what distinguishes secrecy from the inherent non said of rhetorical utterance is another feature of its relation to time: as we have already commented, secrecy necessarily involves resistance to revelation and the sense of the *imminence* of its unveiling, of its disappearance. Rhetorical utterance and secrecy both constrain language to expose the inherent negative tensions of language and speech; but the interpretation of rhetorical utterance, although elusive, bears down on the presupposition of a definite sense. Rhetoric is built upon the invincible conviction of the plenitude of sense.³⁵

Secrecy, on the contrary, displays itself in speech as radically uncertain rhythms of stress and silence, as tokens of the discontinuous time of narrated events: indeed, as we have already stated, it unfolds as a mythical theme; at the horizons of secrecy both moments of language, creation and extinction of sense, fused into a narration charged with the force of myth,³⁶ the myth of the origin and destiny of speech.

The myth of secrecy, its eschatology, is enacted by the tensions between the expression of temporality in language. It demands an abrupt, transient image of meaning. It rejects any still vision of the restless unfolding of language. And yet this myth *also* demands a thorough, delayed creation of the mirage of the depth of language and the forging of its evidence. Rhetorical expression expose the paradoxical temporal

tensions in this mirage: metaphor, ellipsis, and enthymeme display not only a taxonomy of the rhetorical signals of secrecy or enigma, but a taxonomy of the conflicting expressions of time in the mirage of secrecy. The relevance of the notion of time goes beyond its narrative constraints, the thematic imperatives or the rules of gender which determine meaning. It shatters the regime of signs. In his, in many ways astonishing essay about German tragedy, Benjamin introduces the category of time as the definitive frontier between symbol and allegory:³⁷

Unter der entscheidenden Kategorie der Zeit, welche in dieses Gebiet der Semiotik getragen zu haben die große romantische Einsicht dieser Denker war, läßt das Verhältnis von Symbol und Allegorie eindringlich und formelhaft sich festlegen. Während im Symbol mit der Verklärung des Unterganges das transfigurierte Antlitz der Natur im Lichte der Erlösung flüchtig sich offenbart, liegt in der Allegorie die *facies hippocratica* der Geschichte als erstarrte Urlandschaft dem Betrachter vor Augen. Die Geschichte in allem was sie Unzeitiges, Leidvolles, Verfehltes von Beginn hat, prägt sich in einem Antlitz —nein in einem Totenkopfe aus.*

Allegory remains foreign to the advent of intrinsic, transient mirages of language. It stems from the sovereignty of language in face of history, of memory. Benjamin gave a puzzling name to this profile of the temporal tension which defines the narrative expression of history: dialectic in stillness [*dialektik im Stillstand*], that is to say, a mute and resting dialectic.³⁸ Allegory is formally non interpretable, since it remains peripheral to the imperative imposed by language on the expression of time. It is also threatening because it affirms that a negative presence, absence, loss, even meaninglessness can provoke and shape the experience and the expressions of time: allegory transforms itself into an unfathomable figure which exhibits a shapeless glaring residue of the obliterated sense; divested from its identity, allegory reveals itself as a mere gesticulation which points to a timeless verge of experience.

Thus, allegory manifests the close relation between the *dialectic* of secrecy and the dialectic of exclusion, in which the enigmatic nature of the experience of the limit

It is possible to define and formulate persuasively enough the relation between the symbol and the allegory, in the light of the crucial category of time, the introduction of which, in this field of semiotics, constitutes a great finding of these Romantic thinkers. While in the symbol, with the transfiguration of decadence, the transformed visage of nature reveals itself fleetingly in the light of redemption, in allegory the *facies hippocratica* of history presents itself to the observer as a primordial, petrified passage. All that which history has of timeless, of painful, of unsuccessful, exhibits itself in a face; or better, in a skull. (My translation)

of language stands as a menacing *thematic* core. Allegory expresses the terror aroused in the subject by the shadow of concealed presence which looms as an announcement of death, of the crepuscular condition of beings —the concealed presence appears in allegory not as a thing in itself, but as tokens of the absolute experience of finiteness—, as an apocalyptic, immutable sign which illuminates the transient nature of life and the dominance of death. The menace implied by allegory has its source both in a memorable experience, and in the tacit experience of the other's death. Allegory *seems* to have a definite meaning, to exhibit deep, unequivocal evidence; rather, it uncovers the *ontological ground* of secrecy. Secrecy, as ingrained in the allegory, fuses in its recondite figures not only visible bodies and hollowness, its enigmatic composition allows the hollowness to represent origin and destiny. Paradoxically, it pertains both to the sphere of sense and to its outerness. Benjamin wrote: "[Allegorie] zwar bedeutet es genau das Nichtsein dessen, was er vorstellt."³⁸ Benjamin's conception of *dialectic* involves the notion of absolute *ontological* finiteness, which displays itself through allegory, representing an arbitrary and fixed figure. The cardinal attributes of allegory, Benjamin suggests,³⁹ are "das geheime, privilegierte Wissen, die Willkürherrschaft im Bereich der toten Dinge, die vermeintliche Unendlichkeit der Hoffnungsleere"⁴⁰. Paradoxically, its stillness unleashes an interior force that exhumes, illuminates and masks the unbearable vision of finiteness. This interior force of allegory, exhibits itself as a fragmented figure, as the curtailed significance which strives for a limitless power to engender an infinite, compulsive interpretation.

VIII. Secrecy: interpretation and allegory

Jean-Luc Nancy has pointed out⁴⁰ the double sense inherent in the notion of interpretation: that engendered by a closed circular movement of deciphering, and that which emerges from the impulse of interpretation to disseminate and to unfold itself. It is this last impulse which drives interpretation from one object to another, from one

³⁸The allegory signifies precisely the non-being of what it represents (My translation)

⁴⁰the secret and privileged knowledge, the arbitrary regime of the realm of the death things, the pretended infinite of the absence of hope. (My translation).

rhythm to another, from one text to another; interpretation is envisaged as straying endlessly. The rigid borders of knowledge collide and fuse as interpretation wanders. This deracination, this wandering of interpretation, is stressed perhaps by a suspicion that language itself stems from beyond individual consciousness. Foucault has explicitly remarked:

le langage, en tout cas le langage dans les cultures indo-européennes, a toujours fait naître deux sortes de soupçons:

— D'abord, le soupçon que le langage ne dit pas exactement ce qu'il dit. Le sense qu'on saisit, et qui est immédiatement manifesté, n'est peut-être en réalité qu'un moindre sense, qui protège, resserre, et malgré tout transmet un autre sense; celui-ci étant à la fois le sense le plus fort, et le sense "d'en dessous". C'est ce que les Grecs appelaient l'*allegoria* et l'*hyponoia*.

— D'autre part le langage fait naître cet autre soupçon: qu'il déborde en quelque sorte sa forme proprement verbale, et qu'il y a bien d'autres choses au monde qui parlent, et qui ne sont pas du langage. Après tout, il se pourrait que la nature, la mer, le bruissement des arbres, les animaux, les visages, les masques, les couteaux en croix, tout cela parle; peut-être y a-t-il du langage s'articulant d'une manière qui ne serait pas verbale. Ce serait, si vous voulez, très grossièrement, le *semaïnon* des Grecs.⁴¹

The exorbitant eloquence of language, the *semaïnon* which comprehends every being and infringes the order of articulated language, makes of the mute signs of beings a potential source of sense; secrecy becomes an intrinsic power of matter; it becomes omnipresent; it seems to impregnate the mere appearance of things. Things do talk, but their language stays beyond the realm of language; they talk with eloquent yet obscure, silent signs. Nevertheless, between *allegoria* and *semaïnon* there is an intimate relation; the profusion of language is just an allegorical turn of language upon itself. The unpronounceable language of things can be represented by words, but this representation only admits the form of the allegory. It is feasible then for speech to *signal* the language of things without apprehending its meaning; language exhibits a distorted figure of the enigmatic sense of the language of things. The *semaïnon* emerges as an admissible model of allegory, a model which must acknowledge its essential inadequacy, the limited force of its analogies; the *semaïnon* preserves an irreducible vacuousness which resists any interpretative attempt.

For interpretation to be meaningful, it demands a momentary oblivion of

allegory; interpretation invokes the full expressive force of language which, paradoxically, is nourished by its own allegorical power, by its capacity to enact non linguistic forces. The allegory, however, empties language from its own meaning; it obliterates the relevance of words. It thrusts language into a never ending metamorphosis. But this metamorphosis is not a mere resonance of the thing it is neither its mimesis nor the revelation of its essence. Allegory and its metamorphosis are completely foreign to the nature of the represented. The only relation among them is the nebulous, vagary, yet obscure, subjective force of analogy. Allegory becomes the negation of its own source, with which it nevertheless preserves its intimate relation, which makes of it the most powerful expression of secrecy.

If allegory has to be defined in the light of Benjamin's reflection as that which "signifies precisely the non-being of what it represents", it implies a negative force of interpretation, the sheltering of secrecy.

Benjamin's definition of allegory, only defined by its oblique reference to the obscure impulse and substance of evocation, both involves and rejects the words disposition to restore by the way of analogy or mimicry the meaning of the represented object. Indeed, from a certain point of view, allegory is built as a capricious analogy, based on a peculiar though elusive resemblance, which does not stem from the meaning of words but from a non-linguistic force [*Kraft*] clearly betokened by a figure. The outstanding feature of allegory is that it both rests upon a meaningful analogy, and rejects the constraints imposed on its meaning by the echoes of the represented object. Indeed, in allegory words do signify, but their meaning adopts the fuzzy contours of a shadow projected over a *sheer potential* hermeneutical universe. In allegory language hesitates: there is a breach between the full force [*Kraft*] of meaning of the word, and the meaningful capacity of allegory to hint at non-existence.

Thus, secrecy seems to emerge from this almost imperceptible hesitation of language, which reveals the sudden weakness of its meaning. Interpretation seems to follow allegory, although it does not elucidate it. Allegory remains the potential, yet *timeless origin* of interpretation. It is possible to assert that interpretation is not, as certain hermeneutics have claimed, a privileged instrument for the *comprehension* of the unknown taking the known as a point of departure. It does not expand the realm of

sense. Rather, interpretation seems to reveal only a tension between signs which couple different spheres of secrecy; the intrinsic secrecy of language and the powerful force of allegory.

Allegory appears on the boundaries of the interpretative act: as its origins and as its end. Interpretation appears as a relief, it introduces in the turbulence of signs a moment of certainty. Yet, whenever interpretation seems to have achieved the plenitude of sense, the final quietness of meaning, his certitude immediately reveals itself as based, paradoxically, upon an intimate discord of the meanings of its own words and signs; it reveals itself as the outcome of an unavoidable misreading of the *times of the voices, the evoked worlds and the subjective tokens* it itself comprehends. Interpretation hurls itself into forgetfulness. Perhaps the subject, captivated by the forgetfulness inherent in interpretation, stifles the painful tension which arises between the stillness and the precipitation —the urgency— of speech, aroused by the encounter with the other.⁴²

NOTES

1. Weber, in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, explored thoroughly the patterns and consequences of the bureaucratic exercise of political power which implied, inevitably, the strengthening force of secrecy; furthermore, Weber considered secrecy as an essential condition of the bureaucratic structures which govern modern society. See Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1964), pp. 723-738.

2. Richard Sennett, *The Fall of the Public Man* (1977) (London: Faber and Faber, 1993), pp.148-149. (The stress is added).

3. As Peter Brooks has convincingly shown (Peter Brooks, *Body Work. Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp.28-53), this breaking of the conventional limits of privacy, which enshrines a particular relation of the individual's body with the urgencies of seeing in a community, can be traced back to the origins of Enlightenment. Nevertheless, we can claim, with Sennett, that it is not until the economic patterns of the late industrial revolution reached their full expansion that society as a whole experienced a complete decay of the perceptions anchored in the primacy of public life, sharpening thus the contrasting profiles of public and private life.

4. Wittgenstein wrote, in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, perhaps one of the most striking and ambiguous remarks regarding the isolation of subjectivity, its confinement within the boundaries of language; this reflection stands as a testimony of the experience of the inherent temptation of subjectivity to remain captured in the mirage of self-reflection: "Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt." [The boundaries of my language mean the boundaries of my world]. (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. by O.K. Ogden (London: Routledge, 1983), p.149-151). As Max Black has written, in his commentary to this passage: "to speak of the boundary of language is to break the grammatical rules for the word 'boundary'. A boundary separates two places, whereas there is no logical place in language for nonsense" (Max Black, *A Companion to Wittgenstein's Tractatus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964), p. 308). Nevertheless, Wittgenstein, in his later remarks about the impossibility of solipsism, developed the subtle and paradoxical consequences of his early statements.

5. In the opening paragraph of his *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, Kant asserted: "Alle Fortschritt in der Kultur, haben das Ziel, diese erworbene Kenntnisse und Geschicklichkeiten zum Gebrauch für die Welt anzuwenden; aber der wichtigste Gegenstand in derselben, auf den er jene verwenden kann, ist der Mensch: weil er sein eigener letzter Zwecke ist" [Every progress in the Culture has the aim to apply the acquired knowledge and historicity to the use of the world; but the most important object, to which it can be applied is man himself: because he is its proper ultimate end.] (Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, in *Werkausgabe*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel, 12 vol (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), XII: *Schriften zur Anthropologie, Geschichtsphilosophie, Politik und Pädagogik* 2 (1798), p.399).

6. Jean-Luc Nancy, *La communauté désouvrée* (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1990).

7. Maurice Blanchot, *La communauté inavouable* (Paris: Minuit, 1983), p.16.

8. See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, critical edition by Tullio de Mauro (Paris: Payot, 1979), pp.154-170.

9. See above, p.105

10. Vincent Descombes, *L'inconscient malgré lui* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), p.33.

11. Edgar Allan Poe, *The Imp of the Perverse*, in *Complete Tales & Poems* (New York: Vintage, 1975), p.281.

12. Vincent Descombes, p.33.

13. Vincent Descombes, p.33.

14. Jean-Claude Milner, *L'amour de la langue* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), p.80. (Stress added).

15. From this point of view, the already quoted, categorical statement of Wittgenstein: "*Die Grenzen meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenzen meiner Welt*" [the limits of my language mean the limits of my world] acquires a new sense if interpreted disregarding the mere, restricted context of the semantics of proposition: indeed, it stresses the limits and possibilities of the referential force of language. It is not only the testimony of an awareness of the finiteness of language—which contrasts with the potentially infinite number of utterances and meanings engendered by the structure of language—and the fragmentary representation of the subject's world, but also of their reciprocal engendering. The limits of language manifest both as the shattering of its expressive or depicting power, and as an intrinsic silence which pervades the very substance of language.

16. Julia Kristeva, 'L'enfant au sens indicible', in *Le nouvelles maladies de l'âme* (Paris: Fayard, 1993), p.158.

17. Julia Kristeva, 'L'enfant au sens indicible', p.158. (Emphasis added).

18. There is a complex relation between the *indetermination* posited by Kristeva, the Freudian notion of *overdetermination* and the Baroque expressions of temporality, exhibited in the paradoxical temporal structure of Freud's conception of the *secondary revision*.

19. The notion of *experience* remains one of the most important, yet elusive categories of Western philosophy. It informs the modern notion of self; nevertheless, its ambiguities engender the vague profiles of the contemporary conceptions of subjectivity. However, it reveals itself as a non-consistent synthesis of the enquiry regarding the nature of memory, and the speculative, philosophical notions of cognition. In Freud's work, the notion of experience appears as a primary concept which remained undefined. See below, p.179.

20. Vincent Descombes, p.29.

21. Vincent Descombes, p.34.

22. Vincent Descombes, p.29.

23. This primacy of admiration was stressed by René Descartes, *Les passions de l'âme*, in *Oeuvres et Lettres*, ed. André Bridoux (Paris: Gallimard, 1953). Passion became a cardinal yet unfathomable presence in the *spectrum* of the conflicting forces of the soul.

24. Vincent Descombes, p.31. (Emphasis added).

25. Julia Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* (Paris: Seuil, 1980), p. 7.

26. See Donald W. Winnicott, *Psychoanalytic explorations* (London: Karnak, 1989) and also Roland Barthes, *La chambre lucide* (Paris: Seuil/Gallimard/Cahiers du cinéma, 1980), p.150.

27. Julia Kristeva, *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*, p.8.

28. Despite the fact that what has been exposed so far sharply defers from Pierre Boutang's point of view, it is possible to consider some illuminating assertions in his vast and devoted reflection on secrecy. See Pierre Boutang, *Ontologie du secret* (Paris: 1973; repr. Paris: PUF, 1988).

29. Pierre Boutang, p.125 (Emphasis added).
30. See above, pp.103
31. I.A. Richards, *Philosophy of Rhetoric* (London: 1936; repr. London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.40.
32. Anthony Wilden, in his remarkable commentary and translation of Lacan's "Function et champ de la parole en psychanalyse", chose the capital letters to stress the difference between the Saussurian concepts of *langage* [Language] and *langue* [language]. However, we have decided not to follow Wilden's convention. Consequently we only add the correspondent French term enclosed by brackets.
33. Ferdinand de Saussure, p.158-159.
34. I.A. Richards, p.35.
35. I.A. Richards explicitly states this conviction, which otherwise remains implicit. Indeed, Richards writes: "Rhetoric, I shall urge, should be a study of misunderstanding and its remedies." (I.A. Richards, p.3. Emphasis added).
36. I use the term *force* in the sense of Frege's *Kraft* (force), alluding to the kind of sense engendered by the mere act of uttering an assertive or negative phrase. See Gottlob Frege, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1986).
37. Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels* (Frankfurt: 1925; repr. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1978), p.145.
38. Walter Benjamin, 'Paris, Hauptstadt des XIXme hunderts', in *Illuminationen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1955; repr. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), p.180.
39. Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p.208.
40. Jean-Luc Nancy analyses the significant role played by the notion of *presupposition* in the conception of the hermeneutic cycle, and the radical rejection of this notion by Heidegger. He makes clear the paradoxes of the notion of presupposition which constitute the ground upon which the whole enterprise of hermeneutics rests. See Jean-Luc Nancy, *Le partage des voix* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), pp.22-39.
41. Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Marx et Freud', in *Nietzsche*, ed. Fondation Royaumont (Paris: Minuit, 1967), p.183.
42. See for an allegorical treatment of the relation between time and interpretation, the polemical image of a game, imagined by Jacques Lacan, in which the players are immersed in a silent hermeneutical dialogue of gaze and interpretation, 'Le temps logique et l'assertion de certitude anticipée' in *Écrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp.197-213; or for other, less challenging, contrasting conceptions of the relation between interpretation: Paul Ricoeur, *De l'interprétation* (Paris: Seuil, 1965); *Le conflit des interprétations* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), and chiefly his vast work *Temps et récit*, 3 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 1983-85); I (1983); II: *La configuration dans le récit de fiction* (1984); III: *Le temps raconté* (1985). See also the relation between the conception of language and the notion of *horizon* in Hans-George Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr, 1986), specially pp. 442-494. For a controversial position on the dynamics of interpretation see Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and *Essays on Heidegger and Other* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Chapter III

Secrecy and Psychoanalysis: the Turning Points of the Freudian Text

I. Baroque structures in Freud's theory

1. The Baroque atmosphere

Freud's Vienna, the city of Musil, Broch and Kraus, of Wittgenstein and Mauthner, of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern, of Schnitzler and Hofmannsthal, of Kokoshka and Klimt was also the home of the nineteenth century renaissance of the decorative arts. Vienna, the centre of the country which Karl Kraus once described in his famous and, in a sense, prophetic apothegm: Austria is "the experimental field for the end of the world" [*die Versuchstation des Weltuntergangs*]¹, was to become a universe of exasperating contrasts. Kraus' relentless ironic and even sardonic writing burst upon the intellectual scene, presaging the radical crisis which was to exhaust an entire European culture. The arrogant eurocentric values of the nineteenth century were already crumbling, as was evident in the opaque and exacting conflict of manners, aesthetic expression, economic practice and belief plainly visible in the modes of a decaying society. Hermann Broch depicted with abrupt but accurate strokes, the disintegrating structure of the system. While facing the stealthy violence which anticipated the devastation of the coming war which was to consume the continent's universe of values, Broch alerted Europe to the breach in the contemporary sensibility weakened by an invincible, growing sense of futility. The sudden dissipation of a nebulous ethical system —Broch suggested—, revealed a devastated landscape, exposed between what it had been and what it was to be:

Und daß dieser Sachverhalt bereits zum allgemeinen Bewußtsein vorgedrungen ist, wird allenthalben sichtbar, wird zur Ahnung, daß das Zwischenstadium des *Nicht-mehr* und des *Noch-nicht*, daß dieses Zwischenstadium, in dem die Verwirrung des Untergangs sich mischt mit der Verwirrung des Suchens, den

Ausgangspunkt zu einem neuem geistigen Zusammenschluß bilden muß.²

The metaphor of this transitional, intermediate territory between the no-longer and the not-yet revealed the struggle between two seemingly similar and yet antagonistic universes. In Vienna, a Baroque atmosphere and a dominant decorative style coexisted; they gave rise to the wasteful exposure of aesthetic manifestations which Broch called *evil*, that is to say, those *œuvres* showing the intrusion of dogmatism, and the restriction of freedom brought about by the proliferation of theatrical gesture, scenery, and aesthetic grimace. Yet Vienna's atmosphere enlivened aesthetic and intellectual expression, pervaded nevertheless, by the sense of finiteness and death inherent in the Baroque impulse; it encouraged asceticism, and yet favoured lavish and factitious emotions which became visible features of style. Baroque allegory represented the intimate but *agonistic analogue* of the passion for decoration. The crisis of significance which characterizes the Baroque universe, was to emerge side by side with the exacerbation of the simulacrum of sense, with the triumph of appearances, with the strained expression of faith in the plenitude and timelessness of being, and the boldness of evidence.

There are, in spite of their deep and, in a sense, essential differences, several meaningful analogies between the cardinal features of the historical cultural profile of the society which bred the Viennese proclivity for the exaltation of the facade, of the seductions of the mask, and those which invigorated the Baroque. An analysis of these historically distant conditions seems to reveal societies which have been born of the abrupt metamorphosis of the collective, exuberant but anxious contemplation of impending death, the lasting conviction of the existence of a definite limit of sense, an almost tactile experience of time, and the *visibility* of finiteness. In his analysis of the anthropological conditions of the emergence of the Baroque, Duvignaud asserts:

L'idée que la durée qui nous habite et nous compose précipite son mouvement pour nous arracher à la culture que nous avons héritée ou qui nous a été transmise, cette idée nous décompose et nous

²And this state of affairs [the crumbling of the prevailing values] has already been forced into the general consciousness. It will be visible everywhere; it might encourage the assumption that the intermediate stage between the no-longer and the not-yet, where the confusion provoked by the crumbling merges with the confusion provoked by the search, must constitute the point of departure for a new spiritual union. (My translation.)

terrifié. C'est là ce qu'on peut nommer l'allure catastrophique de cette époque [le Baroque]: découverte de civilisations différentes, émergence d'une technologie inconcevable auparavant, expulsion de la magie et de la force divine de la matière, déplacement de la puissance par la richesse économique, révélation de la rentabilité et du marché.³

In the Baroque, Duvignaud suggests, the individual becomes foreign to his own traditions because of his violent expulsion from the cosmogonic universe which fixed the coordinates of his universe of beliefs, of his sensibility, and of his singular experience of time. It is this radical uprooting of the self from the dense history of his collectivity, that thrusts him into a certain rarefied, terrifying solitude, beyond collective bonds. And it is this uprooting that intensifies, in turn, the experience of time as finiteness.

However, the affinity of the conditions between the two distant historical periods may seem not to support a strong parallelism in the modes and patterns of expression. Indeed, the supremacy of the passion for decoration at the end of the nineteenth century may lead to manifold and ambiguous interpretations of its cardinal features: on the one hand, the facade appeared as the surface capable of exhibiting the essence of inner spaces; the human face was believed to evince the true inner self, which could be deciphered from distorting visible signs; on the other, physiognomies were also seen as autonomous expressive devices; the exasperated expressive force of their theatrical displays of signs dominated the scene as if they have been liberated from the silent, veiled profile of the self. The physiognomy of bodies and of objects became ambiguous: simultaneously, they appeared as aesthetic, formal, devices; they also loomed as tangibles tokens of the secret, private domains of the self, exalting, in turn, the social relevance of the concealed. The pompous expressiveness of decorative arts, and of art as decoration —art as a scenic, decorative device—, at the end of the nineteenth century has a counterpart in the ascension of symbolism and of an invincible hermetism in art. Proliferating styles of composition and tumultuous contrasts of aesthetic currents and variations of consecrated styles characterize the cultural atmosphere of Vienna. The constraints imposed on physiognomies intensified the violent, moulding action of codes and conventions upon expression. They drove

them to exhaustion. As Guérin writes:

Une économie mercantile en expansion continue accumule aussi bien le capital que les signes du prestige attaché à la technique et à l'argent. La surcharge décorative justifie par l'esthétique les exigences de l'abondance, de la consommation et du gaspillage sur lesquelles le capitalisme avancé fonde sa prospérité. A l'inverse, il y a dans la valorisation de l'accessoire ornemental une négation de la rationalité productiviste qui peut porter une charge de théâtralité subversive.⁴

The exasperated expressiveness, the hyperbolic visibility of signs, the theatrical surfaces, quietly turned the visible signs into hollow opacities, the force of which resided only in the power of allegory. However, the emptiness of signs corrupted the proliferating manifestations of the enterprise of the decorative arts. A fatigue of the senses, saturated by the dense weave of signs exposed in decorative expressions, corresponded to a fatigue of language, as a wearing away of the meaningfulness of signs. Perhaps, it was them that manifested the crumbling of the "rationality of expressiveness" in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The poverty of this "rationality" also reveals the enduring social tensions which were to become evident in the triumph of the irrationality of certain strategically built, "rational", social devices —market, totalitarianism, bureaucracy—, and in the diffuse, yet devastating violence of the sheer subversive power of the actions which challenged the ethical basis of conventional rationality.

From Broch's remarks we can derive still another relevant insight. There seems to be a peculiar proximity, even a non-renounceable intimacy between the Baroque and the force of the non-said. Silence seems to have dominated surreptitiously the "intermediate stage" [*Zwischenstadium*] between the decaying universe of norms and the restoration of the social web of relations in the European nineteenth century crisis. The primacy of spectacle and decoration in Vienna reveals the unremarked, but all-pervading presence of silence, the definitive wreck of expressiveness. However, the passion for sheer scenic expressions, and chiefly for certain of its intrinsic obscure tones, adumbrated the alliance of ritual and the social experience of death.

Writing appears as a sombre intermediate between the virulence of the inner election of mutism, and the exorbitance of theatrical voices. There is a cleavage

between the primacy of stage, of scenery, and the written language. The late decades of the nineteenth century constitute an age in which a darkening and isolation of a written word took place. Its singular features were eclipsed by the disseminated and ostentatious presence of the harangue and of declamative styles, by the passion both dreadful and fertile, for the pure sonority of language. As the metaphysical confidence in the endurance of the written matter declines and transforms itself into a purely instrumental vision of written text, the devotion of the writer to meditation, enlivened by the impulse and the necessity to realize the imaginary wholeness of language, leads him to embrace the hermetic endeavour; the writer forges a conception of poetic language as a dense, all embracing universe of echoes. Language becomes an oblique, invincible enigma which imposes itself upon the act of writing, a power able to exhibit through the emerging echoes of the words, the elusive yet compelling force of fictional truth. But written language was also seen as a spectre composed of the residues of the live, actual, dispersed oral speech.

Freud's conception of subjectivity exposes in an exemplary fashion this paradoxical relation between perceptible, yet dissipating spoken word, and the manifold images of writing: as we shall see later, Freud's conception of writing is implied in his cardinal conception of mnemonic trace, in his image of super-ego as a sort of inward "written voice" which determines the definitive structure of subjectivity, and in the metaphor of the "writing-pad"⁵ that stands, in Freud, for the relation between the agencies of subjectivity. Thus, subjectivity itself seems to originate in the written images of oral narration; it is writing, in the guise of memory, made up of ensuring traces of the subject's experience engraved upon his mind, that rules the subject's destiny. Thus, Freud's conception echoes contradictory conceptions of language: it reflects, on the one hand, the impact of the image of oral speech, as a dissipating yet determining perception of signs, of a voice the source of which is the similarly dissipating presence of the object of love, and, on the other, an image of memory as a universe of inner, primordial, indelible inscriptions which bear testimony to the history of the subject's desires, as a web of traces gathered into impregnable hieroglyphs written upon the core of subjectivity, which can only be deciphered through the interminable endeavours of oral speech.

2. The Baroque: the fold and allegory

Deleuze's conception of the sense of speech as produced by a *serial displacement* of the meanings casts an oblique light upon Benjamin's notion of allegory. In this light, allegory can be conceived as a definite expression in which converging series of countless meanings seem to acquire a definite profile. Inherent in allegory is the inevitability of the ultimate failure of representation. Moreover, the specific sense of allegory seems to point towards this failure of the representation, towards its own impossibility to achieve a definite form. Allegory, seen like this, becomes the expression of this intrinsic opaqueness of the representation, which reveals the expressive exhaustion of language.

Allegory exhibits the absolute porousness of text. It transforms the endless unfolding of meaning into a fixed image produced by a peculiar regime of composition. Also, it represents the essential element in the fabric of the Baroque. It brings together, at a single stroke, the otherwise dispersed and unrelated series of meanings and expansions of the sense. An undetermined number of possible interpretations coexist; they emanate from the written or the painted image as a dense echo, of sedimented layers of interpretation which seem to fold back, one upon the other. The endless folding back of the interpretations upon themselves, endows the allegorical representation with a powerful creative force which redeems it from a state of mere resemblance.

Thus, allegory can be thought of as the sedimentation of meanings condensed around an isolated though pregnant utterance, around an abysmal impulse to represent, or around an uncertain image; it appears as the comprehensive expression of manifold layers of potential senses, exposed by a narrated passage, the very utterance of which confers upon it meaningful force. This image of allegory as stratified foldings of sense reveals the relevance of a simple constructive principle. Allegory can be thought of as a form of expression informed by the endless folding of interpretation upon itself. In this sense, it exhibits itself as the outcome of what Deleuze identifies as the constructive principle of the Baroque: the fold. Indeed, the Baroque, according to him,

can be defined chiefly by this operative concept.

le critère ou le concept opératoire du Baroque est le Pli, dans toute sa compréhension et son extension : pli selon pli. Si l'on peut étendre le Baroque soient-elles. Si nous voulons maintenir l'identité opératoire du Baroque et du pli, il faut donc montrer que le pli reste limité dans les autres cas, et qu'il connaît dans le Baroque un affranchissement sans limites dont les conditions sont déterminables.⁶

In the Baroque, the fold does not appear as an isolated category, or a circumscribed construction. Rather, it implies the urgency of creation. Each fold expands its own original space; it is the source of its own growing density and yet it brings forth a proliferation of inner cavities, the dissemination and expansion of empty spaces. The surface turns upon itself to create its own temporal and spatial density. In the Baroque aesthetic expression engenders, by continuous folding, a universe of contrasting spaces intimately coupled: with each fold the saturation of the space increases. The fold creates both depth and porousness. Yet it enhances the contrast between inward and outward signs, between light and shadow, between the lasting and the transient.

Le monde a deux étages seulement, séparés par le pli qui se répercute des deux côtés suivant un régime différent, c'est l'apport baroque par excellence.⁷

But the expanding porosity produced by the folding of the surfaces engenders, similarly, an endless series of inner layers, of interior limits which become tangible frontiers surrounding a growing volume of hollows. Porosity exacerbates the idea of limits: each pore is constituted purely by a surface which encircles vacuousness. The difference between the inner and the outer is to be found in the very substance of the matter. However, the surface which shapes the pore, simultaneously separates and links different, autonomous spaces. Porosity takes to its limits the inner differentiation of spaces and their manifold bonds.

Quand Heidegger invoque le *Zwiefalt* comme le différenciant de la différence, il veut dire avant tout que la différenciation ne renvoie pas à un indifférencié préalable, mais à une Différence qui ne cesse de se déplier et replier de chacun des deux côtés, et qui ne délie l'un qu'en repliant l'autre, dans une coextensivité du dévoilement et du voilement de l'autre, de la présence et du retrait de l'étante.⁸

The movement of the fold implies its potential expansion, its condensation and its unfolding. Each potential, new folding foretokens the unaccountable condensation or expansion of its own proper space. The folding expresses in itself the material, exuberant imagination of limits.

Moreover, perhaps the most important feature of the Baroque is that this folding movement, as Heidegger remarks, is also a rhythmic alternation of unveiling and concealment. The folding is then the outcome of the intimate tension between the impulse to create an encompassing new surface, a new facade, new visible signs, and the urgency to veil a previous layer of sense. It is not the surface in itself that produces the veiling of the sense; rather, it is the folding movement of the expressive surface which engenders concealment. The fold then both evidences and masks the concealing movement of expression. But the fold also expresses another intimate tension of the Baroque form: for the Baroque —writes Benjamin— "Verwandlung aller Art, das war ihr Element; und deren Schema war Allegorie".⁹ There is an intimate relation between allegory and metamorphosis, chiefly the transformation brought about by this obstinate folding.

Thus, concealment is not the outcome of a single expressive episode. Rather, it pervades the whole spectrum of expression. The Baroque involves an endless, serial metamorphosis of aesthetic and theoretical expression. It is not only the expressive manifestation of the tensions intrinsic in aesthetic endeavour produced during the serial development of the sense in itself; it also exhibits the tension between the temporalities of written and the spoken word, between the unyielding monotony of codes and the transience of allegory, between the evocation of affections and the fragility of the words that express them. The Baroque also exhibits the subjective tensions between the experience of the imperceptible but unsettling finiteness of language, and the expression of this finiteness in the visible weave of poetic language and the aesthetic signs. These contrasting yet proliferating tensions are characterized by the aesthetic building-up of inner and outer spaces of sense, by moving boundaries between sharply differentiated territories of meaning, of contrasts between irreducible spheres of sense

⁹its element was the metamorphosis of every form; and its scheme was allegory. (My translation)

which have their origin in the expressive potentialities of language itself. Benjamin wrote:

Lautliches ist und bleibt dem Barock ein rein Sinnliches; die Bedeutung ist in der Schrift zu Hause. Und das verlautbare Wort wird nur gleichwie von einer unentrinnbaren Krankheit von ihr heimgesucht; im Austönen bricht es ab und eine Stauung des Gefühls, das sich zu ergießen bereit war, weckt die Trauer. Bedeutung begegnen hier und wird noch weiterhin begegnen als der Grund der Traurigkeit.¹⁰

The Baroque, according to Benjamin, emerges from the debased expressive capabilities of the meaningful, pronounceable word and its reduction to sheer sensual force. The morbid decay of the significance of spoken words strengthened the strict framework which moulds the meaning of written language. This metamorphosis of meaning corresponded to a dramatic mutation in manifest affections. The meaning of the spoken word was suffocated by the sensual tones of speech itself and by the meagre sensuality and diffuse potency of meaning in the written language; meaning thus weakened brought to light the intimate, hermetic relation between language and the emotions aroused by the visions of imminent death, of transience of life. In the Baroque, escatological visions incited by written language coexisted with the lavish sensuousness of the bodily agitations consequent upon the theatrical display of language.

However, this tension between spoken word and written language does not define by itself the whole universe of the Baroque. The breach between the written and the spoken language seems to echo the broader, yet more intense and enigmatic antagonism between image and speech. The conflict between written and spoken languages, casts some oblique light upon another uncertain, boundless relation: the images of the body and the allegorical proximity of death; this relation is evident in the allegories of Holbein's portraits and their hermetic echoes, the desire for remembrance and the apprehension of death linked to the impulse to represent of the face, to capture, in an image the afflictions and the approaching extinction of the soul. The only affections —Benjamin claims— which remain uninhibited are sadness and mourning

¹⁰In the Baroque the articulated sound was, and still is, strictly sensual, while meaning feels itself at home in writing. And the pronounceable word has been struck at the root as by a fatal disease; the word crumbles just in the moment of its uttering, and the emotions that were about to spring up arouse mourning. Meaning appears here, and will continue to appear, as the ground of sadness. (My translation)

which become the mute, silent, enigmatic, secret force of the allegory.

A cardinal feature of the Baroque enterprise is the aim to achieve a timeless writing, one capable of encompassing the whole universe of potential senses. Writing seems able to embrace all by the means of the complex resonance of allegory "das Ganze der Kulturwelt —remarks Benjamin— von der Antike bis zum christlichen Europa auszusprechen"¹¹ The allegorical writing of symbolism echoes the exorbitant pretensions of Baroque artists. Allegory offers for interpretation hermetic signs in which merge the resonances of the dense history of symbols of the whole cultural world. Allegory seems to invoke the figures of the past both as memories and as eternal archetypes, instruments of interpretation able to reveal the transcendental system of invariant forces within the universe, and offer a circumstantial display of images reflecting the ephemeral and deceiving conditions of existence.

Paradoxically, allegory emerges in the wake of oblivion. It is the oblivion of the historically specific conditions which brought about the perception of systematic resemblances between the allegory and its canonical meaning, —the particular conditions which motivated the *invention of an analogy* between lived experiences and the spectrum of the symbolic patterns of an age—, that engendered the blinding opacity of allegorical language. Allegory relies on interpretations built upon this oblivion which, in turn, determine its suggestive and enigmatic depth. It thus rises from a contradictory movement of language; from an expression which turns back upon itself, only to efface from the signs it employs, all traces of the material, historic processes of bodies and of the intensities of actions; the obliteration of the signs of the affections and intensions which gave rise to and surrounded the primordial expression, sunders the allegory from its meaningful origin. What remains is only the relic of a web of signs which points chiefly towards the hollowness, the oblivion which surrounds it. Rejecting the signs of time, allegory seeks to express both the absolute, primordial state of language and its confining limits, the last darkening of meaning; it seeks to comprehend wholly the sense of human experience confined within its own boundaries of creation and apocalypse, birth and death.

¹¹to express the whole cultural world from the Antiquity to the Christian Europe. (My translation)

Moreover, allegory is the singular outcome of the precipitation of the senses and of language into a relentless series of interpretations, expressions and constructions built upon an absolute, reluctant silence, upon the presence of imminent death and the conviction of the wastefulness of signs, and an impotent recognition of its ominous inevitability.

Allegory thus admits a serial, boundless metamorphosis of its senses, the restless creation of interpretations; its crowded meanings exhibit a shapeless, uncertain structure. But the serial composition of the figures induces two possible movements: an expansive interpretation which breeds new signs, narrations and symbols and interpretations which turn back upon its own signs to unfold their potential meanings; the interpretation of allegory either unfolds itself in countless variations and interpretations, or becomes reflexive, it dips into its own substance, it becomes a search for the sense of its own constitutive signs; it seeks the sense of its own enigmatic identity; interpretation may turn upon its own motives; it may immerse itself in its own self engendered universe of meanings. What appears as a primal aesthetic figure, as a primal written image, gives rise to an interpretation which folds upon itself, increasing its own density expressed by a figure of immeasurable, impenetrable opacity: a metaphor within metaphor, a figure which projects its image upon its own original shape, folding ceaselessly, engendering a relentless reflexive movement. Jean Rousset has remarked that the metaphor in the Baroque,

à force de se "filer", en vient à dresser une véritable composition autonome derrière laquelle l'objet se trouve si bien dissimulé qu'il faut le deviner; on se trouve en présence d'un *déguisement* rhétorique qui est l'équivalent de ce que tentent les architectes de façades autonomes tels que Borromini à Sainte-Agnès.¹²

Nevertheless, in this spinning out of the series of either reflexive or disseminating discourse, the expressions of finiteness are clearly decipherable, even stressed. But it is not just the finiteness of sense, or the edge of the serial chaining of images and shreds of language that is highlighted; it is the finite nature of the subject that appears as the cardinal trait of the Baroque expression: the subject's death is readable in its proliferating inner fractures, discontinuities and exacerbated expansions of discourse.

The Baroque, concludes Jean Rousset,¹³ arouses hostility towards the finished

work; it is the enemy of any stable form. The intrinsic impulse of Baroque composition is to trespass, and to dissolve obstinately its own form at the precise moment of achieving a definite profile. If the form of any composition implies a certain steadiness, the persistence of certain features, even relatively fixed rules of genre, then the movement and instability which define the Baroque seem to be confronted by an inescapable paradox: to achieve identity, the Baroque work must dissipate its own identity. The Baroque identity of a work demands, for any creation to be congruent to its aesthetical conditions, either the rejection of any achieved form, of its own identity, or the election of a definite form which would establish its identity, denying, thus, its Baroque nature. The only solution to this paradox is allegory. The aesthetic construction must remain an endless, even shapeless endeavour, a constant invention and destruction of its own form. Consequently, Baroque expression exhibits a fruitful tension between the aim to totality, to identity, and the experience of transience, fragmentation, finiteness. The Baroque artist longs for the massive, he feels the urge to be bold, the desire for weight, but still he holds to the experience of disappearance. The written and visual expressions of the Baroque expose their own rejection of its formal elements; they reject the rigid mould of the genre, and display obsessively the figures and narrations which echo the opposition between the moving profiles of the worldly objects and the final, fixed grimace of death.

By expressing the tension between the aim to totality and enacting its own disseminating force, Baroque works explore the limits of meaning intrinsic to their own endeavour. The Baroque work dismembers its own wholeness; its sense is outweighed by the isolated prominence of its own fragments; each fragment becomes a totality in itself which comprehends the equivocal fate of language, the dense images of the allegorical tale crumbles; the wholeness of the allegory exhibits a fragile, unstable relation among separated members of a violently shattered cluster of figures, shades of words which loom as menacing, autonomous, living members severed from a frail and transient body. In the Baroque, Benjamin claims,

Die Worte erweisen sich noch in ihrer Vereinzelung
verhängnisvoll. Ja man ist versucht zu sagen, schon die Tatsache,

daß sie, so vereinzelt, noch etwas bedeuten, gibt dem Bedeutungsrest, der ihnen verbleibt, etwas Drohendes."¹⁴

This *residual* meaning of the isolated word condenses the contradictory, threatening force of Baroque constructions. On the fringes of the conventional framework of language, the menacing sense of the autonomous allegorical word emerges as a contingent, although forceful formation: it is simultaneously a marginal figure, and a looming, manifold, yet also conventional emblem. However, the autonomous life of the fragment, the preservation of its severed, glaring sphere of signs, cannot prevail over the core of meaning. Rather, fragments integrate into uncertain constellations of decaying and emerging totalities.

Heinrich Wölflin, in his classical study of the Baroque, defines it by a series of reappearing, unresolved contrasts: the Baroque merges the representations of ascending movement and those of stillness and heaviness, proper to classicism; its aim is to arouse disquiet and not serenity; it explores rhythmic series instead of regular metrics; the Baroque privileges the curve over the straight line; the intoxicating lavishness of forms constitutes the inextricable, bold presence of Baroque composition. These coexisting, accumulated tensions impose themselves on the perception with an unpredictable intensity. Wölflin wrote:

Eine Steigerung dieses Principis der Spannung liegt da vor, wo das Verletzend-unbefriedigte [die Unruhe des Werdens die Spannung eines veränderlichen Zustandes] gegeben wird."¹⁵

The Baroque not only represents finiteness, and provokes despair and anxiety; it also seeks to arouse these emotions in whoever immerses himself in its atmosphere. The perturbing amalgam of tensions which give rise to the singularities of the Baroque lead to the preeminence of secrecy:

¹⁴even isolated, the words reveal themselves as fateful. We will dare to say that even torn apart from each other, they continue to signify; this mere condition confers a certain threatening character to the residual meaning they have kept. (my translation)

¹⁵The heightening of the principle of tension occurs when dissatisfaction [provoked by the tension of a changing state, by the distress provoked by that which must come] turns into a cause of suffering. (My translation).

Wo immer dagegen etwas übereinander geschoben ist, ist ein Unfassbares und damit ein Bewegungreiz gegeben."¹⁶

Wölfflin points out the relation of the fold to the unfathomable. However, the unfathomable, which constitutes the core of Baroque expression, —as we have previously posited— is engendered by signs from which the historic and temporal references have been uprooted. As Benjamin suggests, it is the disappearance of all traces of context and memory from the physiognomy of signs that allows the fragments of a symbolic action to acquire an allegorical meaning. Thus, the Baroque can be conceived as an exhausting effort to build with residual, severed images or narrations, a conventional, all-encompassing, universal symbol of finiteness. But the failure of interpretation to comprehend the Baroque universe implies the exhaustion of interpretation itself, and the dissipation of sense consequent upon its allegorical density, which leads to the total consummation of language: the Baroque engenders a decay of the force of meaning; the boundaries of the *expressive* force of expression dissipate and its specific meaning is outweighed by the exultant sensuousness of signs. This decay imposes itself on the consciousness as a conclusive proof of the imminence of death which arises from the only possible experience of death —loss of the other. Mourning —Benjamin claims—, involves the extinction of the speech impulse and the experience of the expressive limits of naming stirs in the subject an incurable and ontological affliction.

Es ist in aller Trauer der Hang zur Sprachlosigkeit und das ist unendlich viel mehr als Unfähigkeit oder Unlust zur Mitteilung. Das Traurige fühlt sich so durch und durch erkannt vom Unerkennbaren. Bemannant zu sein —selbst wenn der Nennende ein Göttergleicher und Seliger ist— bleibt vielleicht immer eine Ahnung von Trauer."¹⁷

The relation between being named, that is to say, to receive from the other the equivocal gift of identity —Benjamin suggests— involves the certainty of the other's

¹⁶when one thing is superimposed to another the unfathomable occurs, and then, the attraction to movement is created. (My translation)

¹⁷Every time there is mourning it appears a fondness for speechlessness which is much more than an incapacity or unpleasure to communicate. Whoever experiences mourning feels totally known by the unknowable. To be named —even by someone blessed by or similar to God— continuously awakens the presentiment of mourning. (My translation)

death and the acceptance of the subject's own impending silence. The sole pronouncing of a word, of name, confers on muteness a meaning, born of the other's disappearance. Every name seems to be pronounced on the fringes of life, at the crepuscule of expression. Naming does not seem simply to attach a label to a thing, or to relate habitually by a lasting habit, a chain of sounds to a perception or a classified parcel of the symbolic universe. Naming, as Benjamin sees it, casts the shadow of its disappearance upon the named object, and also exhibits in the naming voice traces of the subject's own death. Thus, naming is itself the cipher of the shattered expressive force of allegory. Allegory appears both as a paroxysmic act of naming which seems to pronounce the disappearance of the named object and of the uttering voice, and as evidence of the subject's sombre awareness of this disappearance.

Thus, paradoxically, because allegory denies the boundaries of interpretation while stressing the limits of the expressiveness of language, its "indistinct and dense openness" expresses the infinite unfolding of the experience of loss. Allegory yields an infinite series of meanings, a divergent unfolding of senses; it is built upon the experience of the imminent emptiness of the name, upon the experience of transience.

3. Freud and the Baroque

The Baroque physiognomy, shaped by the limitless deployment of the fold, portrays the theoretical scandal of the Baroque: the image of proliferating *inner* boundaries of expression, internal surfaces which cut and engender internal voids.

Freud's conception of subjectivity discernible in his writings reveals the action of the same operative concept as the Baroque: the dominion of the fold. Freud's writings seems to mirror the subject's passions, presenting them, as in the Baroque portrait, as motifs and characters. Monique Schneider has remarked that Freud's text can be seen as a sedimentation of dense *layers* of virtual images of subjectivity; the facade and secrecy become relevant tokens neighbouring powerful freudian metaphors: the mirage and the subterfuge.

A l'intérieur de cet espace théorique lui-même stratifié, Freud pourra faire jouer un mécanisme de *recouvrement* et de censure, semblable à celui qui s'exerce dans le refoulement: la temporalité

correspondant aux exigences de l'idéologie régnante sera maintenue en position de *facade* ou de bouclier, permettant à des *schèmes temporels plus frondeurs, jouant avec la ruse et la mensonge, de commander clandestinement des régions psychiques abritées*.¹⁸

Monique Schneider perceives a cleavage between two spheres of Freud's conceptual work: one comprised by dateable elements, which refer to the immediate conditions of his thought, and a layer of text of uncertain, ambiguous temporality. Freud's theoretical constructions are seen by Schneider as a textual facade, a visible, immediately comprehensible universe, set in a particular historical moment, and a darkened interior space, a theoretical reflexion which lies beyond this facade of dated language. There is a shadow line which lies between them which *resembles* repression, but it is not. Freud appears to wield the instrumental notions of cheat and lie as tokens of a deeply buried scheme of primordial memories which inform a realm of sense abiding beyond language. His theoretical universe seems to be forged by a relentless meditation not only on the limits of the subject's psychical structures, but on the limits of any written expression of a theoretical approach to subjectivity. The constructive principles of Freud's writing echoe both the operations of concealment, and the deceiving, stratified expressions which exhibit the shades of censorship and repression governing the dynamics of subjectivity.

Psychoanalysis involves as an essential condition of its own theoretical endeavour a singular sense of silence. Silence, in the theoretical framework of psychoanalysis, appears neither as a meaningful gap in the act of speech, nor as a casual interruption; rather, it is conceived both as a quality of language itself which *intrudes* upon the smooth unfolding of speech, and as an intrinsic, unfathomable opacity, as a fracture, but also as a resonance which *surrounds* a specific utterance. This silence reveals the existence of a scandalous singular, unconventional, non interpretable sign which defines the emerging identity of the subject. But this redefinition of silence involves the radical transformation of Freud's notion of language. Gantheret points out the subtle displacement of the sense of speech provoked by the suffocated outburst of silence:

Quant à l'analyse, je lui donne une priorité, par ce qui l'ordonne tout entière: le silence. Car si l'analyse est parole – on nous l'a assez rabâché! – c'est parce qu'elle est d'abord et avant tout, en fondation, silence. L'angoisse, les soucis, la quotidienneté, les symptômes, qui s'y déversent, *trop-plein* de corps, y trouvent l'entour d'un espace qui les empêche de coller à vif à la chair, leur donne une autre peau, les fait se dire, c'est-à-dire exister humainement, avec un écart.¹⁹

The very existence of anxiety and the disquiet which springs from the episodes of everyday life, signs which inform bodily experience and the expression of the impulse which animates human existence, are due to silenced action, the eclipsed intrusion of a fundamental experience. Secrecy then, in the light of the experience uncovered by psychoanalysis, does not name the sense of a mere manipulation of language. Neither does it name a definite act nor a strategy of concealment—a deliberate muteness—, but an awareness of the edges of experience, of the extreme limit of language, of the boundary on which language becomes the only trace of an exhausted representation and on which the anxiety provoked by emptiness arises, illuminating the failure of language. Yet, the reflexive folding back of language upon itself is not just the exclusion of a memory from the possibility of conscious recall, or a hindrance to reminiscence; in itself it both preserves and conceals what has been said. Moreover, it stresses an often disregarded though essential feature of meaning, oblivion. It is from the fertile power of oblivion that meaning acquires the force of representation.

Freud's essays in psychoanalysis did not only shatter the compelling, utopian ethic which secrecy transgresses—the utopia of absolute transparency of meaning, of total communication of sense, of exhaustive expression of the self—, but conceived this shattering as a condition every subject should fulfil to achieve its own identity. Yet, psychoanalysis never explicitly renounced to this utopia, which arose from the fictive triumph of reflexive consciousness. The utopia of the transparency of expression—the imperative to "say it all"—is bound to create in the subject's moral domain an invincible tension which defines the fate of subjectivity. Psychoanalysis adumbrated an astounding, paradoxical ethic of secrecy, which rejected the dominion of reflexive consciousness. Secrecy, after Freud's psychoanalysis, no longer reveals an ethical transgression, but a destiny intrinsic in the human condition. Secrecy—as a non

meditated experience which, nevertheless, offers a tangible evidence of the limits of language— informs subjectivity. It becomes a potential, relevant sign of the subject's identity which resists emerging interpretations. *The subject's identity is shaped by the ethical framework grounded upon the rarefied, unfathomable signs of silence, and by the mourning involved in the imperative of naming, of narrating.* The missing sense alluded to by secrecy can also be conceived, in the light of Freud's conceptions, as an experience of the intrinsic resistance of sense. There seem to be meanings that resist articulation. There seem to be expressions which *shall* remain foreign to the spoken word. And it is the subject's non reflexive awareness of the intrinsic resistance of language —this resistance, manifest in his silence—, that must be assumed by him as an irrenounceable condition of his own identity.

However, the subject's awareness is not induced by the intensity of his own intimate tensions. Rather, according to Descombes, it is a product of the intrinsic asymmetry of dialogue.

Dès lors que je parle, il y a des choses que je ne peux pas dire. Non parce que je les ignore, ou parce que mon propos antérieur y répugne; au contraire, je les sais et tout ce que j'ai pu dire les appelle. Mais je ne peux pas les dire à *toi*, ou ce n'est pas *moi* qui puis les faire entendre. Tu ne dois pas l'entendre, donc je ne le dirai pas, si c'est à toi que je parle. Si tu l'as entendu, tu ne l'as pas entendu de moi. La raison du secret n'est donc pas *en moi*, mais *chez toi*.²⁰

It is because the other is perceived as a threat to the subject's own identity, that the boundaries of language, that the exhaustion of expression comes to light. But this limit is perceived as an uncertain hindrance which rules *every* talking impulse; the foreboding of the non said impregnates every moment, each gesture, the very utterance of a single statement: "tout ce que j'ai pu dire les appelle", writes Descombes. Language acquires an unexpected, hyperbolic metaphorical depth: the word encompasses all that a subject might know: its potencies, and also its impossibilities. Secrecy turns each word into a subtle evocation of the absolute limits of the utterance which stems from the imaginary, menacing identity of the other. Each word becomes an autonomous universe of sense which seems to turn itself into an speculative grain of allegory, while invoking its own limits.

4. The Baroque dimensions of Freud's writing

As an expressive presence, the Baroque work seems to be shaped by the passion for secrecy and pervaded by it. Eugenio d'Ors in his discussion of the limits of the notion of the Baroque asserts:

Hoy se tiende [...] en proporción creciente a creer que: primero, lo barroco es una constante histórica, que se produce en épocas tan alejadas como el Alejandrino lo ha estado de la Contrarreforma, y ésta del 'Fin-de-siglo', es decir, antonomásticamente, el fin del siglo XIX y de la 'Transguerra', que nuestra civilización occidental acaba de vivir; y que se ha presentado en las regiones más diversas, en Oriente no menos que en Occidente. Segundo, se trata de un fenómeno que interesa no sólo al arte, sino a toda la civilización y hasta, por extensión, a la morfología de la naturaleza [...] Tercero, su carácter es normal y, si se puede hablar aquí de enfermedad, es exactamente en el mismo sentido en que decía Michelet que 'la mujer es una eterna enferma'. Cuarto, lo barroco, lejos de encontrar su origen en el estilo clásico, se le opone más fundamentalmente todavía que el romanticismo; el cual no es, en suma más que un desenvolvimiento de la constante barroca.²¹

If the Baroque, as Eugenio d'Ors has remarked, does not define a certain type of aesthetic composition or a fortuitous trend in art, but defines a spirit, a nature, a morphological invariant of certain historical processes,²² then it is possible to conceive it as a cultural regime, the force of which resides in the widespread subjective experience of secrecy admitted historically as an essential condition of expression. What might be called the Baroque impulse of the late decades of the nineteenth century took root in the dominant patterns of the aesthetic of Romanticism and acquired a dramatic and ambiguous profile —characterized by both exultant, theatrical manifestations with a decaying expressive power, and a suffocated expressiveness pervaded by an exacerbated inclination to hermetic forms— in final years of the century.

A dominant impulse in writing in the late nineteenth century seems to conform with what Gerard Genette conceived as "typical Baroque": the Baroque is —in his view— a complex pattern informed by

amplification, prolifération des épisodes et des ornements descriptifs, multiplication des niveaux narratifs et jeu sur cette multiplicité, ambiguïté et interférences ménagées entre le représenté et sa représentation, entre le narrateur et sa narration, effets de syncope, affectation d'inachèvement, recherche simultanée de la "forme ouverte" et de la symétrie.²³

But Baroque writing —thought of as engendered by the multiplication of narrative layers, the dominion of ambiguity, the exaltation of the dense weave of meaningful effects due to the interlocking elements of narration— does not remain as a singular, aesthetic expression; it does not appear as an autonomous, extravagant outburst of the expressive force of an age; it is neither an isolated cultural object, bounded to display a bundle of inordinate and exuberant features, nor a frivolous exhibition of an object, shaped by the relentless, conventional rules of a decadent, passing style:

Le baroque, s'il existe, n'est pas une île (et encore moins une chasse gardée), mais un carrefour, une "étoile" et, comme on le voit bien à Rome, une place publique. Son génie est syncrétisme, son ordre est ouverture, son propre est de n'avoir rien en propre et de pousser à leur extrême des caractères qui sont, erratiquement, de tous les lieux et de tous les temps. Ce qui nous importe en lui n'est pas ce qu'il a d'exclusif, mais ce qu'il a, justement, de "typique" - c'est-à-dire d'exemplaire.²⁴

Freud's writings seem to correspond to the broad outline of the fundamental traits of the Baroque offered by Genette. Genette's definition mentions, perhaps as a casual example of the Baroque, the Roman display of manifold architectural styles which remained clustered in a tight unity made from the discordant, yet compelling variations of building procedures and aesthetic conceptions. This casual mention illuminates an often intrusive obsession in Freud's writing: his passion for Roman architectural and archeological spaces. The exploration and classification of relics and traces of buildings of different historical ages became in Freud's universe, as has been frequently stressed, an eloquent allegory of the psychoanalytical enterprise. The eloquence of the allegory of Rome is not adventitious. It evokes an image which constitutes not only a significant testimony to Freud's passion for scenery, but an allusion to the web of heterogeneous discourse which Freud himself invoked throughout his conceptual work —literature, philosophy, physiology, thermodynamics, history, aesthetics, archeology, anthropology—, and to the changing dimensions of psychoanalytic discourse, which

shifted between allegorical and descriptive methods, blending Freud's own reminiscences with fragments of narrations of his patients and other psychopathological examples, and an astounding collection of mixed evidence from contrasting facets of reality. Freud's crucial definition of his metapsychology as a threefold analytic enterprise, simultaneously economic, dynamic and topographical, is a relevant example of this amalgamation of theoretical elements. He achieved an astounding synthesis and coalescence of notions, which emerged at the confluence of disciplinary boundaries. In spite of the rigidity and narrowness of his personal, moral, and epistemological convictions, his conceptual imagination exhibited itself as exorbitantly loose, heterodox and open. Freud's manifold historical, autobiographic, literary, aesthetic and philosophical references blended in non-harmonical structures with medical evidence and theoretical authorities, to constitute lavish but nonetheless convincing evidence of legitimacy.

Despite the immediate perception of these features, Freud's writing is an intricate, challenging and contradictory examples of the *Aufklärung*. As Malcolm Bowie remarks:

in the works of Freud the rational discourse and the rational scientific ambitions of the nineteenth century reached a culminating point, but they overreached themselves in the process and began to disintegrate irreversibly.²⁵

The irreversible disintegration of Freud's Enlightenment heritage had a singular outcome: the creation of a transitional, disturbing body of knowledge, founded upon a fictional structure. Freud's reflexion nourished a saturated fragmentary text confined within the margins of rigorous reflection, at once austere and confessional, descriptive and speculative, empirical and fictional, entangled in arguments of exorbitant variety and discouraging monotony; his amazing regime of argumentation was derived from self-reflections which did not reject such imaginary creatures as literary deductions, allegorical inferences and interpretative observations: "Secure knowledge —concludes Bowie— would bring him [Freud] unspeakable terror". This insecurity marks his devotion to metaphorical and allegorical patterns of exposition. Freud seems to be constantly disquieted by the paradox of his "*reticent passion*" for the obscure phenomena at the edge of the subject's experience, and by his own fervent search for

the illuminations the source of which was delirium and psychical malady and which cast a sharp light on common life. He passionately but secretly exposed a daunting landscape of scatological representations embedded in his own psychoanalytic discourse.²⁶

Freud hails science and deplors the obscurities of speculation. He rejected the will to totality exhibited by seemingly comprehensive theories which lacked any empirical foundation; he spurns the impregnable sphere of occultism, resistant to any evidence which might perturb his own regime. Freud emphatically rejected "the blinding glare of a faultless theory" [*den blendenden Glanz einer lückenlosen Theorie*] (*Psychoanalysis und telepathie*, GW, 17: 30). However, to have chosen the positive, empirical alternative did not shield him from the intrusion of the inherent darkness of his fragmentary writing. Sarah Kofmann remarks:

Freud revendique pour sa théorie le droit au fragmentaire, au lacunaire. Contre la lumière speculative, aveuglante trop aveuglante, il en appelle au droit à l'obscurité.²⁷

Rather than the obscurity of the topics, Freud seems to have chosen the darkness which stemmed from silence and elision, from the hesitant textual unfolding of his conceptual endeavour. Perhaps he exhibits an exacting and meaningful imperative: not to admit in his writings the invincible opaqueness of dogma, but to reveal the disquieting chiaroscuro of the destroyed unity of medical allegories of psychical phenomena. The fragmentary nature of Freud's text represents something more than a definitive wager; he strives to achieve a text capable of incorporating a vast range of tonalities; he arouses and shapes the belief of his readers in his exorbitant formulations with an impressive spectrum of knowledge, erudition and argumentative skill. Often, Freud's expositions trespass on unacceptable explanations; they even lack fair empirical support.

Moreover, his writings strongly resemble an articulated Baroque optic device, which offers to the dazzled observer an aberrant image of the subjectivity or an enigmatic anamorphic image of it. The reading of Freud's work arouses sensations that resemble those stirred up by the Great Style, which Wölfflin described as the main characteristic of Baroque work:

Der Barock beabsichtigt eine andere Wirkung. Er will packen mit der Gewalt des Affects, unmittelbar, überwältigend. Was er giebt ist nicht gleichmässige Belebung, sonder Aufregung, Ekstase, Berausung. Es geht aus auf einen Eindruck des Augenblicks, während die Renaissance langsamer und leiser, aber desto nachhaltiger wirkt. Man möchte ewig in ihr dem Bezirk weilen. Vom Barock erfahren wir momentan eine starke Wirkung werden dann aber bald mit einer gewissen Oedigkeit entlassen. Er gibt kein glückliches Sein, sondern ein Werden, ein Geschehen; nicht das Befriedigte, sondern das Unbefriedigte und Ruhelose. Man fühlt sich nicht erlöst, sondern in die Spannung eines leidenschaftlichen Zustandes hineingezogen.²⁸

Wittgenstein bears a testimony to this experience of disquiet, of the dissatisfaction aroused by the reading of the Freudian text. He explicitly and emphatically remarked the paradoxical nature of the intense aesthetic tension in Freud's work. He emphasized the unbearable, inhospitable nature of psychoanalytic theory. He was outspokenly suspicious of its fragmented development, of its apparently incongruous conceptual unfolding, of the changing orientation of its concepts, of the accumulated resonances of meanings which crowded Freud's unrelenting, allegorical style and which embarrassed the reader while exerting on him an irresistible attraction. Wittgenstein exposes the paradoxical response to the Freudian text, which provokes a *restrained attachment*, while arousing a *detached* and *tyrannical* attraction to it.²⁹

This passionate, paradoxical strangeness provoked by Freud's text was also experienced in his immediate intellectual, medical and philosophical environment, but it was to produce its most powerful and persisting impact on its later readers: Freud's writing exerts simultaneously a compelling attraction, and grips its readers, while arousing in them incurable suspicions. Freud's text might be portrayed in the words which Alberti used to describe the sensations aroused by Baroque architecture: "That those who stare at it do not think they have apprehended it completely but just a part, and thus they must turn their heads to see it again as they walk away".³⁰

²⁸The purpose of the Baroque is different. It strives to, directly and overwhelmingly, captivate with the power of affect. His contribution is not a uniform enthusiasm, but an astonishment, an ectasis, a rapture. It seeks to give an impression of the instant, while the action of the renaissance work is slower and silent but also more enduring: one would like to stay endlessly in his realm. The Baroque exerts a strong action upon us, but fleetingly, it abandons us very soon, leaving us with a sensation of uneasiness. It does not restore the plenitude of being but its becoming; it is a mere incident; it does not satisfies; rather it arouses dissatisfaction and disquiet. One does not feel liberated but driven into a passionate state. (My translation)

Moreover, Freud's empiricist model of knowledge was undermined by his own paradoxical conviction of the impossibility of consciously achieving a complete comprehension of itself. Nevertheless, he was often furtively assailed by disbelief: for him, inferential procedures, assumed as an undisputed point of departure in scientific enterprise, were subverted by his own assumption of the fatally curtailed powers of consciousness:

Man muß sich dann auf den Standpunkt stellen, es sei nichts anderes als eine unhaltbare Anmaßung, zu fordern, daß alles, was im Seelischen vorgeht, auch dem Bewußtsein bekannt werden müsse. (*Das Unbewußte*, SA, 1915, III: 126)*

Freud echoes with this phrase an undesired but strong conviction derived from the *sombre optimism* of Enlightenment and which encouraged the visions of Romanticism: there exists an irresistible force within the realm of consciousness which eludes the efforts of self-reflexion but which imposes its own conditions on knowledge. In his anthropological considerations, Kant had already avowed:

Daß das Feld unserer Sinnenanschauungen und Empfindungen, deren wir uns nicht bewußt sind, ob wir gleich unbezweifelt schließen können, daß wir sie haben, d.i. *dunkeler Vorstellungen* im Menschen (und so auch in Tieren), unermesslich sei, die klaren dagegen nur unendlich wenige Punkte derselben enthalten, die dem Bewußtsein offen liegen; daß gleichsam auf der großen Karte unseres Gemüts nur wenig Stellen illuminiert sind.**³¹

Freud does not deny that the unknowable is an irreducible condition of knowledge. Furthermore, he uses this axiom as a definitive argument against the pretentious claims of speculative philosophy and occultism, which considered the completeness and exhaustiveness of a conceptual system as convincing evidence of their truth. Throughout his work, Freud sustained an ardent defense of the relevance of fragmentary notions. Freud was never reticent about the uneasiness he felt when confronting speculative thought, yet he was willing to conceive it as the mythical,

*we must adopt the position that to require that whatever goes on in the mind must also be known to consciousness is to make an untenable claim. (FP, 11: 168)

**That the field of our intuitions of the senses and sensations of which we are not conscious, although it can be undoubtedly deduced that we have them, that is to say, dark representations in men (and also in animals), is boundless, and that, on the contrary, only infinitely few are the number of clear points open to consciousness; just as in the huge map of our spirit only too few places are illuminated. (My translation)

almost cosmological force of understanding which animated the theories of subjectivity. Despite Freud's open rejection of it, speculative thought was to be embodied in psychoanalysis both as a threatening, undesirable extreme of thought, which should be avoided at any cost, and as the allegorical figure of a ghost, of a witch without whose intercession no progress can be made.

Die Hexe Metapsychologie nämlich. Ohne metapsychologisches Spekulieren und Theoretisieren — beinahe hätte ich gesagt: Phantasieren — kommt man hier keinen Schritt weiter. (*Die endliche un die unendliche Analyse*, SA, 1937, Ergänzungsband: 364)*

This duality in Freudian thought is not only a definitive feature of its reflection and its text, but also of his conception of subjectivity itself, and of the root of the subject's anxiety. As Rosolato has remarked, after Freud's enterprise has taken the exploration of subjectivity to its limits:³²

il y a irréductiblement un inconnu inconnaissable. Il ne peut être aboli et constitue la finitude en tant que limite de tout savoir, et jusque dans le champ des expériences possibles pour l'être humain et que l'interdit de l'inceste pose dans le symbolique. Et cet inconnu est au coeur de l'angoisse, de son intensité affective, et dans tout détresse. A l'inverse, le savoir peut bloquer toute progression de connaissance, car il affermit la position de ne pas savoir que l'on ne sait pas (ou encore que ce qu'on sait intellectuellement ne correspond pas à un éprouvé, à une expérience). Dans la prise de conscience qui suit la découverte de cet inconnu, l'après coup, dans l'analyse, a un effet capital.³³

At this limit *savoir* and *connaissance* become antagonists. *Savoir* intrudes upon the singular process of *connaissance*. Conventional, broad knowledge hinders the progressive comprehension of the subject's singularity. This comprehension can stem only from the encounter of self-reflection with anxiety, from the subject's admission of the limits of his own illuminating project. The roots of *the sense of anxiety* remain foreign to the insights of self-reflection. Then, secrecy —this emergence of the hollowness of sense, of its limits, in the folding back of thought upon itself— is not only engendered by the subject's experience of limit itself, but by the reflexive

*The witch metapsychology. Without metapsychological speculation and theorizing —I had almost said 'phantasizing'— we shall not get another step forward. (*Terminable and interminable analysis*, SE, 1937, 23: 225)

awareness of the limits of knowledge signalled by the presence of anxiety, and the resistance of anxiety to being rendered into any form of language.

Moreover, the obstinate, reflexive movement of thought defers the formation of sense, and it is this deferral that engenders a silence which also remains foreign to the encompassing reflections of language. This silence gives to the subject an experience of limits which puts it on the fringes of language itself, foreign even to an image, to sense. Freud's notion of deferred action [*Nachträglichkeit*] is an example of the multiple synthesis which emerges from this folding back of interpretation upon itself, from reflexive language, from the actual patterns of creation of sense. The deferred action delimits a process of non-meditated reflection which does not only embrace the meaning of language and the profile of the subject's identity; it determines the way the subject imagines time, and sets the conditions for outbursts of psychological malady; it silently reveals the violence exerted on his present perceptions by his own experience.

The deferral of sense appears as an essential condition of subjectivity which has its origins in the unattainable memory of nameless objects and experiences, in relics of past, in images and vestiges of perceptions which reject reminiscence while preserving their intense affective root. It is this deferral of sense, aroused by shreds and vestiges of memories, by fragments and shades of presences, that sheds a sharp light upon the "empirical" requirements of objective knowledge.

Freud's apology of the fragmentary went hand in hand with his feeling that the inductive nature of psychoanalysis as an empirical science was a virtue and a great burden, going as it did against his deeper inclinations and forcing him to enter reluctantly into prolonged logical demonstrations.³⁴

Freud's faith in the empirical nature of psychoanalysis expressed itself in the fragmentary, piecemeal and equivocal formulas of his theoretical imagination. He enacted in fragmentary text his resistance to a consistent and faultless theory of the precariousness and failures of the subject's comprehension of his own impulses. His writings are animated by a broken yet restless breath. He held to a shattered yet dense narration, made out of discordant sources, linked by mere resonances; he admitted the intrusion of contrasting, heterogeneous even contradictory logics, which distorted the

smoothness of his "tireless logical constructions".

Freud's writings are dominated by traces of cleft images, which are linked by proliferating resonances and echoes, layers of reminiscence and evocation; perhaps, his writing mirrors his conception of the subject's nature.

Despite the pervading presence of silence and of hollowness in Freud's writing, its tireless impulse seems to be dominated by the fear of hollowness which characterizes the Baroque.

Typically, Freud's composition is processive, not uniformly unidirectional but still progressive amid its ebbs and floods. Its essence can be to an extent appreciated by a glance at the change from the Ciceronian to the Baroque style in the 16th century.³⁵

But Freud's Baroque is not confined to the extremely exigent and disquieting constructions of his written arguments. It impregnates the whole psychoanalytic enterprise.

II. The thematic spectrum of the Freudian Baroque

1. Freud's paradoxical conception of primordial meaning

The paradoxes of Freud's conception of the roots of meaning appear in his early writings, particularly in the *Entwurf einer Psychologie* (1895), which seems to have remained the constant, silent reference and the foundation for further developments of the psychoanalytic theory. In the Freudian scheme, the limits of the expressive capacity of language are not the outcome of a progressive devastation of sense, but an original condition of subjectivity. Language emerges from non-linguistic structures. Conceptual judgement emerges from the fundamental structures of speechless perception and memory. Meaning is thus the outcome of a paradoxical folding of perception upon the primary structures, which constitute the unaccountable conditions of subjectivity. Primary conditions does not evolve into different structures; rather, while remaining essentially unchanged, they engender the basic structural conditions for the acquisition of language. But words do not replace or displace the primary processes. They are an

adherence, a supplementary instrument of regulation, the logic of which is radically dissimilar to the primary processes from which they spring. Words do not regulate the relative quantities and levels of bodily energy but the orientation of its discharge and the symbolic nature of the perceptions which set this orientation. Words, in a first analysis, do not determine the relation between concepts and reality. They rather *imply* the relation between primary processes and reality. Primary processes are conceived as a stratified weave of perceptions the associations of which are resistant to any conceptual determination; rather, they reflect the dynamic aims of the subject, impelled and governed by the need for satisfaction. The determining logic of thought ceases to be meaning itself, but the requirements of strictly subjective, bodily energy relations, well beyond the relation between the word and the world.

Freud links his conception of meaning to the subject's memory of the primordial *experience of satisfaction*, the subject's memory trace of the original encounter with a vital object which has aroused a pure, primary reaction; primary process take their impulse from a tension between memory traces of perceived objects, a primordial judgement, the sketch of a thought produced by conflicts between memories and perceptions engendered before the acquisition of language, foreign to words, but which anticipates the fundamental structures and capacities of conscious thought. Indeed, the primordial experience of satisfaction appears at the moment when the perception of the object finally matches the appropriate memory and unleashes an adequate subjective response. It is the moment of the actual —silent, wordless— emergence of a primary symbolization. The subject's identity, the limit between him and the other, is weakly but definitively settled, as an outcome of the pure tension between contradictory impulses of energy and diverging traces of perception.

Within the homogeneous, all encompassing universe of the newborn, the originally boundless, primordial perception ignores the subject's own limits, and is absolutely unaware of the foreignness of the objects and of others. Yet a primordial signal of his own strangeness is his experience of pain. He suffers and there is no adequate, autonomous reaction to attenuate his pain. It is pain that seems to signal the boundaries and identity of the body, the singularity of perception. Also, there is a memory both of the experience of pain —the experience of the violent, compelling

necessity—, and of the impotence of his own means of achieving a satisfaction. The experience of pain, which forges the primal identity, becomes embodied in the indelible, though unarticulated memory of the earliest appearance of the satisfying object.

Desire reveals, in these early writings, the nature of the primordial absence: it is the consequence of the primordial, objectless necessity which arouses a motor reaction. The signs of necessity confound themselves with the memory of the absence of the primordial object of satisfaction. The primordial pain associated with this awareness of necessity, will only yield to the presence of the foreign, satisfying object. In turn, the memory of satisfaction seems to veil the primordial memory of the presence of pain, which, nevertheless, will leave a concealed trace and will set a definite boundary to the subject's experience. From then on, the tensions aroused by the need for nourishment will confound themselves with the experience of pleasure which emerges from the dissipation of pain. The memory of the object will fuse satisfaction and pleasure, and will stir, in an organic impulse, the silenced memories which anticipate the absence of the object, the end of satisfaction, the emergence of pain. The self-perception of the tension which grows with necessity, will eventually turn the extinction of pleasure into a signal of the sexual necessity associated with the absence of the object.

A subtle metamorphosis turns the actual signals of the object of satisfaction into threatening signs of its future disappearance. The traces of this object acquire an invincible equivocity: they merge the memory of pleasure with the tokens of the pain consequent upon the future, unavoidable disappearance of the object. Thus, desire excites the representations which encompass the vast heterogeneous universe of those objects which awaken both the concealed memory of pain and the urgent need for satisfaction. However, it is the severing of this single object from the sphere of the subject, the incurable malady of identity that requires the extinction of the intimate, essential alliance with the other, that determines the absolute singularity of its traces in memory. The singular memory of this object bears not only the equivocal traces of the primordial fusion of pain and pleasure, but the silent stigma of the emergence of identity, of the appearance of definite limits to the subjective sphere which sever the

essential bond with the primordial object. It is the subject's striving for the restoration of this primordial bond, the search for an object the perception of which will conform to the traces of the lost object, that seems to be the origin of the obscure obstinacy of desire.

Meaning will have as its primal structure the intricate map of pathways through which the subject's impulse has sought intimate traces of the extinguished presence. In the primordial moment, before the definitive loss of the primordial object, truth does not differ from the intimate correspondence between the perception of the actual object and the memory of the object of satisfaction. At that moment, truth is foreign to words. It is the threshold at which pain ceases. Truth confounds itself with the encounter with pleasure and the echoes of future, unavoidable pain. Truth is the fusion of the experience of satisfaction, the anticipation of pain, and the memory of the primordial perception of the loved-object, and thus extraneous to language. This primordial scheme of truth will have an enduring and definitive impact upon the subsequent structures of subjectivity. It is the foundation of narcissism. Freud constructs a fictional narration of the subjective origin of truth. "Where does the falsehood come from?", asks Kristeva. She answers:

le mythe ovidien dévoile ainsi la concomitance du narcissisme et du faux [...] Le faux viendrait du fait que l'on n'arrive que rarement à s'identifier pleinement avec cet idéal: soit qu'il ne tient pas, soit qu'il est démolé, soit que Narcisse aidé par sa mère croit n'avoir pas besoin de lui parce qu'il l'est déjà (idéal pour sa mère).³⁶

The origin of falsehood, for Kristeva, is to be found in the wreck of the subject's identity shaped by the impulse of desire and governed by unarticulated reminiscences of the lost object. The narcissistic catastrophe which constitutes the source of falsehood, emerges from the remains of the original, shattered link between the subject and the loved object. Yet, the nature of the primordial object is uncertain: both its inward and outward nature. As object, its identity entirely depends upon the spectrum of the attributes which respond to the demand of satisfaction. It is its ability to respond the need for satisfaction that is the sources of its objectivity. And this nature cannot be different from its representation in phantasy.

Later on, Freud seems to abandon his passionate attachment to an incipient neural conception at the early stages of his work. From then on, he will avoid naming physiological entities; the earlier descriptions of energy processes acquire a metaphorical sense; his image of the neuron as the anatomical site of memories yields to a powerful, allegorical topography of the soul; and the physiological conception of the subjective structures of memory and action which obey thermodynamic laws—chiefly Fechner's principles—turns into the spectre of an instinct—drive [*Trieb*—governed by the delusive phantasy of the love object in the psychical realm.

Nevertheless, Freud's neuronal conception proved to be more than an inadequate physiologically or histologically based theory, or a minor, forgettable chapter in the chronicle of his efforts to grasp the elusive nature of desire and unconscious acts; it also proved to be more than a pure spatial model, or a mere *topography* able to order and classify the formal attributes of the psychical universe. The neural theory remained at the later stages of Freud's theory as a fertile scheme of thought ingrained in the conceptual body which defined the fate of the psychoanalytic enterprise; it engendered the material, tangible allegories of his conceptual representations of clinical experiences, and determined the architecture of his theoretical fiction; it underpinned Freud's metaphors which represent the dynamics of the subject's symbolic behaviour.

Nevertheless, the disappearance of explicit mentions of the "neuron theory" is disquieting. Jacques Le Beuf concludes an extremely suggestive work on Freud's neuron model with the following, remark:

Freud abandonne-t-il son *Project*? C'est plutôt son *Project* de 1895 qui l'a abandonné, largement tombé dans le refoulement. *Il nous est revenu en fragments*, pour beaucoup au fil des pertes et ruptures.³⁷

The neuron theory, although only briefly and hastily outlined in the *Entwurf einer Psychologie*, allowed Freud to confront several issues which would become essential contributions to his later theory.

Indeed, the neuron theory of representation was developed for the first time in an early work which preceded the outburst of the conception of the psychical apparatus formally described in *Die Traumdeutung*. Freud's *Zur Auffassung der Aphasie* (1891)

develops some cardinal concepts which would constitute the cornerstone of his theory of the unconscious. However, the neuron theory was found unable to cope with incisive, insurmountable objections, and it was silently abandoned. In spite of this, it kept its hold on Freud's conceptual imagination. It became a secret point of reference in his theoretical reflection.

Loose metaphorical echoes of the neuron theory constituted a support for Freud's conception of repetition as an essential attribute of desire. A fundamental feature of this theory is the seemingly inconsistent notion of referential meaning implied in its conception of thought: in his early work, the primordial structures of judgement are—in Freud's view—only the result of the fixations in the neuron charged with the energy aroused either by perception or memory. It is the tension between the perception and the memory of the loved object which constitutes both the primordial *speechless, unutterable* structures of judgement—of thought—, and the absolute foundation of desire:

[im Wunschvorgang] Es können sich mehrere Fälle ereignen. Erstens: gleichzeitig mit der Wunschbesetzung des Erinnerungsbildes ist die Wahrnehmung desselben vorhanden; dann fallen die beiden Besetzungen übereinander, was biologisch nicht verwertbar ist, es entsteht aber außerdem das Realitätszeichen von ω aus, nach welchem erfahrungsgemäß die Abfuhr erfolgreich ist. Dieser Fall ist leicht erledigt. Zweitens: die Wunschbesetzung ist vorhanden, daneben eine Wahrnehmung, die nicht ganz, sondern nur teilweise mit ihr übereinstimmt. Es ist nämlich Zeit, sich zu erinnern, daß die Wahrnehmungsbesetzungen nie Besetzungen einzelner Neurone sind, sondern stets von Komplexen. Wir haben diesen Zug bisher vernachlässigt; es ist jetzt an der Zeit, ihm Rechnung zu tragen. Die Wunschbesetzung betreffe ganz allgemein Neuron $a +$ Neuron b , die Wahrnehmungsbesetzung Neuron $a +$ Neuron c . Da dies der häufigere Fall sein wird, häufiger als der der Identität, erfordert er genauere Erwägung. Die biologische Erfahrung wird auch hier lehren, daß es unsicher ist, Abfuhr einzuleiten, wenn die Realitätszeichen nicht den ganzen Komplex, sondern nur einen Teil davon bestätigen. Es wird aber jetzt ein Weg gefunden, die Ähnlichkeit zur Identität zu vervollkommen. Der Wahrnehmungs-Komplex wird sich durch den Vergleich mit anderen Wahrnehmungs-Komplexen zerlegen in einen Bestandteil Neuron a eben, der sich meist gleichbleibt, und in einen zweiten, Neuron b , der zumeist variiert. Die Sprache wird später für diese Zerlegung den Terminus Urteil aufstellen und die Ähnlichkeit herausfinden, die zwischen [dem] Kern des Ich und dem konstanten Wahrnehmungsbestandteil,

den wechselnden Besetzungen im Mantel und dem inkonstanten Bestandteil tatsächlich vorliegt; wird Neuron *a* das Ding und Neuron *b* dessen Tätigkeit oder Eigenschaft, kurz dessen Prädikat benennen.

Das Urteilen ist also ein ψ Vorgang, welchen erst die Ichhemmung ermöglicht und der durch die Unähnlichkeit zwischen der Wunschbesetzung eines Er[innerungsbildes] und einer ihr ähnlichen Wahrnehmungsbesetzung hervorgerufen wird. Man kann davon ausgehen, daß das Zusammenfallen beider Besetzungen zum biologischen Signal wird, den Denkakt zu beenden und die Abfuhr eintreten zu lassen. Das Auseinanderfallen gibt den Anstoß zur Denkarbeit, die wieder mit dem Zusammenfallen beendet wird. (*Entwurf einer Psychologie*, GW, 1895, Nachtragsband: 422)*

The surreptitious and fragmentary appearance of shreds of the *Entwurf* throughout the Freudian enterprise, the lost fragments, have often been missed or have fallen into oblivion. The wide dissemination of the nameless, non-identifiable, though determining contributions of the *Entwurf* at different stages of Freud's theories, reflects the fragility and the strength of the psychoanalytic Baroque.

Indeed, Freud's conception of subject derived from an "asemantic semanticism"—judgement without words—has its origins in the myth of primal satisfaction. The sudden cessation of the subject's satisfaction provoked by the disappearance of the loved object entails the need for judgement, to discern the difference between the actual perceived presence and the memory of the object of satisfaction.

[in the process of wishing] Several possibilities may occur. In the first case: simultaneously with the wishful cathexis of the mnemonic image, the perception of it is present. If so, the two cathexes coincide which cannot be made use of biologically but, in addition, the indication of reality arises from ω , after which, as experience shows, the discharge is successful. This case is easily dealt with. In the second case: the wishful cathexis is present and along with it a perception which does not tally with it wholly but only in part. For the time has come to remember that perceptual cathexes are never cathexes of single neurones but always of complexes. So far we have neglected this feature; it is time to take it into account. Let us suppose that, quite generally, the wishful cathexis relates to neurone *a* + neurone *b*, and the perceptual cathexis to neurone *a* + *c*. Since this will be the commoner case, commoner than that of identity, it calls for more exact consideration. Biological experience will teach here once again that it is unsafe to initiate discharge if the indications of reality do not confirm the whole complex but only a part of it. A way is now found, however, of completing the similarity into an identity. The perceptual complex, if it is compared with other perceptual complexes, can be dissected into a component portion, neurone *a*, which on the whole remains the same, and a second component portion, neurone *b*, which for the most part varies. Language will later apply the term judgement to this dissection and will discover the resemblance which in fact exists between the nucleus of the ego and the constant perceptual component [on the one hand] and between the changing cathexes in the pallium and the inconstant component [on the other]; it [language] will call neurone *a* the thing and neurone *b* its activity or attribute in short, its predicate.

Thus judging is a ψ process which is only made possible by inhibition by the ego and which is evoked by the dissimilarity between the wishful cathexis of a memory and a perceptual cathexis that is similar to it. It can be inferred from this that coincidence between the two cathexes becomes a biological signal for ending the act of thought and for allowing discharge to begin. Their non-coincidence gives the impetus for the activity of thought, which is terminated once more with their coincidence. (SE, I: 327-328)

Language—in Freud's conception— does not expunge this primordial structure of judgement. Moreover, words obliterate the evidence for it, while preserving it as a covert process which continues to act upon the symbolic judgement. Furthermore, language appears as a means of mitigating the intrinsic violence of the memory of the original loss of the loved object. Paradoxically, it is the capacity of language to inhibit the pain of the loss that consummates the disappearance of the actual presence of the object in the subject's experience. It imposes on the underlying structure of perceptual judgement the representations inherent in language; it dissolves the *inner* relation between the traces of the object and its perception; memory loses its autonomous force, obscured by the shadow of words. The object is no longer a real presence nor an evocation aroused by traces of memory, but is distorted by the presence of words; it remains in memory as an obscure, lost, isolated relic of something which once was a sought after, apprehensible presence.

Subjectivity proper, in the Freudian conception, originates at the boundaries of self-perception, settled both by the appearance of the other—which ceases to be a non-discernable, interior presence and thus reappears as a foreign, transient, threatening perception—, and by the extinction of the primordial satisfaction. Subjectivity is the incipient awareness of desire, of the cleavage between satisfaction and its object. The subject's primordial, uncertain identity is produced by the absence of the other; thus, the disappearance of the other's image paradoxically creates the subject's own identity and the identity of the missing object, evidence of which is only the memory of pain and scream, the non-signified traces of the sensations aroused by absence—the primal language of desire. The subject experiences a rhythmic fading and appearance of the loved object and makes of language the support of this absence and the means of mitigating it. The frontiers of the subject, which separate his own sphere from the world, appear with the memory of the primordial experience of pain. It is this memory of pain that sinks him in the vertigo of time, and endows him with an awareness of temporality.

It is pain that creates the experience of time. In Freud's conception, the path from perception and consciousness to the unconscious, confounds itself with the progressive shaping of the subject's experience of time inherent to consciousness. In

Freud's view, the traces of perception do not betoken in themselves either succession or change, they do not bear the signals of their own chronology; they form timeless sediments of layers of memory. The passage from the conscious perception of the outside world to the inner psychical space can thus be seen as the metamorphosis of signs of temporality into signs of timelessness, but also as the passage from the world of stimulus and absences, of succession and disappearances, of processes and fadings, to the sphere of fixed, indelible residues through the path of language.

The notion of *specific action*, which proved to be fundamental to the early conception of psychoanalysis, sought to elucidate a facet of the transformation of the symbolic structure of desire. In Freud's neuron theory, the notion of *specific action*—which was originally sketched throughout his correspondence with Fliess—was first thoroughly developed in the *Entwurf*. It derived from an early dynamic concept of primal satisfaction, and aimed at deciphering the nature of anguish.³⁸

Ein primäres Nervensystem bedient sich dieser so erworbenen $Q\eta'$, um sie durch Verbindung mit den Muskelmaschinen abzugeben, und erhält sich so reizlos. Diese Abfuhr stellt die Primärfunktion des Nervensystems dar. Hier ist Platz für die Entwicklung einer Sekundärfunktion, indem unter den Abfuhrwegen solche bevorzugt und erhalten [werden], mit denen Aufhören des Reizes verbunden ist, *Reizflucht*. Hierbei besteht im allgemeinen eine Proportion zwischen Erregungs[quantität] und [der] zur Reizflucht nötigen Leistung, so daß das *Trägheitsprinzip* hiedurch nicht gestört wird.

Allein, das *Trägheitsprinzip* wird von Anfang an durchbrochen durch ein anderes Verhältnis. Mit [der steigenden] Komplexität des Inneren [des Organismus] nimmt das Nervensystem Reize auf aus dem Körperelement selbst, endogene Reize, die gleichfalls abgeführt werden sollen. Diese entstammen Körperzellen und ergeben *die großen Bedürfnisse, Hunger, Atem, Sexualität*. Diesen kann sich der Organismus nicht entziehen wie den Außenreizen, er kann ihre Q nicht zur Reizflucht verwenden. Sie hören auf nur unter bestimmten Bedingungen, die in der Außenwelt realisiert werden müssen. Z. B. Nahrungsbedürfnis. Um diese Aktion, die spezifisch genannt zu werden verdient, zu vollführen, bedarf es einer Leistung, die unabhängig ist von endogener $Q\eta'$; im allgemeinen [ist sie] größer da das Individuum unter Bedingungen gesetzt ist, die man

als *Not des Lebens* bezeichnen kann. (*Entwurf einer Psychologie*, GW, 1895, Nachtragsband: 389-390)*

In his *Entwurf einer Psychologie*, Freud posited, while trying to explain the initial pressure of the need upon the subject's experience, that a "specific action" [*spezifische Aktion*] is the subject's response to the painful inner pressure of the mounting levels of energy, intensified by the disappearance of the other; it is conceived as the means by which the subject attempts to bring about the transformation of the external world in an unfruitful effort to restore the presence of the satisfying object; thus, the *specific action* is the expression of the subject's struggle to escape pain. What is involved in this early endeavour to avoid pain is the experience of an interior tension strengthened during the subject's encounter with the absence of the loved object, an experience turns into an early memory of a vain effort to overcome this painful absence.

Reizaufhebung ist hier nur möglich durch einen Eingriff, welcher im Körperinnern die Q η '-Entbindung für eine Weile beseitigt, und dieser Eingriff erfordert eine Veränderung in der Außenwelt (Nahrungszufuhr, Nähe des Sexualobjektes), welche als *spezifische Aktion* nur auf bestimmten Wegen erfolgen kann. Der menschliche Organismus ist zunächst unfähig, die spezifische Aktion herbeizuführen. Sie erfolgt durch fremde Hilfe, indem durch die Abfuhr auf dem Wege der inneren Veränderung ein erfahrenes Individuum auf den Zustand des Kindes aufmerksam gemacht [wird]. Diese Abfuhrbahn gewinnt so die höchst wichtige Sekundärfunktion der Verstandigung, und die anfängliche Hilflosigkeit des Menschen ist die Urquelle aller moralischen Motive. (*Entwurf einer Psychologie*, GW, 1895, Nachtragsband: 410)**

*A primary nervous system makes use of this Q η ' which it has thus acquired, by giving it off through a connecting path to the muscular mechanisms, and in that way keeps itself free from stimulus. This discharge represents the primary function of the nervous system. Here is room for the development of a secondary function. For among the paths of discharge those are preferred and retained which involve a cessation of the stimulus: flight from the stimulus. Here in general there is a proportion between the Q of excitation and the effort necessary for the flight from the stimulus, so that the principle of inertia is not upset by this.

The principle of inertia is, however, broken through from the first owing to another circumstance. With an [increasing] complexity of the interior [of the organism], the nervous system receives stimuli from the somatic element itself—endogenous stimuli which have equally to be discharged. These have their origin in the cells of the body and give rise to the major needs hunger, respiration, sexuality. From these the organism cannot withdraw as it does from external stimuli; it cannot employ their Q for flight from the stimulus. They only cease subject to particular conditions, which must be realized in the external world. (Cf., for instance, the need for nourishment). In order to accomplish such an action (which deserves to be named 'specific'), an effort is required which is independent of endogenous Q η ' and in general greater, since the individual is being subjected to conditions which may be described as the *exigencies of life*. (SE, I: 296-297)

**The removal of the stimulus is only made possible here by an intervention which for the time being gets rid of the release of Q η ' in the interior of the body; and this intervention calls for an alteration in the external world (supply of nourishment, proximity of the sexual object) which, as a specific action, can only be brought about in definite

Freud sees in this primal experience of pain the origin of a non-linguistic yet meaningful relation with the other; the spring of an urgency which gives rise to a vocal discharge, a non-symbolic release of energy. This vocal discharge which has no intrinsic significance is construed by the other, as an incipient communication. In a sense, it succeeds and becomes the sign of the experienced helplessness of the subject. Freud goes to assert that it is the wordless, asymmetric, non-intentional communication, made of the other's elucidation of the child's mere bodily signs, which forge a primordial, mute ethics. This primordial ethic is tied in the subject's memory to the experience of a foiled act.

The images of the birth of the subject's identity in Freud's early notions of *experience of satisfaction* and of *specific action*, were rendered in terms of a paradoxical, allegorical model of the neuron as the basis of psychical processes,³⁹ which paid a visible tribute to the nineteenth century concept of association. Indeed, the fictional core of his theory was to be exposed as a weave of concepts taken from the biological and thermodynamic fields of enquiry which became a shapeless yet powerful allegory of the psychical processes.

The neuron theory contemplated the elementary pair of bound components of judgement —subject and predicate— as founded upon the relation between two neurons which conveyed the empirical contents of their respective meanings. Truth then becomes an intimate, physiological experience which springs from the disappearance of the difference between the neuronal contents involved in perception and memory. One first sequel of the original conception of judgement is the theoretical opposition between the *identity of thought* and the *identity of perception* as developed in *Die Traumdeutung* (1900) —perhaps the most ambitious and successful of Freud's works—:

ways. At first, the human organism is incapable of bringing about the specific action. It takes place by extraneous help, when the attention of an experienced person is drawn to the child's state by discharge along the path of internal change.

In this way this path of discharge acquires a secondary function of the highest importance, that of communication, and the initial helplessness of human beings is the primal source of all moral motives. (SE, I: 317-318)

Der Primärvorgang strebt nach Abfuhr der Erregung, um mit der so gesammelten Erregungsgröße eine Wahrnehmungsidentität [mit dem Befriedigungserlebnis herzustellen; der Sekundärvorgang hat diese Absicht verlassen und an ihrer Statt die andere aufgenommen, eine Denkidentität zu erzielen. Das ganze Denken ist nur ein Umweg von der als Zielvorstellung genommenen Befriedigungserinnerung bis zur identischen Besetzung derselben Erinnerung, die auf dem Wege über die motorischen Erfahrungen wieder erreicht werden soll. Das Denken muß sich für die Verbindungswege zwischen den Vorstellungen interessieren, ohne sich durch die Intensitäten derselben beirren zu lassen. (*Die Traumdeutung*, SA, 1900, II: 571)*

Clearly, despite the obvious disappearance of any reference to the neuron model, the same tacit scheme informs the development of the explanation. The relation between the neurons which appeared formerly as the reservoir of the contents of memory has been rewritten as relations between memories alone. The original duality of the neuron relation which occupied a crucial position at the early stages of psychoanalytic theory, fades away to give rise to new notions of memory and perception, which befogged—without explicitly refuting—the previously posited inner, subjective nature of truth.

Freud's exposition of the notion of experience of satisfaction, derived from the neuron theory, fully exhibits the force, and the suggestive power of his elliptic writing: the tension between *identity of thought* and *identity of perception*—which is the origin of judgment in Freud's language theory—will support implicitly the notion of repetition, conceived as an essential feature of the psychical apparatus and of desire.

Freud never explicitly put forward a conception of memory. However, in the origins of psychoanalysis an implicit theory of memory seems to be an essential element in the conception of *specific action*. Later, the concept of specific action was to be refounded on a dynamic conception of perceptual recognition, related to what Freud was to call

*The primary process endeavours to bring about a discharge of excitation in order that, with the help of the amount of excitation thus accumulated, it may establish a 'perceptual identity' [with the experience of satisfaction]. The secondary process, however, has abandoned this intention and taken on another in its place - the establishment of a 'thought identity' [with that experience]. All thinking is no more than a circuitous path from the memory of a satisfaction (a memory which has been adopted as a purposive idea) to an identical cathexis of the same memory which it is hoped to attain once more through an intermediate stage of motor experiences. Thinking must concern itself with the connecting paths between ideas, without being led astray by the *intensities* of those ideas. (FP, 4: 762)

the "necessities of life", Freud's obscure *Αναγκή* [*Not des Lebens*]. What remained a key, yet unexplored element of the definition of *specific action* was its definitive dependence upon endogenous processes of energy discharge, the aims of which appeared to be subtly diversified. The pathways through which the subject's internal energy was discharged as a response to the perceived presence of the object, were to be sharply distinguished from those involved in a mere motor reaction.

Specific action is never a pure motor discharge able to regulate by itself the level of the internal energy. It is governed by the presence of a well defined, recognizable, object—the loved object—the image of which has been engraved on the substance of memory, determining the unrelenting orientation of desire and the aim of its perception. Thus, specific action is the privileged, symbolically governed means to discharge accumulated inner energy and to ensure the effective domain of the *principle of inertia*.⁴⁰

Paradoxically, it is not the privileged, constitutive aim of the specific action to achieve the exclusion of the painful-pleasure-giving object from the sphere of the subject's experience, but to assure its *permanent presence*. The primordial structure of the psychical apparatus aims to ensure the presence of this ambiguous but desired object within the ambit of effective action. This is accomplished with the intervention of memory traces, some of which will be charged with energy when the excitation exceeds the capacity of the system. However, as Freud conceives it, the excitation stirred by the rising levels of energy agitates the whole psychical apparatus. The residues involved in the release of the endogenous energy form a dense web of variously assorted and autonomous, although intimately assembled, sets of related traces. In his thorough revision of the *Entwurf*, Forrester distinguishes these separate, variable densities of the entangled memories that constitute the psychical apparatus:

[while seeking to repeat the experience of satisfaction] The level of unpleasure in the psychic apparatus increases. A second attempt to bring about the experience of satisfaction now follows: the pathway of internal change, by which the 'expression of the emotions' is produced. These seemingly random innervations of the muscular system, which include screaming, are all aimed at discharging the accumulated Q through motor pathways. [...] The ego, while inhibiting the movements of large Q in ψ , allows small Q to *retrace the facilitations that are connected with the representation of the wished-for object, the breast, and the*

representation of the wished-for action sucking. In this way, the ego finds a set of facilitations that correspond to a set of representations of actions, whose performance will result in perceptual identity being attained. Having successfully conducted this process of thought, which result in thought-identity, the ego releases the pathways that thought has found to lead to the memory of the experience of satisfaction: both a preparatory set of actions and the specific action itself are carried out.⁴¹

Indeed, the specific action is the tangible, culminating stage in a complex set of the representations *not only of the object, but also of actions of a different nature—preparatory and specific—* which lead the subject to overcome the perceptual difference between the original satisfying object and the actual perception of the aimed at object seeking the provisory extinction of unpleasure, even of pain. However, the extinction of unpleasure—that is to say, to achieve the identity between the contents of memory and those of perception, which unleashes the discharge of the endogenous energy in the system—involves, with the perception of loved object, a complex set of memory traces produced by the subject's perception of its own actions and motor discharges, of their actual effect on the perceived reality, and of the sensations aroused by them; thus, the specific action might be conceived as a dense weave of relations among traces of perception of a different nature, of bodily reactions, of the surrounding world, indeed, of a vast spectrum of sensations. The repetition which animates desire involves the restoration of this vast web of dissimilar memories.

However, desire and pleasure does not only set in motion contradictory and heterogeneous processes: they also reveal the contradictory nature of the loved object. Desire holds to paradoxical memories of the primal object: on the one hand, the memories of an intricate satisfaction—at once physiological and affective, nourishing and pleasurable, arousing and relieving—, of vast and manifold spheres of actions associated with unpleasure and its cessation are inextricably fused to the perception of *that* single, incomparable object; on the other, the memories of the experience of the frustrated restoration of the complex primal image of the object. Thus, desire preserves the inextinguishable, spectral presence of the object, and, simultaneously, the experience of its loss. Pleasure, on the contrary, seems to be free from the constraints imposed on the soul by the primal image: both identity of thought and identity of

perception, seem to obey different and non-comparable dynamics. Freud will posit, chiefly in *Die Traumdeutung*, the independent nature of the identity of thought and identity of perception; however, the potential convergence of these autonomous processes is the condition of the satisfaction of the need, and of the fulfilment of desire. Still, the conditions for the extinction of unpleasure —extinction conceived as the sensation produced by the coincidence of both identities—, remains obscure.

This unelucidated though cardinal theoretical issue will constitute the conceptual foundation of the Freudian conception of subjectivity. It seems that beyond the initial presence of the primordial satisfying object, the only way in which the coincidence of both processes might be achieved is by restoring the primordial image of these "preparatory movements" which led to the satisfying object. The subject's perception of his act of speech, or rather, scream, as a mere motor discharge, as squandered energy, is embodied in these traces of the preparatory movements and the experience of the motor discharge. It is this memory of the set of movements and sensations inherent in the primal satisfaction, that makes the restoration of the sought identity impossible. The singular physiognomy of this memory of potential actions and sensations —which constitute the memory of the loved object— remains a timeless, fixed, yet meaningless image, linked to primordial vocal discharges and affective forms of language. The primal object of satisfaction is then condemned to become an inarticulated psychical trace, the content of which derives from intense memories of primordial language. From the moment of the definite eclipse of the primal loved object onward, any other presence will be doomed to arouse these memories in part, and even if it is capable of mitigating unpleasure, it will appear to be a foreign, transient object, and the pleasure it arouses a mere surrogate of true satisfaction.

2. Thought and desire

A cardinal issue of Freud's complex approach to desire is the structure of thought process: thought is conceived as a relational process that develops across a large web of traces of perceived objects and attributes, and which precedes both the subject's acquisition of language and the construction of self-reflexive identity. This silent,

speechless thought process, nevertheless foreshadows the logical structure which informs speech. According to Freud, the primordial perception of the loved object engraved on memory is the outcome of a cleavage in its representation. The memory of the object undergoes a three-stage fragmentation: the memory trace of the essence of the primordial thing [*Das Ding*] is detached from the memory of its features. The dual structure of the memory of the object seems to mirror the dual structure of proposition. However, the actual perception of the contingent physiognomy of later, similar objects, experience an analogous cleavage. The relation between the structures of wordless judgment defines the congruence —the identity— between the structures of the memory traces of the primordial and immediate object. This cleavage in the perception of the object also involves the speculative and disquieting assumption of the existence of the essential, yet recognizable nature of the object, distinguishable from an evanescent semblance made up of a mixture both of transient and enduring characteristics. However, as has been already suggested, the non-essential profile of the object reveals itself as a dense entangled pattern of memories, both of the perception of the object itself and of the reflective perception of the actions by which the subject has achieved satisfaction.

The profile of the object does not only remain as an open spectrum of qualities, a virtually infinite aggregate of attributes —a conception borrowed by Freud from the philosophical conceptions of John Stuart Mill⁴², and explicitly developed by him in his *Zur Auffassung der Aphasie* (1891)—, at this primordial moment of the subject's experience, the object also incites a singular, ambiguous aesthetic experience: it simultaneously arouses in the subject, by the sole virtue of its presence or absence, desire and fear. This underlying, wordless propositional structure, which foretells the actual presence or absence of the object, also supports the unspeakable, actual aesthetic sense of the object; the identity of the object undergoes a ceaseless metamorphosis, alternately threatening and seductive. Freud's conception seems to follow the nineteenth century idea which assumes that the predicative relation of judgement presupposes its two-member structure: the subject of the proposition is linked to its object which depicts the constellation of its attributes. However, he introduces a meaningful, though bold assumption: the thought process is impelled and invigorated

by desire, which, in turn, springs from the experiences of pleasure and pain brought about by the disappearance or presence of the loved object. The primordial structure of thought, supported by the successive cleavages of the perception, takes roots in a primordial aesthetic experience which oscillates between satisfaction and abjection, pleasure and pain, the love and the terror inherent in the sublime.

But, if we follow Freud's arguments, the primordial structure of the proposition does not only mirror the primordial relation of the subject with the object of its desire, also it reflects the impulses, the constraints and the imperatives which rule the transformations of the subject's phantasies. Freud thoroughly developed these implications in *Ein Kind wird geschlagen* (1919), in which he condenses, in the allegory of an unfolding grammatical process of logical propositional transformations, the manifold process of the shaping of the psychical identity, of perversion, expressed as the narrative motif of a violent, masochist relation. Freud will turn frequently to these logical-grammatical allegories—as he does chiefly in *Die Verneinung* (1925)—for an explanation of the inextricable entanglement between the construction of the subject's truth, the emergence of its identity and its aesthetic experience which has its origin in pain and abjection.⁴³ The function of the negative particle —*nein* [no]— both logic and grammatical, reveals, according to Freud's intricate exposition, an indirect signal, a linguistic residue of repression which evinces the *allegorical* role of the primordial propositional structure in the fictional origin of the subject: the appearance of negation in discourse is chiefly residual evidence of the repression undergone by an evoked representation, but also—and this strengthens its allegorical sense—the token and the residue of the emergence of its own identity. The non-referential meaning of the negative linguistic particle embodies the whole history of repression from its own origins and thus, must be considered both as the residue and the consequence of the genesis of the subject's identity.

Consequently, the process which leads to the fulfilment of the subject's desire does not only require that the mnemonic traces associated to the image of the original experience of satisfaction should be charged with energy⁴⁴, but it also presupposes the complex conjunction of different sets of attributes of the perceived object, that certain "essential" features of the perceived primal thing [*Das Ding*]⁴⁵ are echoed by changing

attributes both of the perceived thing and of the complex repertoire of its preparatory actions. However, Freud's passionate fidelity to empiricism led him to reject any transcendental conception of a *thing-in-itself*, for he considered this a mere idealistic and speculative postulate;⁴⁶ Freud's own singular *thing-in-itself* was rooted in a pure analytic sediment of the subject's primordial *perception of the thing*, gathered into a definitive, non-decaying single mnemonic representation. Freud seems to have replaced the Kantian speculative notion of *thing-in-itself*, which implied a *transcendental subject*, with an uncertain theoretical image of an indestructible memory, which he probably developed during his research on aphasia. Thus, the primal thing [*Das Ding*] should be a fixed nucleus of the traces of the perceived primal object, a hardened sediment of features, engraved on the soul as a perpetual shadow of the overwhelming, fully satisfying presence. It is this fixed nucleus of the traces of the primal thing that will command the subject's response to the changing physiognomy of objects.

Thought does not reduce itself to the various perceptions entangled in the core of a simple image. On the contrary, thought can be conceived of as an expanding grid of associated representations, as the thickening of the residual layer of the perceived aspects of the object. The invariant residue of the perception of the primal thing rules the aim of the senses; the mnemonic residue of the object which arouses desire and determines the unfettered repetition of the search for satisfaction has, in Freud's writing, an allegorical basis the neuron:⁴⁷ in his allegorized anatomy of the early *Entwurf*, the neuron *a* becomes the definite *locus* of the essential features of an object. From an imaginary conception of the bodily tissues, he derives a speculative, even scandalous image of the "psychical substance". Another neuron, neuron *b*, is the conjectural location of the memories of changing attributes and contingent actions regarding the invariant core of the thing. The neuron *c* represents the predicate of another judgement, the content of which condenses the contingent attributes and actions derived from other reappearances of the primal object or of a new one. Thought is, consequently, the process which contrasts and compares the contents of neuron *b* and *c*, provided that they refer to a common essential content of perception deposited in neuron *a*. The thought process thus expands, piece by piece, the fragmentary perceptions associated to the primordial object, and weaves a vast web of attributes and

potential actions attached to it. Thought process —Freud posited— refines [*vervollkommen*] resemblance and transforms it into identity. [*die Ähnlichkeit zur Identität zu vervollkommen*]. Resemblance might thus be seen as a slight, almost imperceptible, primary shiver aroused by the concurrence of the perceptions of a definite object in the psychical apparatus; the moment of the mythical, primal confrontation with the satisfying object is that at which the identity of perception and thought involves the memories of actions which lead to the disappearance either of pain or displeasure.

This peculiar distribution of memories among neurons, in turn, gives rise to an ontological and mythical assumption: there must be an *essence* of the object *immediately apprehensible by perception, the traces of which will be engraved without further alteration as obstinate, unchanged monuments on the subject's soul*. The object, as it appears to the primal perception, as it responds to the primal need of the being, is thus apprehended as a whole. Freud conceived it as the mythical origin of subjectivity and its perceptions as a primordial event which fuses the ontological core of this object and its contingent metamorphosis. Nevertheless, his devotion to induction, which led him to conceive the invariant dimension of the desired object as *derived* from perception, also demanded from him, paradoxically, the formulation of a speculative thesis which was to be the cornerstone of his conception of desire: indeed, the primal object of satisfaction yields its absolute, essential nature to a perception informed by desire, and imprints its figure upon the fictive substance of the soul, at the mythical instant of its appearance, when it first comes to the suffering child. But Freud's anxious search for empirical support for his reflection also demanded an open, evolving image of the object, conceived as the enduring memory of the perceptible, changing shapes of the original, satisfying object.⁴⁸

For Freud, the accomplishment of the thought process is the primordial condition of the absolute fulfilment of desire. The primordial object provides an absolute pleasure which fuses affection and nourishment. The energy spent in satisfaction, Freud remarks, does not reduce itself to a motor or energy discharge. Desire, driven by the contradictory tensions of memory and perception, detaches itself progressively from other physiological needs and becomes attached to sexual excitation.

While in its origins, satisfaction seems to be just the aftermath of a discharge of energy, brought about by the sole presence of the mother during the nourishment of the child, later, sexuality will acquire a distinct quality. It will become foreign to the sheer sensation of motor discharge, and its intrinsic features will derive from the nature of the relation between the sensation of the discharge and the complex memory of the primal loved object.

There is a progressive separation of affection and physiological needs. The thought process becomes incapable of accomplishing the identification of an object which embodies the total universe of the primordial experience. Affection is progressively extricated from successive experiences of nourishment and physiological fulfilment. The primordial encounter with the object becomes an isolated memory, the silent experience of an unaccomplished thought process which seeks vainly to restore the inner, primordial identity of memory and perception. The subject progressively frees itself from dependence upon the *presence* of the other for the satisfaction of the need for self-preservation —nourishment. However, the sexual excitations remain attached to the memory of the primordial experience of satisfaction:

on assiste à une séparation de l'une et de l'autre, puisque la sexualité, tout entière d'abord appuyée sur la fonction, est en même temps tout entière *dans le mouvement qui la dissocie d'avec la fonction vitale*. [...] Desormais, l'objet est abandonné, le but et aussi la source prennent leur autonomie par rapport à l'alimentation et au système digestif. Avec le suçotement nous arrivons au second "caractère" , qui est aussi un "moment", étroitement lié à l'étagage qui le précède: l'autoérotisme.⁴⁹

The patterns of the thought process undergo an irreversible metamorphosis. Once isolated, the essential, invariant memory of the primordial object will never again match new, intrusive perceptions. However, the memory of the experience of satisfaction is an essential part of this primordial, isolated memory of the lost object. What constitutes the sought identity of the perceived object remains foreign to the content of the memory of the primal object and the original experience of satisfaction. From the moment of the sundering of physiological needs from the symbolic constraints of sexuality, the thought process will no longer be directed at the essential core of the perceived object, but at its contingent perceivable traits. In terms of the

neuron allegory, this amounts to an absolute inversion of the structure of the thought process. Instead of neuron *a* —the perceived invariant of the object— determining the orientation of the thought process, it is neuron *b* —the associated set of functions and actions which aim at the contingent perception of the object— that commands the whole process of representation and the paths of the discharge of energy. The memory of the essence of the primal object becomes an isolated relic, linked to the ineffaceable trace of the primordial experience of satisfaction. The physiognomy and structure of the primary thought process has undergone a subtle but definitive transformation: the primal object ceases to be sought. Instead, the memory of its perceptual invariance *becomes a model* of the wished-for object. This transformation defines the ontological roots of desire.

The primary thought process, which shapes both the identities of the subject and the form of the perceived spectre of the world, reveals itself to be manifold in nature. Its search for identity has experienced an *absolute* metamorphosis: the excitation alone becomes the signal of the subject's search for satisfaction, commanded by the desire, dependent upon the unconscious relations between ephemeral perceived profiles and the trace of the primal loved object. Repetition —the essential feature of desire, the search of the absolute restoration of the original bond with the primordial object— becomes a restless, yet vain effort to achieve this primordial satisfaction and remains confined to the experience of pleasure. The thought process undergoes a new metamorphosis: it ceases to seek the *identity* between the primal memory and perception, but is satisfied by mere *similarity*. Repetition, the restoration of the original experience, is impossible and unleashes an *allegorical* search for the object.

However, the allegorical nature of the search will only be fully acknowledged by Freud in his work on narcissism in 1915, with the specific significance he confers on the notion anaclisis [*Anlehnung*]. The dual nature of desire becomes clear: it aims for identity and seeks mere similarity of the immediate perception and the non-symbolic memory of the primal experience. In Freud's view, the subject's *anaclitic* election of the object reflects the cleavage of perception and memory, undergone by the object itself. The memory of the perception of the primal object is eclipsed in the subject's experience by the intricate, dense fog of the perceived attributes of actual

objects, by the contingent, evanescent shade of their psychical representations, by the meanings of the words that name them, by the sheer number of their associated senses and figures, by their position in subject's history.

The memory of the primal object of love appears as a relic of an object the only surviving evidence of which is desire itself. The desired object is Freud's theoretical, singular image of the Kantian *thing-in-itself*.⁵⁰ Freud's own *Ding an sich*, his thing-in-itself—both essential and primordial for his whole intellectual enterprise—constitutes a pole the intense magnetism of which continues to rule actions of the subject eclipsed by the experience of the contingent attributes of an actual, real object. What once were marginal attributes of the object, become its acknowledged centre; the features which arouse the subject's passionate attachment. However, the presence of the primordial image of the object does not fade away, does not dissipate because of this inversion. It remains and thrives.

It is the simultaneous coexistence of divergent, dual patterns of a mute primary thought—the folding upon itself of the primary process which informs the action and the desire of the subject—that defines the main and puzzling characteristics of human sexuality. Consequently, desire can be conceived as the sequel of a confrontation between memory traces of words and of perception; as a symbol-driven process detached from its physiological base, yet nourished and invigorated by it. In Freud's terms, it is the essential paradoxical structure of thought that defines the complex process of anaclysis [*Anlehnung*]⁵¹, the obscure relation between the biological ground of psychical processes and their autonomous evolution.

If pleasure and unpleasure are sensations aroused by the discharge of energy, then they must yield to the symbolic constraint of primary thought which informs sexuality. The discharge of energy wholly depends upon the perceivable signs of the actual object and not upon the deep, preserved, memory of the irrecoverable perception of the primordial love. The symbolic nature of the pleasure principle is now discernible. However, the pleasure principle can also drive the subject to the limit experience of hallucinatory *satisfaction*. *Pleasure* seems to be achieved only by the mere discharge aroused by the presence of a *suitable object*. The difference between pleasure and satisfaction broadens.

Freud reserves the equivocal, yet suggestive term —full of historical, philosophical and literary resonances— of *pleasure principle*, for the naming of the intricate set of constraints on the biological, mnemonic, perceptual processes and motor reactions of the subject which unleash the effusion of energy and bring about the experience of pleasure. But *pleasure principle* can rather be thought of as a counterpart of Brentano's "structural intention"⁵², as a necessary relation between the whole structure of consciousness and a privileged acknowledged attribute of the objects of the world. Freud's pleasure principle becomes foreign, in a sense, to the ethic significance of pleasure put forward by the empiricists, preserving, nevertheless, some of its features. The conception of the symbolic determination of desire also unveils an essential alliance between the sources of pleasure and hallucination.

By the intrusion of the memories of words in consciousness, the subject has been freed from the mere circular, tyrannical repetition of the direct, immediate response to a perceived image resembling the wished-for object. Thus, language forges time; it introduces the chance of an equivocal yet essential delay between perception and pleasure. However, repetition holds to the deeper, silent and wordless, compulsion of the primary thought which rules the significance of the symbolic universe in the subject's action, and which emerges, in turn, from the subject's history.

The physiological excitation commanded by the symbolic constraints of desire, can lead to the creation of the hallucinatory presence of its object. Hallucination, in Freud's early vision, is just a singular, deficient evocation, which has failed to acknowledge the signals of the displayed images that reveal its inner provenance. Thus, the "hallucinatory presence" creates an obscure object, the sources of which appears neither as inner nor as outer; it seems not to spring from perception, nor to arise as an evocation. It obliterates the essential, subjective functions of language; hallucination turns language into isolated, material objects, emptied of their symbolic content, changing them into pure resonances of the dominating primary processes. Moreover, hallucination might be, when it manifests itself at late stages of the subject's development, the exorbitant exposure of a shattered language, overwhelmed by the rising power of timeless images, the spectre of which fuses evoked remnants of words,

disquieting sonorities, and unruly traces of perception.

Hallucination is in itself an unfruitful repetition: it represents the obstinate, unchanged reappearance of a non-representable object, it enacts the symbolic force, the tenacity of a non-symbolic identity. Hallucination portrays the exasperation of the subject's desire. The multiplicity of the objects involved in the thought process of desire, the slight but significant mutations in the ephemeral traits of the diverse physiognomies of the wished-for object, imply also the pliable fabric of the thought processes. Desire and perception no longer serve the aim of the experience of satisfaction.

The obstinate repetition of the search for the loved object involves a succession of fading objects and mutating identities of perception, a rhythmic sequence of absences. The wishful cathexis —the charge of energy that triggers the impulse of desire— is not simple repetition. It implies the structural transformation of the "ontological" time involved by desire. As we have already seen, there is a tension between the persistent reappearance of desire, the unchanging object of its search, and the transience and fragility of perception. The experience of satisfaction holds to the unexpressed, unspeakable physiognomy of the image of the primal love object. The primordial object is condemned to convey a sense of wholeness, irreducible to fragmented, surrogated images.⁵³

Poser l'existence d'un objet originaire, voire d'une Chose, à traduire par-delà un deuil accompli, n'est-ce pas un fantasme de théoricien mélancolique?

Il est certain que l'objet originaire, cet "en-soi" qui reste toujours à traduire, la cause ultime de la traductibilité, n'existe que pour et par le discours et le sujet déjà constitués. C'est parce que le traduit est déjà là que le traductible peut être imaginé et posé comme excédent ou incommensurable. Poser l'existence de cet autre langage et même d'un autre du langage, voire d'un hors langage, n'est pas nécessairement une réserve pour la métaphysique ou pour la théologie. *Ce postulat correspond à une exigence psychique que la métaphysique et la théorie occidentale ont eu, peut-être, la chance et l'audace de représenter.* Une exigence psychique qui n'est certes pas universelle: la civilisation chinoise n'est par exemple pas une civilisation de la traductibilité de la chose en soi, mais plutôt de la répétition et de la variation des signes, c'est-à-dire de la transcription.

L'obsession de l'objet originaire, de l'objet à traduire, suppose qu'une certaine adéquation (certes imparfaite) est considérée possible entre le signe et, non pas le référent, mais l'expérience non verbale du référent dans l'interaction avec l'autre. Je peux nommer vrai. L'être qui me déborde - y compris l'être de l'affect - peut trouver son expression adéquate ou quasi adéquate. Le pari de la traductibilité est aussi un pari de maîtriser l'objet originaire et, en ce sens, une tentative de combattre la dépression (due à un pré-objet envahissant dont je ne peux faire le deuil) par une cascade de signes destinée précisément à capter l'objet de joie, de peur, de douleur. *La métaphysique, avec son obsession de traductibilité, est un discours de la douleur dite et soulagée par cette nomination même. On peut ignorer, dénier la Chose originaire, on peut ignorer la douleur au profit de la légèreté des signes recopiés ou enjoués, sans dedans et sans vérité.[...]* L'homme occidental, au contraire, est persuadé de pouvoir traduire sa mère - il y croit certes, mais pour la traduire, c'est-à-dire la trahir, la transposer, s'en libérer. *Ce mélancolique triomphe sur sa tristesse d'être séparé de l'objet aimé par un incroyable effort à maîtriser les signes de sorte à les faire correspondre à des vécus originaires, innommables, traumatiques.*

Plus encore et en définitive, cette croyance dans la traductibilité ("maman est nommable, Dieu est nommable") conduit à un discours fortement individualisé, évitant la stéréotypie et le cliché, aussi bien qu'à la profusion des styles personnels. Mais par là-même, nous aboutissons à la trahison par excellence de la Chose unique et en soi (de la *Res divina*): si toutes les manières de la nommer sont permises, la Chose postulée en soi ne se dissout-elle pas dans les mille et une manières de la nommer? La traductibilité postulée aboutit en la multiplicité des traductions possibles. Le mélancolique potentiel qu'est le sujet occidental, devenu traducteur acharné, s'achève en joueur affirmé ou en athée potentiel. La croyance initiale en la traduction se transforme en une croyance dans la performance stylistique pour laquelle l'en deçà du texte, son autre, fût-il originaire, compte moins que la réussite du texte même.⁵⁴

It remains unclear at which stage of the development of subjectivity does the primal loved object achieve a fixed identity, and become a closed, autonomous entity, which resists the mutations of the turbulent flow of perception. It is not clear when the swelling sphere of the mnemonic attributes of the primal object gives rise to a fixed, secret memory. However, from that conjectural moment onwards, the search for the ephemeral achievement of satisfaction is not governed by the wish to recover the lost object, but to grasp a simulacrum of it.

3. Timeless residues: the fixed image of movement

Memory is the name conferred upon the fixed, unavoidable, images of the absent; it is also the name given to the representations of past and passing actions. It names the enduring, obstinate network of the perceptions of past presences engraved on the voluble substance of the subject's soul. But memory may also be conceived either as recalled reminiscences or intrusive images thrust upon the continuous flow of perception. Memory introduces into the subject's experience of time a discontinuity which suspends the implacable course of consciousness. With memory, the ordered succession of perceived events crumbles. There is a sudden enhancement of experience and an untimely outburst of remembrance; but some intrusive image may overcome the dissipating force which disperses gliding, recalled images; remembrance might hold to the unyielding signs of the unrecognized fate which looms from memory, perturbing the pace of the soul ruled, as it is, by the intrinsic impatience of perception. Yet, perceivable pain and memory share this common feature: both dam the trodden path of autonomous perception. They disturb the succession of perceived images of events. They introduce opaqueness in the perception of duration, and impose a singular inflection on the subject's experience of time.

It has often been remarked, that perhaps the source of Freud's hesitant conception of memory was the twisted narration of hysterics, their cunning yet unwilling amnesia, their proclivity to selective forgetfulness. Hysteria reveals contradictory impulses originated in the divergent senses of the traces, in the psychical processes they trigger, which drive the subject to seek both enduring remembrance and oblivion. According to Freud's early account of hysteria, certain experiences are severed from any meaningful evocation, despite the persistence of memories which remain as active, forceful, yet silent and unspeakable images, engraved on the mind; they resist the subject's will to narrate. Yet the sense of this resistance that shatters the expression itself remains unfathomable.

However, from Freud's point of view, it is quite clear that it is the physiological process, the production of quantities of inner energy, that governs the reappearance of the memories of the unformulated episode under the appearance of a

symptom, a mere bodily signal which resists interpretation. There is a disquieting relation between certain enduring "modifications" of the pathways along which bodily energy discharges, and the symbolic expression of the affective intensity linking to the residues of the memories of lost objects.

The simultaneous cleavage and intrinsic link of physiological processes and symbolic expressions, which serve common ends and seems to share a recondite teleology, the only tangible sign of which is the sensation of pleasure, define one of Freud's most obscure, yet nevertheless outstanding, theoretical contributions.

Freud dislocated the meanings of the notions of *association* and *(re)presentation* [*Vorstellungen*], and redefined their commonly accepted relation, which, although severely constricted by the psychoanalytic conceptual framework, was to prove one of Freud's steadiest contributions to the conception of subjectivity throughout the successive stages of development of psychoanalytic theory.

The peculiar relation of association and representation, as Freud understands it, seems to derive from the need to find a particular theoretical guarantee for the exigencies of a dynamic notion of repression. This relation is founded on a radical conception of the shattering of language, and on the observation of anxiety as a pervading force originating in the cleavage of language and memory. The shattering of language impose on the capacity of evocation a profound disturbance. Hysteria, as Freud stressed, springs from the singular impossibility of words to *present* the complex web of perception, memory and thought, because of the deranging intrusion of intense affection in the psychical sphere. It is this overwhelming affection that shatters language, preventing words from preserving its constitutional bond both with the affective process and with memories, and completely obliterating their capacity to represent the "state of things". Moreover, this force, which disjointed the components of the word originally fused into a whole, remains foreign to language, even to representation; it is a *non-representable, secret force, which engenders an unfathomable, yet inevitable experience*, possible because of the intrinsic structure of language itself; it is this force which abstracts the intensities of affection from the ordinary substance of the word, and consequently it sets the boundaries of the subject's experience. It produces a peculiar, symbolic experience, which drives the subject to a

paradoxical, negative expressiveness: the subject is seized by unwilling muteness, the limits of the subject's expressiveness appear as the untraceable effect of an effusion of energy capable of destroying the meaningful consistency of words. Nevertheless, there is a sense conveyed by this destruction, an unpronounceable yet effective sense which can stir in the subject, in spite of the intangible nature of the broken signs, an enduring disquiet. Yet, the substantial components of the word, which are dismembered by the bursting energy, engender in their crumbling the very sense of the destruction. The ruined language renders visible the violent effusion of inner energy; it bears testimony to a suffocated act of language. The sense of destruction, even if it remains foreign to representation, to any means of expression, is conveyed by the distinctive remains of the wrecked act of nomination.

In Freud's conception, it is only when the subject reaches the upper stages of sexual development, that the effective and dynamically efficient impact of the repression will be fully acknowledged. However, this delayed awareness does not amount to a full comprehension of the process and to the recognition of its sources; they remain obscure, foreign to consciousness.⁵⁵ The pain of the hysteric, aroused by this series of indeterminate meanings and contradictory experiences of time, reveals an unspeakable anxiety stirred by the meaningless remains of this *unbearable experience of the wreckage of language*. However, in hysteria it is not the word alone that has been rendered impossible; rather, it is the very possibility of a complete narrative action, the wholeness of the narration that has been obliterated. This experience of the weakness of speech, of the curtailed impulse to narrate, is also evidence of the limits of the subject. *Hysteria appears as the evidence of the destruction of narration that issues from reminiscence, from the cleavage of the unity of the word, the dismembering of which entails the impossibility of representing the subject's own history. The unaccomplished, ephemeral impulse to restore the meaningful continuity of experience contrasts with the indelible engraving of the residues of the painful primal experiences which remain unformulated.* Thus, the main issue of psychoanalysis is not to elucidate the lasting tension between an image of the word as such and its trace in memory, but the illumination of the subject's inability to fully restore the relation between the dispersed elements of representation. Freudian psychoanalysis has bestowed on us the

privilege of the awareness of the muteness of our own history; of the secrecy inherent to our own identity, which also defines our own language; of the awareness of an intense affection which paradoxically eludes and devastates language, and burdens the subject's image of its own identity.

Freud's implicit notion of memory seems to closely resemble here that of Bergson. Indeed, Bergson conceives remembrance as a breaking point in the subject's experience of time. It is the subject's means to escape the siege of the external stimulus; hence, memory can be depicted as the dynamic condition of mind which isolates the subject from the stream of images of the world; simultaneously, memory thrusts him into the core of life, for memory becomes an active force able to transform the development of action and the image of the future:

la force interieur qui permet à l'être de se dégager du rythme d'écoulement des choses, de retenir de mieux en mieux le passé pour influencer de plus en plus profondément l'avenir, c'est à dire enfin, au sens spécial que nous donnons à ce mot, sa memoire.⁵⁶

The hysteric perturbation simultaneously hampers and evinces this movement which paradoxically darkens and enhances the subject's experience of time. Memory, as might be inferred from the characters and episodes forged by hysterics, cannot be conceived as a fixed set of obstinately recalled images, nor as the digressive tale which manifests a universe of distorted or partial engravings of evanescent perceptions. Rather, hysteria manifests itself in the subject's fiction which enacts the non-representable breaking of language as a gap in the narration; this gap stands for a secret, non-expressible, forgotten episode in the history of the subject. Hysterics exhibit in their own narration the signs of the timeless intrusion of a diffuse, untraceable, yet compelling force which drives them to swerve endlessly from their original narrative intention. In hysteria, the fragmented memory seems to shield the subject from the urgent demands of his immediate environment and suspend or cancel his own narrative will; it is memory that provides him the substitute satisfaction attained by the mere hallucinatory *presence* of the loved object. But it is also memory that prevents him from creating a singular, new experience.

Despite this notion of memory, Freud's conception still holds to the notion of

trace, which inevitably evokes a universe of acquired and perhaps definite representations. This notion appears to be a complex symbolic matter. It exposes the radical asymmetry between the conventional meanings of symbol and the significance of the primal experience. Moreover, according to Freud's conception, the symbol remains foreign to the trace itself; the conventional symbol —chiefly language— is nothing more than debris which, however, is likely to evoke images, fictional allegories which stir the excitation of the primal experiences, but not the memories of the experience itself. This mnemonic symbol represents the material, yet merely conjectural, relic of a forgotten episode. However, with the notion of trace, Freud seems to have moved away from Bergson's dynamic conception of memory, and to have yielded to the seduction of associationism. Indeed, association calls to mind the image of a relation between located entities which emerge from perception as a constellation of settled presences, as a finite inventory of signs.

In a first analysis, Bergson's interior force [*force interieur*] seems to be opposed to Freud's ineffaceable substantial relics —the traces— which are vaguely transcribed from outer perception to the delicate registers of memory and which resemble a simple map of memory. Memory appears thus, in Freud's terms, as an assortment of simple, clearly circumscribed material signs able to avoid the erosion provoked by the cessation of perception or physiological decay. Each trace seems to preserve its full capacity to *reproduce* a specific scene, a definite perception. But these traces remain foreign to the subject itself, they "act as a sort of foreign body" [*nach Art eines Fremdkörpers wirkt*] (*Entwurf einer Psychologie*, GW, 1895, I: 85) beyond the reach of words, constituting the core of unspeakable experiences in the *Omphalos* of subjectivity⁵⁷.

Yet this foreign body, which in Freud's early clinical work will be "associated" with trauma, is but a testimony born of hollowness. The trauma only reveals itself as a memory of a loss or a fault, of an inexpressible, experienced intensity which confounds itself with pain; it reveals itself as the remains of the ephemeral cessation of the flood of life, an in formulable episode the force of which suffocates the impulse of memory. Trauma becomes the frightful evidence of a symbolic destruction which, nevertheless, eludes the force of representation: the notion of trauma expresses the impossibility of narrating an abrupt, piercing perception capable of stirring the

subject's emotion linked to the image of the primordial pain of the absence of the loved object.

Freud, despite his relative coincidence with Bergson in the need for a dynamic notion of memory, approaches it from a completely different point of view. According to Freudian assumptions, memory cannot be conceived as a deposit of images, but should be seen as an intricate map of the intensities and the displacements of inner energy.⁵⁸ The objects of memory derive, in the last analysis, from their fundamental link to the dual structure of the experience which is build upon memory of primal satisfaction and pain.

But the link to these primal experiences also imposes on the memory different forms of resistance. The dynamic tension which defines memory derives from the specific content which Freud gave to the thermodynamic distinction between bound and free energy. It is this distinction that led him to the separation between a memory, topographically defined, and the dynamic implications of mnemic traces; memory was then located, with the fixed representation of word residues, in the preconscious, while the entangled tensions in the thread of the mnemic traces inform the unconscious.

Die Vorgänge des Systems Vbw zeigen - und zwar gleichgültig, ob sie bereits bewußt oder nur bewußtseinsfähig sind - eine Hemmung der Abfuhrneigung von den besetzten Vorstellungen. Wenn der Vorgang von einer Vorstellung auf eine andere übergeht, so hält die erstere einen Teil ihrer Besetzung fest, und nur ein kleiner Anteil erfährt die Verschiebung. Verschiebungen und Verdichtungen wie beim Primärvorgang sind ausgeschlossen oder sehr eingeschränkt. Dieses Verhältnis hat J. Breuer veranlaßt, zwei verschiedene Zustände der Besetzungsenergie im Seelenleben anzunehmen, einen tonisch gebundenen und einen frei beweglichen, der Abfuhr zustrebenden. Ich glaube, daß diese Unterscheidung bis jetzt unsere tiefste Einsicht in das Wesen der nervösen Energie darstellt, und sehe nicht, wie man um sie herumkommen soll. Es wäre ein dringendes Bedürfnis der metapsychologischen Darstellung - vielleicht aber noch ein allzu gewagtes Unternehmen -, an dieser Stelle die Diskussion fortzuführen. Dem System Vbw fallen ferner zu die Herstellung einer Verkehrsfähigkeit unter den Vorstellungsinhalten, so daß sie einander beeinflussen können, die zeitliche Anordnung derselben, die Einführung der einen Zensur oder mehrerer Zensuren, die Realitätsprüfung und das Realitätsprinzip. Auch das bewußte Gedächtnis scheint ganz am Vbw zu hängen, es ist scharf von den Erinnerungsspuren zu scheiden, in denen sich die Erlebnisse des Ubw fixieren, und entspricht wahrscheinlich einer besonderen Niederschrift, wie wir sie für das Verhältnis

*der bewußten zur unbewußten Vorstellung annehmen wollten, aber bereits verworfen haben. (Das Unbewußten, SA, 1915, III: 148)**

Freud's hesitation about the content of memory traces does not obscure the clearly defined duality of the memory: the different yet inextricable natures of preconscious and unconscious psychical processes, which derive from distinct dynamic behaviours. The dualism of memory also bears testimony to the vicissitudes of the agonistic relation between the primal terms of the subject's experience: pain and satisfaction. The misleading apparent simplicity of the relation between them veils the underlying uneasiness of the conceptual tension of Freud's thought. Freud suggests there is a difference between traces according to the nature their different sources: the enduring traces of the excitation which result from the outpouring of the energy, the facilitations [*die Dauerspür der Erregung (Bahnung)*], and those which stem, in the last analysis, from the mere perception of the outer world. The origin of the traces seems to stress a fundamental splitting of Freud's universe: the inner world sundered from the outer world. However, the conflict between these two spaces and these sources resembles the Baroque condensation of the opposition between the endurance of the traces and the extraordinary fragility of the perceived images, as well as the opposition between the complex dynamics of the repression undergone by the primordial representations and the unobstructed flow of energy which characterizes the perception of the outer world.

Perception is not only directed outwards, it can also turn inwards. Perception can fold inwards seeking to comprehend the signs of its own inner experience: the

*The processes of the system Pcs. display -no matter whether they are already conscious or only capable of becoming conscious- an inhibition of the tendency of cathected ideas towards discharge. When a process passes from one idea to another, the first idea retains a part of its cathexis and only a small portion undergoes displacement. Displacements and condensations such as happen in the primary process are excluded or very much restricted. This circumstance caused Breuer to assume the existence of two different states of cathectic energy in mental life: one in which the energy is tonically 'bound' and the other in which it is freely mobile and presses towards discharge. In my opinion this distinction represents the deepest insight we have gained up to the present into the nature of nervous energy, and I do not see how we can avoid making it. A metapsychological presentation would most urgently call for further discussion at this point, though perhaps that would be too daring an undertaking as yet.

Further, it devolves upon the system Pcs. to make communication possible between the different ideational contents so that they can influence one another, to give them an order in time, and to set up a censorship or several censorships; 'reality testing' too, and the reality principle, are in its province. Conscious memory, moreover, seems to depend wholly on the Pcs. This should be clearly distinguished from the memory-traces in which the experiences of the *Ucs.* are fixed, and probably corresponds to a special registration such as we proposed (but later rejected) to account for the relation of conscious to unconscious ideas. (FP, 11: 192)

perceived signs of the world fuse with the reflexive perception of the inner processes. Thus, perception builds the "inner" body following the models of the exterior objects; it creates a fictional density of the self, the phantasm of its own depth which, in turn, transforms itself into a fictive memory, an experience of the subject's own body, of its own identity. In this reflexive perception which blends the inner and the outer, memory takes as their privileged object the unsignified experience of inner processes, the energy which goes through the facilitations and which charges the psychical traces of the perceived outside world.⁵⁹

The appearance of the features of perception in the theoretical reflection frustrated any possibility of a straightforward conception of the representational process. Freud offered an alternative conception of the origins of representation: memory signs emerge as a result of displacement of inner energy which sets the dynamic psychical conditions of repetition and inhibition of this moving charge.⁶⁰

Freud's conception is notoriously obscure. Indeed, it broadens the breach between the physical and the psychical. But it also suggests a complex, Baroque entanglement of both universes. It might be said that the image of the separation must have emerged from a crucial insight which paved the way for the conception of the unconscious; in this view, the fictive image of physical interiority articulate both universes —psychical and physical— into inextricable yet incongruous unity bonded by this perception, by this inward, inherently interpretative perception. The concept of the unconscious appears on the shadow line which separates the diverging schemes of psychical and physical causality which govern psychical processes. These schemes are, on the one hand, "natural" determination, ruled by the principle of inertia and by the dynamics of free and bounded energy, and on the other, psychical determination, the logic of which involves the coexistence of the schemes of speechless thought, and traces of actual language. The dark source of action might be this struggle between physical and psychical constraints, the incongruous relation between perception and memory, or rather, the conflict between the complex unutterable, non-symbolic logical patterns engendered by the breakdown of representation.

Freud insisted upon the necessity for inner thought processes to manifest themselves,

driven by word residues which should convey the excess of energy. As unconscious processes —unconscious thoughts— can exist without being perceived, it is only this lasting relation to words which can render unconscious processes into sensations.

Abgekürzter, nicht ganz korrekterweise sprechen wir dann von unbewußten Empfindungen, halten, die Analogie mit unbewußten Vorstellungen fest, die nicht ganz gerechtfertigt ist. Der Unterschied ist nämlich, daß für die *Ubw* Vorstellung erst Verbindungsglieder geschaffen werden müssen, um sie zum *Bw* zu bringen, während dies für die Empfindungen, die sich direkt fortleiten, entfällt. Mit anderen Worten: Die Unterscheidung von *Bw* und *Vbw* hat für die Empfindungen keinen Sinn, das *Vbw* fällt hier aus, Empfindungen sind entweder bewußt oder unbewußt. Auch wenn sie an Wortvorstellungen gebunden werden, danken sie nicht diesen ihr Bewußtwerden, sondern sie werden es direkt. Die Rolle der Wortvorstellungen wird nun vollends klar. Durch ihre Vermittlung werden die inneren Denkvorgänge zu Wahrnehmungen gemacht. Es ist, als sollte der Satz erwiesen werden - Alles Wissen stammt aus der äußeren Wahrnehmung. Bei einer Überbesetzung des Denkens werden die Gedanken wirklich - wie von außen - wahrgenommen und darum für wahr gehalten. (*Das Ich und das Es*, SA, 1923, III: 291-292).*

The distinction between "unconscious feelings" [*unbewußten Empfindungen*] and word (re)presentations, as well as the vicissitudes of their "transmission" [*fortleiten*] from the unconscious to consciousness bring to light a seldom explored territory within Freud's conception. Two issues emerge from Freud's astounding remark: on the one hand, the capacity of feelings to elude the representations of memory which reside in the preconscious, and yet still remain susceptible to repression; on the other hand, the need for word representations —not of words only— to render visible the speechless thought process which governs desire and repetition, and to clarify the confusion of perception regarding the provenance of thought, due to its "overcharge" [*überbesetzung*] of energy in the primary process. The uneasy relation between the obscure notions of *unconscious*

*We then come to speak, in a condensed and not entirely correct manner, of 'unconscious feelings', keeping up an analogy with unconscious ideas which is not altogether justifiable. Actually the difference is that, whereas with *Ucs. ideas* connecting links must be created before they can be brought into the *Cs.*, with *feelings*, which are themselves transmitted directly, this does not occur. In other words: the distinction between *Cs.* and *Pcs.* has no meaning where feelings are concerned; the *Pcs.* here drops out — and feelings are either conscious or unconscious. *Even when they are attached to word-presentations, their becoming conscious is not due to that circumstance, but they become so directly.* The part played by word-presentations now become perfectly clear. By their interposition internal thought-processes are made into perceptions. It is like a demonstration of the theorem that all knowledge has its origins in external perception. When a hypercathexis of the process of thinking takes place, thoughts are actually perceived — as if they came from without — and are consequently held to be true. (FP, 11: 361)

feelings and sensations, and between *conscious feelings and perceptions*, as well as between *primary thought processes and unconscious feelings*, leads to an intricate conceptual conflict when Freud seeks to elucidate the role of pain and culpability, and the resulting model of the inner conflict between the super-ego and ego, or the origins of the *perceived sensation of anxiety*.⁶¹

Language remains a marginal province, an ancillary means of thought in the presence of the rising force of feelings, wordlessly bursting into consciousness. The experience of the wordless —meaningless— perception of feelings, of their autonomy regarding thought, the experience either of the immediateness of their arousal or of the absolute concealment of their impulse, the awareness of the capacity of feelings to escape the labyrinthine deferral of words in which desire is caught, or of the unconditional surrender of feelings to the force of repression, the experience of the independence of feelings from desire, reveal an unsuspected quality both of psychical processes, and of feelings themselves. Moreover, feelings become an object of reflexive consciousness, and the speech which informs the meditation of consciousness on its own feelings arouses, in turn, unformulated feelings. However, the particular nature of feelings, the source of their singular quality, and the temporal heterogeneity they introduce in the psychical process becomes a marginal topic of Freud's conception of the psychical structure. From the theoretical conditions of this exclusion it is possible to infer the nature of the resistance of psychoanalytic conception to explicitly face the nature of pain and its impact upon the structure of subjectivity: pain appears both inherent in Freud's conception of desire and memory, and foreign to the fundamental assumptions of psychoanalysis.

The immediate consciousness of feelings casts a dazzling light upon the nature of the "subordinate", though paradoxical position of word traces in Freud's theoretical scheme. Words introduce a vaguely understood "delay" in the path of thought towards consciousness; they appear as an intermediate stage in the passage of the reflexive thought from mute, "physiological" and "dynamic" dialogue to the expressiveness of speech. In Freud's early theoretical scheme, the word, conceived as a *necessary condition* of the conscious perception of thought, also determines the reflexive

movement of consciousness. Consequently, the word appears as an intrinsic attribute of the conscious perception of unconscious "judgement", despite the external conditions which determine the meaning of the word as object. The word, once perceived, once acknowledged as an outer object, transforms itself within the subject's psychical sphere into a mere memory trace. It is precisely as a word trace that this shadow of language informs the whole secondary process of thought as if the sources of meaning were the internal psychical processes themselves; simultaneously, the perceived word preserves the features of foreign, outer objects.

The *internal nature* of word traces is different from the image of the word as it is perceived from outer sources. However, the memory traces of these words, regardless of its exterior origin, completely lack any particular feature that reveals their provenance. The word conveys, because of this non-betokened origin, what appears to the subject as an absolute, timeless though uncertain meaning: the word constitutes a radical mirage which embodies the subject's whole symbolic universe. Nevertheless, word traces, confined within a layer of the psychical apparatus, acquire an absolute command of the subject's notions of reality and truth. And this absolute power of the word, its autonomous nature, and its uncertain yet cardinal function in the system of memory, transform the enigmatic origin of the word into the mirage of truth:

Bei einer Überbesetzung des Denkens werden die Gedanken wirklich - wie von außen - wahrgenommen und darum für wahr gehalten. (*Das Ich und das Es*, SA, 1923, III: 292)*.

These features confer on thoughts the strange dignity of a non-subjective truth. Word residues constitute a complex, articulated though autonomous system within the *preconscious*.

Wortvorstellungen sind Erinnerungsreste, sie waren einmal Wahrnehmungen und können wie alle Erinnerungsreste wieder bewußt werden (*Das Ich und das Es*, SA, 1923, III: 289)**

However, word traces differ completely from the other representations contained in the

*When a hypercathexis of the process of thinking takes place, thoughts are actually perceived — as if they came from without — and are consequently held to be true. (FP, 11: 361)

**These word presentations are residues of memories; they were at one time perceptions, and like all mnemonic residues they can become conscious again. (FP, 11: 358)

preconscious, and from other memory traces. This notion of word traces as material residue which allows the conscious appearance of thought processes introduces in Freud's conceptions an additional tension concerning the role of time in the structure of subjectivity. Words originate a peculiar set of memory traces. However, these traces are both sources of memories, and the means by which consciousness can engage in self-reflection, and signs able to set the focus of attention; thus, word traces establish the moment, rhythms and intensities of desire, the expectation of the desired object and the thread of the fiction which displays the subject's phantasies.

Evocation appears as the unfolding of associated images; it indicates, in Freud's scheme, a discharge of energy along distinct, divergent paths. What appears to the consciousness as a sequence of images has its origins in the expanding web of memory traces. Thus, the trace is not only a residue, but an active ferment likely to *create* significance. The notion of trace thus implies a complex entanglement of processes with distinct rhythms and evolving patterns: the trace remains, but not only as that which has been left aside, the lasting evidence of an extinguished event. It is also a potential, unbounded sign, the source of the sense of an imminent unfolding of representation, of an endless expansion of the vast web of traces which may be charged, in turn, by the increasing intensity of internal energy. This expansion of internal energy rules memory and representation. Nevertheless, this driving energy is governed by the principle of constancy, which seeks to abate the mounting internal energy and lead the psychical apparatus to a discharge, chiefly when excess energy breaks the barriers of perception: the dynamic engendering of pain.

The association of representations themselves informed by the wordless and divergent —neither comparable nor contradictory— experiences of pleasure and pain, may induce the psychical apparatus to delay or hasten the discharge. The experience of expectation, the complex behaviour of internal energy that manifests itself as attention —an increase in the level of energy which simultaneously expands the spectre of potential perceptions and associations, and intensifies the charge of energy in the circumscribed domain of the traces related to the loved object—, produces the experience of non-completeness, the foreshadowing of an impending yet uncertain presence; the future is then invented as pure potency. The attention springs either from

pain or from the shades of affection which anticipate it. Malcolm Bowie has stressed the relevance of the past in Freud's explanatory framework, and of the preeminence of past over the suggestive power of the future. The dominant impulse of thought when it faces the disquieting silence of the future is to invest it with the affections and images from the experiences, to turn it into a coherent image made from shreds of reminiscences.

past always had a logical as well as chronological priority over the present and the future; and it always had more explanatory force.⁶²

Freud was no exception. However, he hesitates. Anticipation and desire —this opaque grasp of future time—, the longing for the object once present in the origin of the subject's chronologies, mould the emerging images of imminent and remote times. These images attenuate or even suffocate the subject's own perception of the anxiety which arises from the dissipation of the future. These distorted experiences, which create the images of the future with the allegorical transformation of the past, undermined Freud's striving for a conclusive explanation of the role of desire in the forging of the images of future.⁶³ Because phantasy is regressive and it enacts a allegorical, hallucinatory restoration of the experience of satisfaction, it appears always as repetition.

The unconscious recall of suffering endured in the past, joined to the excitation aroused by the non-signified traces of the desired object, inform the experience of time: the evoked threat of the loss of the primordial object and its momentary attenuation in the wake of the experience of satisfaction, the paradoxical temporality inherent in repetition, the time of the disappearance of the loved object and its hallucinatory return, punctuate the sequence of memory in the subject's experience. The folding back of thought and memory upon the primal painful experience engenders the experience of density of time.

Association produces, indeed, an "interpretative" movement about the traces of the object of love, about the source of the repetition which seeks to restore the primal experience of satisfaction. Thus, the associative web is not only the source of the *creation* of sense; its disquieting metamorphosis engenders a "pulsating" relation as

well—the subject both becomes attached or is torn away from real objects. Each time the image of a previously fixed image is restored, the routes of excitation are drastically altered, and the boundaries of the perception are irreversibly redefined. Evocation, conceived as the conscious allegorical enactment of inner speechless thought, is, nevertheless, nothing more than a sort of reflexive interpretation the spring of which remains untraceable. But this interpretation is in itself constrained by the dynamic conflict provoked by the intense, shapeless effusion of energy stirred by the memory of primal experiences.

Freud's meditations on the evoked images reveal, like an image reflected by a negative mirror, the dynamic conflict of the repression, the temporal tension produced by hallucination—conceived as a regressive restoration of primordial experiences—, and the conjectural, future-creating capacity of the day-dream.

Freud's notion of *experience* is complex. It implies undefined conceptions of the psychical representation of time, of memory, of expressiveness and of the significance of perception, of the role and the nature of evocation, and a notion of the subject's action as creation. Despite the cardinal position of the notion of *experience* in Freud's theoretical scheme, it remained virtually undeveloped. Moreover, Freud's empiricist convictions led him to imagine, at the culminating stage of his theoretical enterprise, a temporal circularity in the genesis and expression of the unconscious processes. In this reflection, he seems to have unwittingly transformed Locke's account of the origin of ideas. Indeed, Locke wrote:

But, our *ideas* being nothing but the actual perceptions in the mind, which cease to be anything when there is no perception of them; this laying up of our ideas in the repository of the memory signifies no more but this, — that the mind has a power in many cases to revive perceptions which it once had, with this additional perception annexed to them, that *it has had them before*.⁶⁴

However, Locke's conception was to be drastically transformed by the incorporation of the allegorical images of the "psychical" apparatus—the traces, the remains—which also redefine Locke's notion of memory in terms which completely revoke the conditions imposed on philosophical thought by the notion of an undivided, unitary

subject, of mind as a whole. In fact, Freud overturned his "empiricist" heritage:

bewußt werden kann nur das, was schon einmal *Bw* Wahrnehmung war, und was außer Gefühlen von innen her bewußt werden will, muß versuchen, sich in äußere Wahrnehmungen umzusetzen. Dies wird mittels der Erinnerungsspuren möglich. Die Erinnerungsreste denken wir uns in Systemen enthalten, welche unmittelbar an das System *W-Bw* anstoßen, so daß ihre Besetzungen sich leicht auf die Elemente dieses Systems von innen her fortsetzen können. Man denkt hier sofort an die Halluzination und an die Tatsache, daß die lebhafteste Erinnerung immer noch von der Halluzination wie von der äußeren Wahrnehmung unterschieden wird, allein ebenso rasch stellt sich die Auskunft ein, daß bei der Wiederbelebung einer Erinnerung die Besetzung im Erinnerungssystem erhalten bleibt, während die von der Wahrnehmung nicht unterscheidbare Halluzination entstehen mag, wenn die Besetzung nicht nur von der Erinnerungsspur auf das *W*-Element übergreift, sondern völlig auf dasselbe übergeht. (*Das Ich und das Es*, SA, 1920, III: 288-290)*

Freud introduces a subtle difference between two related notions which refer to these remains of the word: memory-trace [*Erinnerungsspuren*] and mnemic residues [*Erinnerungsreste*]. Each of these concepts stresses particular features of the unfolding path of perception. Each of them and their relation seem to reproduce the image of the subject's stratified memory and the conception of their dynamic difference. Thus, they differ both in their genesis and in their role. While the mnemic-trace becomes an intrinsic element of the primary processes—the condition of the stratification of the psychological apparatus—the residues appear as the relics of process which have a direct intrinsic relation to the memories of language. The relation between these Freudian notions—the trace and the residue—, calls to mind that between the image of the non-representable, primal relics of memory, and the signal which has the capacity to restore the perceived image of the absent object, it is language. The asymmetry between these

*only something which has once been a *Cs.* perception can become conscious, and that anything arising from within (apart from feelings) that seek to become conscious must try to transform itself into external perception: this becomes possible by means of memory-traces. We think of mnemic residues as being contained in systems which are directly adjacent to the system *Pcpt.-Cs.*, so that the cathexes of those residues can readily extend from within on the elements of the later system. We immediately think here of hallucinations, and of the fact that the most vivid memory is always distinguishable both from hallucination and from an external perception but it will also occur to us at once that when a memory is revived the cathexis remains in the mnemic system, whereas a hallucination, which is not distinguishable from a perception, can arise when the cathexis does not merely spread over from the memory-trace on to the *Pcpt.* element, but passes over to it *entirely*. Verbal residues are derived primarily from auditory perceptions, so that the system *Pcs.* has, as it were, a special sensory source. (FP, 11: 358)

notions resembles that between interpretation and interpreted matter.

Phantasy, day-dreaming, as well as hallucination and perception itself occupy different though definite positions in this temporal circularity of traces, residues, perceptions and language. What phantasy and day-dreaming narrate, find its coherence in the certainty of the existence of a definite link between the allegorized, fictional representation of the fading primordial object, and the elements of the perception of certain object which have remained associated to the mnemonic images of the experience of satisfaction. Despite its unyielding opacity, phantasy appears as a clearly recognizable fiction, able to display its own pace, an identifiable plot, an understandable, logical sequence. Phantasy might be conceived, thus, as the allegorical expression which originates from both the "symbolic" manifestation of the speechless structures of primary thought, and the images of everyday perception which echo the mnemonic residues of the subject's primordial experience, inextricably bonded in a disquieting palimpsest of elusive significance; the constellation of opacities, of scraps of expressive matter which perturb the clarity of its narrative unfolding, resembles the Baroque anamorphosis. Phantasy thus appears, in the Freudian text, as an anamorphic image, an optical ruse which creates a mysterious efigy that reveals and conceals, displays a *jeu de masque* and the emblems of death, inscribes upon its facade the signs of transience and the metamorphosis of the gaze and its image. Both anamorphosis and phantasy seem to reveal, if seen from certain specific angle, the figure of a foreign time, the evidence of an autonomous, complete, yet unspeakable signification the force of which pervades the whole narration and even obliterates its explicit sense. Moreover, in phantasy, as in the Baroque anamorphosis, these isolated signs strives for a definite meaning, the destruction of its own expressive power.

In the metamorphosis of temporalities and the distorted signs engraved in allegory, phantasy abruptly exposes the unpronounceable core of primary thought; it is the intermittent exposure of this forbidden object that is capable by itself of arousing the subject's excitation. This reappearance of the shade of the primal object seems to be enough to disquiet consciousness. The closeness of the adumbrated primal object of love, evoked in both phantasy and fetichism,⁶⁵ seems to account for the excitation stirred by their unusual and astounding images.

In 1926, Freud abruptly redefined his notion of anxiety. It ceased to be the consequence of repression, the non-signified, non-sayable, non-representable perception of the effusion of energy unleashed by a shattered utterance. Anxiety turned out to be, in Freud's later meditation, a response to what he considered to be the human, deeply rooted experience of hollowness, of abandonment. Despite the thorough reconstruction of this notion, his early conviction of the absolute dominion of anxiety over all the other experiences still prevailed. A brief, clear formulation of the supremacy of anxiety appears in his 1909 analysis of *little Hans*:

Wenn einmal der Angstzustand hergestellt ist, so zehrt die Angst alle anderen Empfindungen auf; mit fortschreitender Verdrängung, je mehr die schon bewußt gewesenen affekttragenden Verstellungen ins Unbewußte rücken, können sich alle Affekte in Angst verwandeln. (*Analyse der Phobie eines fünfjährigen Knaben*, SA, 1909, VIII: 35)*

However, in 1926, this conception of anxiety was to be fully revised, and then conceived in completely different terms: it ceased to be the subject's reflexive perception of the mounting, internal energy produced by the collapse of the psychical representation which has yielded to repression. In this later, disconcerting account of anxiety, explicitly presented in his work *Hemmung, Symptom und Angst* (1926), it appears as the *origin* of subjectivity, and not as a result of a shattered representation, rather, it appears as the very source of representation itself. Anxiety was conceived as a primordial, autonomous experience, free from the constraints of representation, and brought about by the loss of the primal object of love. Anxiety stands, in the subject's experience, as a token both of the lost object, and of the loss itself.

die Angst wird bei der Verdrängung nicht neu erzeugt, sondern als Affektzustand nach einem vorhandenen Erinnerungsbild reproduziert. Mit der weiteren Frage nach der Herkunft dieser Angst —wie der Affekte überhaupt— verlassen wir aber den unbestritten psychologischen Boden und betreten das Grenzgebiet der Physiologie. Die Affektzustände sind dem Seelenleben als Niederschläge uralter traumatischer Erlebnisse einverleibt und werden in ähnlichen Situationen wie Erinnerungssymbole

*When once a state of anxiety establishes itself, the anxiety swallows up all other feelings; with the progress of repression, and the more those ideas which are charged with affect and which have been conscious move down into the unconscious, all affects are capable of being changed into anxiety. (FP, 8:197)

wachgerufen. (*Hemmung, Symptom und Angst*, SA, 1926, VI: 239).⁷

The sheer intensity of physiological energy becomes itself a signal of the primal absence, a perceivable sign of the disappearance of the object and the tangible evidence which stands for the missing object; anxiety burst upon the reflexive perception as a non-articulable sign, as the *ersatz* of a deep and incurable experience of helplessness, of finiteness; however, it is this experience of finiteness inherent in the self-perception of anxiety which sets the boundaries of the self, and makes possible self-identity. Anxiety is, in the light of Freud's late contribution, both the germ of the subject's identity, and as a violent force which veils and dissolves the variety of experience, which subdues the whole spectrum of perceptions and obliterates the identity of the self.

The chief feature of anxiety, like that of desire, is repetition. Anxiety emerges only to restore paradoxically the original dissipation of identity, the overwhelming, annihilating presence of the silent effusion of energy, and the mythical moment of the origin of the subject's identity.

In this significant reflection, *Hemmung, Symptom und Angst*, it is not a shattered word but the primal, wordless representation of loss which arouses anxiety. The affective state [*Affektzustand*] of anxiety is created by the intrusion of the memory of a primordial catastrophe; thus, anxiety is not a primary condition of the subjectivity but a sequel of the occupation [*Besetzung*] of a unarticulable mnemonic image [*Erinnerungsbild*], the effect of which is perceived by reflexive thought. A disquieting conclusion seems to derive from this set of related notions. The source of experience [*Erlebnisse*] is not restricted to outward perception. Experience is also achieved by the thorough observation, perception and remembrance of the subject's inner metamorphosis, of intimate sensations, of those feelings [*Gefühl*] which burst into consciousness without the aid of the word residues.

⁷Anxiety is not newly created by the repression; it is reproduced as an affective state in accordance with the already existing mnemonic image. If we go further and inquire into the origin of the anxiety —and of affects in general— we shall be leaving the realm of pure psychology and entering the borderland of physiology. Affective states have become incorporated in the mind as precipitates of primaeval traumatic experiences, and when a similar situation occurs they are revived like mnemonic symbols. (FP, 10: 244)

Anxiety, as a memory-symbol [*Erinnerungssymbole*], perturbs the indifference of perception regarding the temporal regime of surrounding signals. Anxiety anticipates and enacts the repetition of the loss, it betokens the imminent reappearance of the signs of an episode which would represent again that primordial [*uralter*] traumatic experience. An astounding consequence is that the mnemonic images reveal themselves as signs of the subject's reflexive interpretation: they are signs the sense of which is referred to the perturbations, emotions and disquiet experienced by the subject. Anxiety is, thus, a definite sign which demands an allegorical interpretation; it is an opaque, non-articulate sign which remains meaningless, but significant.

For Freud, there ought to be a relation between the *affective state* of the subject and the mnemonic image of this inner perturbation, which determine the original paradox of a *meaningless significance* of the primordial loss. Beyond the subject's experience, in the indifferent collapse and resurgence of the world, there is neither loss nor absence, there is only non-existence and disappearance. Loss appears as the sense of the subjective experience of disappearance. Without language the only sign of loss is the irreflexive response to the imprinted memories of pain, the motor and physiognomical response to the inner sense of an overwhelming effusion of energy which has destroyed the sheltering barriers of perception.

There is thus a parallelism between anxiety and phantasy. They are both allegories of a primordial, inarticulate, primal experience. But, while anxiety seems to manifest allegorically the imminent repetition of the loss, phantasy reveals, through an obstinately repeated narrative scheme which informs the complex weave of primordial and perceptual signs, the force of the primary structures of thought which aim at the object of primal satisfaction. Anxiety, however, preserves itself as a meaningless, unfathomable signal; contrariwise, phantasy appears as the narration of an invariant, timeless, articulated scene. Yet, the persistent symbolic scheme of phantasy displays itself as a set of variations, the significance of which lies beyond hermeneutic inquiry. Thus, the allegorical nature of phantasy and anxiety have in themselves no other sense than the evidence of a loss; phantasy and anxiety are different kind of signals of a non-representable object whose sense is, in the last analysis, only the absolute limit of the

subject's symbolic sphere. What can be seen as the narrative consistency and coherence of phantasy derives from the capacity of language to veil the force of the silent signs embodied in its expressive matter. Phantasy is comparable to the dream and what Freud identified as the *secondary revision*, which shapes the fictional development of oneiric signs.

The unconscious expressions transformed by the secondary revision [*sekundäre Bearbeitung*] condense in different Baroque patterns distinct orders of temporality and modes of perception, qualities of silence and representations of absence in discourse, the different *modes of narration* involved in unconscious productions and the different kinds of pleasure —actual physical discharges of energy and hallucinatory satisfaction— brought about by phantasy itself. Secrecy and allegory are privileged forms of expression which inform unconscious representations.

Serge André has remarked the importance of this non-said that cleaves, dismembers, and punctuates narrative pace. He recalled that Breuer himself witnessed both the shifts of Ana O. among several different languages, and her obstinate mutism, and he observed as well that this shifting between languages or the definite election of silence was the consequence of the singular experience of the exhaustion of her own language.

Breuer avait déjà observé qu'il arrivait que les mots manquent à Anna O., au point qu'elle ne puisse plus s'exprimer que dans une autre langue que la sienne —elle en connaissait quatre ou cinq—, ou qu'elle soit frappée de mutisme durant plusieurs jours. Or, ce mutisme avait été déclenché par la rencontre avec un certain état du corps, plus précisément par la confrontation à une partie inanimée de son corps [...] Ce mutisme soudain d'Anna O., comme celui, plus ponctuel, d'Emmy, semblent pouvoir être rapportés au trou, à la lacune par quoi le réel manifeste sa présence dans la parole. Il ne s'agit pas simplement d'un vide, mais de la présence de quelque chose d'innommable qui impose l'interruption, la coupure de la chaîne du discours. Emmy en donne une représentation imaginaire dans un fantasme qu'elle a construit à partir d'un fait divers relaté dans le journal: un jeune garçon serait mort de terreur après qu'on lui ait fourré une souris blanche dans la bouche.⁶⁶

The discourse collapses. The often untraceable gaps in the discourse then become

evident. They do not exhibit only the exhaustion of words or a sudden weakening and shattering of meaning, but also the abrupt encounter with an unavoidable, material presence of silence. This presence becomes in itself an unsurmountable barrier, the signal at the edge of the subject's experience. According to André, Emmy's phantasy is just an imaginary representation which envelops this present silence, this tangible brink of hollowness; phantasy is then conceived as a narrative development of a series of signs woven into an expansive surface about a fixed but unnamed, unnameable presence.

As Freud himself pointed out in *Die Traumdeutung*, the narrated phantasy is often astoundingly *detailed* and displays a perfect weave of images.⁶⁷ There is, nevertheless a deep gap between the logic of the narration and the dynamic, agonistic relation among the perceptions and expectations aroused by desire. This gap is filled with silence, the token of an unfathomable source, of an absolute, non-apprehensible form of the significance of silence itself.

Freud clearly recognized this breach between the unconscious elements and the narrated scene. However, taken as an isolated term, the category of secondary revision [*sekundäre Bearbeitung*]—put forward by Freud to account to the logical congruence of non-consistent images brought by different psychical processes into a singular narration—does not give a full account of the profusion of temporal folds inherent in the narrated phantasy, and of the lavishness of its representations. Freud himself asserts the poverty of any possible taxonomy of the cycles, of the temporal layers simultaneously present in the interlocking episodes of phantasy, of the different evocable episodes interwoven in the seemingly simple narrative line. The secondary revision, Freud admits, does not come *after* a primary, original construction. In the *Traumdeutung*, Freud recognizes that, paradoxically, in the sources of subjectivity primary processes, secondary revision and the multiple threads of phantasy are woven together:

Geht es etwa so vor sich, daß die traumbildenden Faktoren, das Verdichtungsbestreben, der Zwang, der Zensur auszuweichen, und die Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit in den psychischen Mitteln des Traumes, vorerst aus dem Material einen vorläufigen Trauminhalt bilden und daß dieser dann nachträglich umgeformt wird, bis er den Ansprüchen einer zweiten Instanz möglichst

genügt ? Dies ist kaum wahrscheinlich. *Man muß eher annehmen, daß die Anforderungen dieser Instanz von allem Anfang an eine der Bedingungen abgeben, denen der Traum genügen soll, und daß diese Bedingung ebenso wie die der Verdichtung, der Widerstandszensur und der Darstellbarkeit gleichzeitig auf das große Material der Traumgedanken induzierend und auswählend einwirken.* Unter den vier Bedingungen der Traumbildung ist aber die letzt erkannte jedenfalls die, deren Anforderungen für den Traum am wenigsten zwingend erscheinen. (*Die Traumdeutung*, SA, 1905, II: 473)*

Thus, the dream is forged by secondary revision together with all the other factors at the very origin of representation. Phantasy appears as the projection of a vast spectrum of inconsistent, and even conflicting, layers of memory in a recognizable sequence which then becomes acceptable, although it sometimes exhibits a fairly unbelievable series of images.⁶⁸ Moreover, this "logical" (for it derives from a formally coherent relation of the elements of fictional construction) and "non-logical" (for it is incongruous and inconsistent with regard to conventional logical schemes) disposition of the complex narration of phantasy undergoes a further fusion of temporalities. The evoked chronologies, the mixing of memory and desire, of the timeless experience of the loss and of its anticipation, the simultaneous presence of the immediate perception and the appearance of the transfigured testimonies of a crowd of experiences, engender a pattern of embedded chronologies. Freud, in *Der Dichter und das Phantasie* stressed the conflicting temporalities of the dominant sequence of events in phantasy: the depiction of the scene precedes the introduction of a detailed description of events, the relation of which adumbrates the transfigured desired object. The phantasy "wraps" itself around this transfigured, deceiving, yet cardinal point of the narration. However, the development of phantasy as a whole tends to constrain the interpretation to its discernible significance. Phantasy —Freud insists— emerges only as fragmentary

*Are we to suppose that what happens is that in the first instance the dream-constructing factors —the tendency towards condensation, the necessity for evading the censorship, and the considerations of representability by the physical means open to dreams— put together a provisional dream-content out of the material provided, and that this content is subsequently re-cast so as to conform so far as possible to the demands of a second agency? This is scarcely probable. *We must assume rather that from the very first the demands of this second factor constitute one of the conditions which the dream must satisfy and that this condition, like those laid down by condensation, the censorship imposed by resistance, and considerations of representability, operates simultaneously in a conducive and selective sense upon the mass of material present in the dream-thoughts.* In any case, however, of the four conditions for the formation of dreams, the one we have come to know last is the one whose demands appear to have the least cogent influence on dreams. (FP, 4: 641)

mixture of perception, memory and desire; it thus involves different kinds of silence, the violence of different disappearances, the changing words in which it is possible to perceive partial signals of the memories of pain, of isolated threads of conflicting histories, charged with nameless emotions aroused by scattered senseless signals.

Das Verhältnis der Phantasie zur Zeit ist überhaupt sehr bedeutsam. Man darf sagen: eine Phantasie schwebt gleichsam zwischen drei Zeiten, den drei Zeitmomenten unseres Vorstellens. Die seelische Arbeit knüpft an einen aktuellen Eindruck, einen Anlaß in der Gegenwart an, der imstande war, einen der großen Wünsche der Person zu wecken, greift von da aus auf die Erinnerung eines früheren, meist infantilen, Erlebnisses zurück, in dem jener Wunsch erfüllt war, und schafft nun eine auf die Zukunft bezogene Situation, welche sich als die Erfüllung jenes Wunsches darstellt, eben den Tagtraum oder die Phantasie, die nun die Spuren ihrer Herkunft vom Anlasse und von der Erinnerung an sich trägt. Also Vergangenes, Gegenwärtiges, Zukünftiges wie an der Schnur des durchlaufenden Wunsches aneinandergereiht. (*Der Dichter und die Phantasie*, SA, 1908, X: 174. Emphasis added)*

Phantasy involves the conjunction of three chief, distinct moments of experience. An actual, contemporary perception of an object or certain of its features, immersed in the temporal flow of the experience, unleashes a regressive movement and the corresponding excitation of desire, arousing in the same impulse a fulfilling fictional construction, partially repressed but experienced nevertheless as intimately satisfying.

But this three-stage construction is not exclusive to phantasy. The representational content of the mnemonic image implied in the experience of satisfaction reveals the evidence of the similar temporal structure of the primary processes and other formations of the consciousness. The charge of energy of the mnemonic traces, which is experienced as anticipation, and the obstinate impulse of desire, which appears as compelling repetition, defines rhythms and times which belong exclusively to the schemes of primary thought. Yet, *anticipation* and sheer *repetition* are not comparable.

*The relation of phantasy to time is in general very important. We may say that it hovers, as it were, between three times—the three moments of time which our ideation involves. Mental work is linked to some current impressions, some provoking occasion in the present which has been able to arouse one of the subject's major wishes. From there it harks back to the memory of an earlier experience (usually an infantile one) in which this wish was fulfilled; and now creates a situation relating to the future which represents a fulfillment of the wish. *What it thus creates is a day-dream or phantasy, which carries about it traces of its origins from the occasion which provoked it and from the memory.* Thus past, present and future are strung together, as it were, on the thread of the wish that runs through them. (FP, 14: 135)

As distant poles in the temporal spectrum of the dense representation of time in the subject's experience, phantasy differs from the persistent, speechless tension of mere anticipation; phantasy exposes, in each of its variations, allegorical changing images of the restoration of the primordial conditions of satisfaction.

Repetition acquires, in Freud's theoretical framework, the relevance of an explanatory notion, related intrinsically to his image of the form and the manifestations of the subject's experience of time, and to his conception of the relentless dynamic regulation of the *principle of constancy* and of the primal thought.

Yet, Freud's rejection of the early theoretical conception of abreaction as repetition and its therapeutic relevance invigorated the role of hallucination as allegorical repetition on Freud's theoretical horizon. It became a touchstone in early psychoanalytic theory, despite its conceptual precariousness.

Hallucination, a universe of psychical phenomena frequently conceived as an isolated symptom, seemed to reveal, nevertheless, unexpected similarities to everyday psychical life and their unacknowledged common roots; their evidently discordant traits were thought to be linked by a common thread: hallucination, fantasy, daydream and even dream revealed themselves to Freud, as Romanticism lucidly foretold, as manifestations of similar structures exposing the symbolic relics of experience; they were shown to be invariantly and atavistically attached to the subject's own original yet forgotten early experience of plenitude. The common thread was provided by the complex armature of language, by its deceiving and enduring, yet mutable substance, by the vast repertory of its metamorphosis. Moreover, memories and traces of language persist as transformed images of the subject's ciphered, intimate history, of his obstinate love attachments and devotions; the destruction of the web of word-residues makes apparent the pervading experience of absence.

The capacity of phantasy, hallucination and dream to expose obliquely, allegorically, the wordless structure of desire makes apparent another structural similitude between them: their reiterative narrations are not only figurative exposures of the silent vicissitudes of primary thought dominated by desire; they exhibit in a different expressive matter the condensed, ciphered, unutterable history of the relation

of the subject to its own language as the means to express and unveil desire.⁶⁹ Phantasy also reveals that words alone may arouse a *reflexive desire* of language, of sense, of expressiveness. Phantasy is seen to express in the grammar of fiction and in the astonishing arrangement of evoked images and perceived features of actual objects, the subject's attachment to the mere physiognomy of words, which stand as autonomous, tangible objects. The relation between the fictional grammar of phantasy and language, sheds a distinct light upon the surface of signs that link phantasy to drama, drama to hallucination, hallucination to body, and body to language.

III. Freud's layers of allegory: theory as a map of sediments

Freud's two "topographic" models of the subject's psychical apparatus, evince the unsurmountable difficulty in clearly defining the frontiers of the different agencies of subjectivity. There is an asymmetry between the "boundaries" of the different systems and agencies of the psychical apparatus: the barrier between conscious and unconscious is thin and pervious, elusive, difficult to define. Nevertheless, both agencies—the conscious and the pre-conscious—form, as a whole, a congruous space which stands against the dark, abysmal sphere of the unconscious. Freud's metaphorical image of the limits between these contrasting and conflicting agencies, is that of a creased membrane, the folds of which penetrate the sphere of the preconscious-conscious system. But the dynamics of the unsteady, inner tensions of memory turns into an abstract allegory. Some repressed representations succeed in invading the sphere of the preconscious, by distorting or "disguising" themselves. Consequently, there seems to be a displacement of the frontiers of repression; an expansion or contraction of the sphere of the unconscious; either the metaphorical vessel of bodily energy swells, forcing the boundaries, penetrating the restricted territory of consciousness, or it shrinks driving the former boundaries to a new position. The action of repression strengthens itself as each fold penetrates into the conscious-preconscious system: Freud envisions this process as an epical, abstract struggle between cosmic forces; each new

intrusion of unconscious elements intensifies repression which tries to push them backwards. However, this is not a barren allegory: it led Freud to a twofold conception of censorship as a dynamic model of the genesis of the layers of memory and its constraints; as well as an unprecedented insight of the obscurities of the relation between satisfaction and representation.

Wir sehen, daß Abkömmlinge des *Ubw* als Ersatzbildungen und als Symptome bewußt werden in der Regel nach großen Entstellungen gegen das Unbewußte, aber oft mit Erhaltung vieler zur Verdrängung auffordernden Charaktere. Wir finden, daß viele vorbewußte Bildungen unbewußt bleiben, die, sollten wir meinen, ihrer Natur nach sehr wohl bewußt werden dürften. Wahrscheinlich macht sich bei ihnen die stärkere Anziehung des *Ubw* geltend. Wir werden darauf hingewiesen, die bedeutsamere Differenz nicht zwischen dem Bewußten und dem Vorbewußten, sondern zwischen dem Vorbewußten und dem Unbewußten zu suchen. Das *Ubw* wird an der Grenze des *Vbw* durch die Zensur zurückgewiesen, Abkömmlinge des selben können diese Zensur umgehen, sich hoch organisieren, im *Vbw* bis zu einer gewissen Intensität der Besetzung heranwachsen, werden aber dann, wenn sie diese überschritten haben und sich dem Bewußtsein aufdrängen wollen, als Abkömmlinge des *Ubw* erkannt und an der neuen Zensurgrenze zwischen *Vbw* und *Bw* neuerlich verdrängt. Die erstere Zensur funktioniert so gegen das *Ubw* selbst, die letztere gegen die *Vbw* Abkömmlinge desselben. Man könnte meinen, die Zensur habe sich im Laufe der individuellen Entwicklung um ein Stück vorgeschoben. (*Die Unbewußte*, SA, 1914, III: 152-153)*

However, in his late, second theory of the psychical apparatus (1923), Freud creates an astounding, yet misleading, optical and dramatic allegory to explain the dynamic tension which determines the subject's own sensations and symbolic-oriented behaviour: the super-ego glowers at the ego, which offers itself as a "visible" presence to this relentless enquiry. It is this allegory that guides his meditation on the sources

*On the one hand, we find that derivatives of the *Ucs.* become conscious as substitutive formations and symptoms – generally, it is true, after having undergone great distortions compared with the unconscious, though often retaining many characteristics which call for repression. On the other hand, we find that many preconscious formations remain unconscious, though we should have expected that, from their nature, they might very well have become conscious. Probably in the latter case the stronger attraction of the *Ucs.* is asserting itself. We are led to look for the more important distinction as lying, not between the conscious and the preconscious, but between the preconscious and the unconscious. The *Ucs.* is turned back on the frontier of the *Pcs.* by the censorship, but derivatives of the *Ucs.* can circumvent the censorship, achieve a high degree of organization and reach a certain intensity of cathexis in the *Pcs.* and the *Cs.* Thus, the first of these censorships is exercised against the *Ucs.* itself, and the second against its *Pcs.* derivatives. One might suppose that in the course of individual development the censorship had taken a step forward. (FP, 11: 197-198)

of morality and feelings of culpability. This allegory, composed of a series of images which represent in fictional terms the genesis of pain, enlivened by the intimate experience of culpability, is immediately interpreted by the theory in terms of the web of flows of energy discharge which shapes the subject's identity; the struggle between super-ego and ego exposes the fictional nature of the subject's psychical processes, as a narrative counterpart of the dynamic outcome of the inextinguishable, destructive tension between *energy states and processes*. *This tragic tale narrates the impossibility of the human being to fulfil its own ideal*. Yet, this allegory lacks a complete, consistent plot; it is a fragmentary tale, a sequence of abrupt and compelling, isolated episodes of conflicts between characters. Different images enact the vicissitudes of anxiety; narrations of culpability and pain of the ego intrude in Freud's theoretical exposition in which mythical characters echo the powerful allegory of the struggle between the opposing forces of Nature. In the psychoanalytic meditation on the origins of human suffering, and on the self destruction of the soul, an allegory folds back upon the other.

Allegory illuminates the inextricable yet discordant relation between Freud's metapsychological view (economic, topographical and dynamic), and the fictional expression of self-consciousness; it displays the eschatology of existence, the images of its inconsequential tragedy. The conflicting implications of the metapsychological view, exposed by precarious, fictional means cast a diffuse light upon the "landscape" of pain and of memory. The impossibility of the ego to satisfy the demands of the ideal, chiefly imply the debasing involved in the exorbitant, exacting maxim: "you must say the truth, *all* the truth"; the ideal, as we have previously asserted, involves an unexpressed cruelty veiled by the imperative of transparency. The destructive quality of secrecy springs, in psychical processes, from the understated violence of the metamorphosis of the ideal into the violence of the super-ego:

Das Über-Ich ist aber nicht einfach ein Residuum der ersten Objektwahlen des Es, sondern es hat auch die Bedeutung einer energischen Reaktionsbildung gegen dieselben.[...] Das Ichideal ist also der Erbe des Ödipuskomplexes und somit Ausdruck der mächtigsten Regungen und wichtigsten Libidoschicksale des Es. Durch seine Aufrichtung hat sich das Ich des Ödipuskomplexes bemächtigt und gleichzeitig sich selbst dem Es unterworfen. Während das Ich wesentlich Repräsentant der Außenwelt, der

Realität ist, tritt ihm das Über-Ich als Anwalt der Innenwelt, des Es, gegenüber. Konflikte zwischen Ich und Ideal werden, darauf sind wir nun vorbereitet, in letzter Linie den Gegensatz von Real und Psychisch, Außenwelt und Innenwelt, widerspiegeln. (*Das Ich und das Es*, SA, 1923, III: 301-302)*

The conflict between psychological agencies mirrors and allegorizes Freud's Baroque vision of the contrast between the inner and the outer realms of subjectivity. The surface which envelops the subject and shapes its identity, folds inwards, and becomes an inner surface the fold of which creates autonomous yet heterogeneous agencies. Consciousness emerges from this sundering of a primordial identity; it thus appears, in turn, signified by the metaphor of a fold, one of its faces turned outwards, to the external world, completely dominated by the logic of the faculty to perceive, while the other face turned inwards; as well, language capable of naming the inner, mute disturbances of the soul, takes note of the distinct intensities of the charge of word-residues, provoked by the effusion of energy through the memory traces which govern the impulses of desire. Consequently, super-ego appears as an uncertain fold of consciousness: it gives rise to certain perceptions, certain kinds of conscious behaviour and sensations, and yet, it is also an emanation of the unconscious history of the subject, an image of primordial, unconscious history of agonistic love and loss.

IV. The Baroque substance: language as fold

1. Words as membranes

Freud envisioned the subject's memory of language—a necessary condition of the performance of speech—as a disarranged group of memories of signals; it was conceived as a marginal, almost recondite, autonomous psychological sphere of the

*The super-ego is, however, not simply a residue of the earliest object-choices of the id; it also represents an energetic reaction-formation against those choices [...] The ego ideal is therefore the heir of the Oedipus complex, and thus it is also the expression of the most powerful impulses and most important libidinal vicissitudes of the id. By setting up this ego ideal, the ego has mastered the Oedipus complex and at the same time placed itself in subjection to the id. Whereas the ego is essentially the representative of the external world, of reality, the super-ego stands in contrast to it as the representative of the internal world, of the id. Conflicts between the ego and the ideal will, as we are now prepared to find, ultimately reflect the contrast between what is real and what is psychological, between the external world and the internal world (FP, 11: 374-376).

preconscious, likely to distinguish the nature of perceptions and sensations. In a sense, language was conceived by Freud as the main resource for the formation of the psychological identity; nevertheless, in the soul, the word stood for the absent object, and, consequently, was the privileged support of phantasy; it brought about deceiving remembrances, and prevented the subject from immediately apprehending surrounding phenomena; yet, language was as well the subject's chief instrument for the building of a complex, open and ever-changing representation of the objects of the world. Thus, language appears both as an inner *dynamic* boundary and as reflexive evidence of the subject's finiteness.

Freud's early conception of the word evolved from a seemingly simple, vaguely delineated scheme of the relation between circumscribed mental representations, to the image of language as a surface which both separates and weakens the force exerted upon psychological agencies by an increase of inner energy. Forrester clearly defines the ambiguous character of language, which, nevertheless, was to be considered a constraining and ordering device, an inhibitory web of representations capable of deferring and dissipating the intensity of discharges; and a means of attenuating the harshness of the immediate stimulus; language thus intervenes as a reflexive, symbolic grid of settled mental images likely to rule the pleasure principle:⁷⁰

Speech allows the ψ system to suspend both imperatives of the pleasure principle; it allows thought concerning pain-producing objects to take place as easily as with relatively neutral memories, and it ensures that thought does not get 'stuck' pursuing immediate pleasure.⁷¹

It stands as an inner frontier between pain and pleasure, and marks the boundaries of the subject; it embodies in its tight weave representations which shield the self and settle its limits. And yet language cleaves the subject. It allows consciousness to apprehend the evolution of forms and identities, and thus to anticipate the failure of actions, attenuating the devastating force of absence and the intensity of pain. Paradoxically, it enables the subject to inhibit and intersperse the continuous response to the exacting conditions of the environment, construed as imposing but abysmal exigencies of the world. Language is the locus of psychological representations of uncertain qualities, simultaneously internal and external, subjectively determined and foreign to

the inner constraints of the representation: pain and impulse, the sources of the subject's action. It constitutes, within subjectivity itself, a closed and dense autonomous universe.

Since Freud's first conception of language, broadly sketched in the *Entwurf*, words were seen to convey the signs of quality which made it possible for the subject to distinguish between memories and perception. Language appeared then as the means of identifying the perceptions which come from beyond the boundaries of the subject.

A peculiar inflection of the sense of experience derives from this vision of language. As has been said already, truth, as conceived by Freud in the *Entwurf*, is not conceived as the name of a definable correspondence between the word and its object. The appropriate correspondence between word and object is only achieved through the complex assortment of memory, primary thought, attention, and potential or actual action. It does not derive from an ontological condition either of the word itself, or of the world, but from the singular role of the word in the assortment of heterogeneous psychical processes in the subject's desire.

Freud's suggestive images of the deep cleft between language and thought, and between thought and truth become essential conditions for the genetic and dynamic relevance of his conception of language in his notion of psychical processes. Freud's explicit conception of language, formulated early in his psychoanalytic work, albeit excluded from his late works, will, nevertheless, silently inform his fundamental theoretical constructions. His notion of judgement—thought of as the outcome of primary, speechless thought—essential for the comprehension of the dynamics of repression and which upholds the entire psychoanalytic framework bears a crucial yet intricate and obscure relation to the formal rules of speech. The mnemonic system of the signs of language does not only serve the need for achieving a specific action, but also informs and renders perceivable conscious thought. It is the reflexive power of language that forges its relative autonomy and preserves it from the exigencies of primary thought. By the means of reflexive language it becomes possible for the subject to discern the outer provenance of a perceived signal; thus, the possibility of reflexion makes consciousness able to distinguish between the signs originating in the inner process, and those which derive from the perception of the world. Consequently,

language is capable of inhibiting the discharge of inner energy, whenever the outer signals enliven in the memory of language the representation of the imminent failure of the action. The principle of reality —as Freud named this resource of reflexive language— is essentially linked to the possibility of deferring the discharge because of outer warning signs, the significance of which are revealed by reflexive language.

Wir werden uns zur Annahme entschließen müssen, daß diese Lust- und Unlustentbindungen automatisch den Ablauf der Besetzungsvorgänge regulieren. Es hat sich aber später die Notwendigkeit herausgestellt, zur Ermöglichung feinerer Leistungen den Vorstellungsablauf unabhängiger von den Unlustzeichen zu gestalten. Zu diesem Zwecke bedurfte das *Vbw*-System eigener qualitäten, die das Bewußtsein anziehen könnten, und erhielt sie höchst wahrscheinlich durch die Verknüpfung der vorbewußten Vorgänge mit dem nicht qualitätslosen Erinnerungssystem der Sprachzeichen. Durch die Qualitäten dieses Systems wird jetzt das Bewußtsein, das vorher nur Sinnesorgan für die Wahrnehmungen war, auch zum Sinnesorgan für einen Teil unserer Denkvorgänge. (*Die Traumdeutung*, SA, 1900, II: 547)*

It is unpleasure and, more compellingly, pain that drives the psychical apparatus to the unfolding of the capacity of language: the need for its relative autonomy, the independence [*Unabhängigkeit*] of language from the pressure of primary thought. The need to delay a discharge, which might lead to unpleasure and pain, imposes on word-residues a growing dependence upon perceived surroundings; word-residues acquire the force of anticipatory signs; they either betoken coming satisfaction or impending pain. The cleavage of reflexive representation and the autonomy of the evocative power of language confer on desire the capacity to create the subject's experience of time and the need for future; desire is also the source of the need for the perceived intensities of a pain.

This dual and intermediate nature of the word is that of other psychoanalytic objects: consciousness, drive and pain —this latter explicitly considered by Freud as an

*We are thus driven to conclude that these releases of pleasure and unpleasure automatically regulate the course of the cathectic processes. But, in order to make more delicately adjusted performances possible, it later became necessary to make the course of ideas less dependent upon the presence or absence of unpleasure. For this purpose the Pcs. system needed to have qualities of its own which could attract consciousness; and it seems highly probable that it obtained them by linking the preconscious processes with the mnemonic system of the language signs. Through these qualities, consciousness, which had hitherto been a sense organ for perceptions alone, also became a sense organ for a portion of our thought-processes. (FP, 4: 729-730)

"intermediate thing" [*Mittelding*]—, which paradoxically both obscures and marks the limits of self. The relation of language to pain remains ambiguous, unfathomable: both are uncertain objects; however, pain remains foreign to language and, as has already been remarked, it even appears as a non-symbolic physical catastrophe able to confer on the body a peculiar symbolic shape, to build its fictional nature, informing the subject's imagination and representation of its own flesh, and to create the subject's own sense of identity. The opaqueness of pain remains intractable within Freud's horizon.

Language exhibits an ambiguous quality: it shapes the experience of time and is likely to call up the presence of the loved object conferring on it a clear sense both of timelessness and of foreignness. Language spreads the web of associated memories that veils and disperses the intensities of pain. It is by the means of a silent, non-signifying process that language dissipates the compelling and violent increase of energy due to the failure of primary thought; the broadening breach between the perception of language and the experienced, mute violence of primary thought, paradoxically informs the sense of pain, and gives it a conscious representation. It brings about the meaningful figures of pain and its associated images as an abstract, chimerical yet efficient object of reflexive consciousness.

Thus, language, in the early psychoanalytic conception, contravenes the belief in the referential meaning of words. Moreover, it completely rejects the conception of words the sense of which might be free from the subject's affections. As Freud suggests, the experience of the word is *alone* a synthesis of the subject's heterogeneous experience of time, a fusion of manifold memories of actions and objects and the ruling force of habits of speech, a perceived figure at the crossroads of desire and the perceived signals of the world. Language does not only point towards an external universe of beings, it also appears as a twofold object: one of its faces turned to psychological process, while the other is the perception of a foreign object itself.

2. The double inscription: folding and negation

Freud's outstanding work, *Die Verneinung* (Negation) (1925), begins with a series of

seemingly trivial examples of negation, extricated from the psychoanalytic dialogue: Freud quotes an imaginary patient who addresses him: "Sie fragen wer diese Person im Traume sein kann. Die Mutter ist es nicht".* The immediate interpretation of this negative statement given by Freud is of a discouraging, misleading simplicity: "Wir berechnen: 'Also ist es die Mutter'".** The naivete of this "deductive" procedure, articulated as a facile inversion of the sense of the question, the outcome of which amounts to the obvious suppression of the negative particle, masks its own labyrinthine and disquieting theoretical implications. Jean Hyppolite emphasized the unusual strangeness of this simple resource of the psychoanalyst: it does not only involve a profound revision of the theoretical notion of subjective truthfulness, but also a peculiar interpretation of the position of the symbolic particle of negation —*nein*— in the dynamic relation between the subject and his own discourse.

Hyppolite perceives in the Freudian quotation not only a simple negation, but a complex act: a sort of dis-judgement [*dé-jugement*]. Hyppolite expounds the complex, reflexive folding of the negative statement upon itself, involved in the simple act of denying the recognition of a certain dreamt character. What Freud seems to be emphasizing in the quotation is that while the denial seems an appropriate, non unsettling answer, the subjective knowledge involved in the act of recognition is not. The destructive violence which ensues from this immediate disavowal of the identity of the evoked image, is not originated in the very nature of the reference of the judgement to its object, but in the complex constraint which inhibits the full appearance of the sought identity, which incites the subject to the denial of the reappearance of the repressed image. Negation involves both the rejection of the actual image of the desired object, and the veiling of desire, which amounts to disregard the sense of desire itself. The dis-judgement alluded to by Hyppolite thus involves a deferral, a suspension of sense. Giving such a relevance to negation, Freud particularly stresses not the irrelevant, fleeting phrase which occurs in the dialogue, but the primordial relevance

*You ask who this person in the dream can be. It is not my mother. (FP, 11: 437)

**We emend this to: So, it is his mother. (FP, 11:437)

of the *act of negation* in the structure of subjectivity.

Die Verneinung ist eine Art, das Verdrängte zur Kenntnis zu nehmen, eigentlich schon eine Aufhebung der Verdrängung, aber freilich keine Annahme des Verdrängte. (*Die Verneinung*, SA, 1925, III: 373)*

Hyppolite prevents the reader of the Freudian text from hastily and thoughtlessly interpreting this mention to the "lifting" [*Aufhebung*] of the repression in this context.

Présenter son être sur le mode de ne l'être pas, c'est vraiment de cela qu'il s'agit dans cette *Aufhebung* du refoulement qui n'est pas une acceptation du refoulé.⁷²

To consider negation a sort of "inverted ontological meaning" of the presentation of the recalled object bears disquieting consequences. As in irony, the clue to the inverted meaning of the presentation relies on the belief in a certain natural essence of the world; both irony and negation suspend the referential meaning of language. Irony demands, to be clearly understood, a radical semantic inversion. In it, the sense of the utterance as a whole swerves from its expected meaning, despite the fact that the actual words seem to have an acceptable form and aim at a virtual reality. There is nothing in the surface of the judgement that reveals the surreptitious inversion of the sense, save perhaps a subtle accent or a peculiar stress of the body. Irony emerges from the crevice between evocation and perception. The Freudian conception of negation, conceived as an *act of denial*, also stress its perceivable duality of sense, but a more unsettling one: the words express what the subject wishes to believe, while the presence of negation betokens an unnoticed, uncertain yet poignant sense, the evidence of which is veiled by the force of the negative particle.

Thus, according to the Freudian scheme, the negation involved in the *act of denial* is nothing but the residue of the repression suffered by the reappearing, metaphorical, transfigured images of the primordial object of love. In this context, the meaning of the negative particle is neither logical nor semantic; it is a pure relic, debris of an inner conflict, of a tension which signals the limits of the subject and of the expressive capacity of language. The negative particle lacks any reference, any

*Negation is a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed; indeed it is already a lifting of repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed. (FP, 11: 438)

meaning; as part of the *act of denial* it exhibits itself as an inert word. However, this noticeable sign of negation, in Freud's words, the certificate of origin [*Ursprungszertifikat*], the "*Made in Germany*" (quoted by Freud in English) of the repression, adumbrates the weakening of the violence exerted by of repression on reflexive consciousness. The "no" [*nicht*] does not only reveal itself as a visible vestige of the repression which has already taken place —just as anxiety will be interpreted in the later works of Freud as a signal of the looming, threatening obsolescence of the object. It also betrays the partial failure of repression.

This attenuated, "marked", "symbolized" lifting of the repression casts some light upon the opaque notion of acceptance [*Annahme*] put forward by Freud, as an intermediate state in which a heavily charged image that springs from the primary thought, has been emptied of its affective charge through the act of negation. This acceptance embodies both the time of the presentation, of the utterance, and a transfigured, inert image of the wished-for object. What the notion of acceptance seeks to illuminate is, perhaps, *the sense of negation as a fold of language* which allows the originally repressed object to appear through the veil of the negative, meaningless signal.

Yet, this veil does not obliterate the memory and the representation of the primal object. Negation creates a supplementary image, a distorted, inert resonance of the primal object which remain in the subject's memory. Negation engenders an image, a fold of language which displays the lifeless, debased image of the primordial object, the *sprouts* (Freud) of which will coexist in consciousness with the lingering, inane emanations of itself both invoked and stigmatized by the "not". Thus, the lifting [*Aufhebung*] of the repression is the evidence of this complex assembly of representation offered to the subject's reflexive consciousness.

Language embodies this negative sign the role of which differs abruptly from the others; it is a strange, opaque sign, likely to exhibit a singular relation to the images which emerge from the primordial stage in the genesis of the subject's identity. It is a foreign sign in the midst of meaningful words, the evidence of an non-significant token which informs the whole system of language.

The structure of this duality of the representation of the primal object, its bare

image duplicated by negation which will coexist with its own traces, calls to mind the terrifying experience of the uncanny, depicted by Freud: in negation, the repressed image of the wished-for object remains confined within the unconscious, while its distorted duplicate, its negated image, reappears in consciousness as a perceived, threatening, foreign object. However, the experience of the uncanny differs from negation in that in the former the duplicated image which looms in the subject's perception stirs intense affection, the violence of which repeats that of the original experience of loss.

What arouses terror is the clear perception of the fold itself, what Freud named the *projection*. Projection *suspends* the subject's awareness of his own limits: it is neither the actual uprooting nor the embodiment of the threatening image of the subject's own primal object. This optical metaphor, which haunts Freud's writing from its very beginning to his last work, reveals the complex theoretical relevance of the notion of projection, its twofold topographical sense. The projected image strikes the subject as a condensed sign which enacts its own fragmented history, its own origins and the impulses which determine its own fate. The projection has the features of allegory; the fragment acquires an autonomous, appalling meaning that encompasses a closed and complete universe of sense. The particular intensity of the terror stirred by the uncanny seems to rely upon the exact correspondence between the image associated with the traces of the primal object, and its "reflected" image, in spite of its unaccountable physiognomy, of its radical strangeness to the subject's consciousness. Although the projected image has its own identity as an object of the world, its conventional meaning vanishes; the sign seems to be intrinsically bonded to the subject's intimate, unspeakable memories.

Negation, on the contrary, suffocates the emotion incited by the projected image. The denied identity of the evocation seems to bring about in the subject's consciousness a quietness which seems to be due to the absolute unawareness of the violence of the image. However, that which suffocates terror in the act of denial is the folding back of negation upon itself; the act of denial merges in a sequence the negation and the obliteration of the threatening image: the subject acknowledges the actual identity of the image and, without effacing it from consciousness, recognizes it

as something it is not, only to abandon it immediately. Yet, this abandonment is not a mere exclusion. In Freud's conception, it is the expression of a negative judgement which bears a moral sense rooted in the subject's identity. The identity of the image has been condemned [*verurteilen*] and this "condemnation" derives from the allegorical sense engendered by the act of denial itself. It is denial that dooms the image to disappearance and meaninglessness; it repeats and negates the memories of the threatening loss of the primordial object.

Freud's allegorical sense of condemnation [*Verurteilung*] imposes on the theoretical interpretation a disturbing meaning: negation as condemnation does not only involve the strict sense of the act of denial, it also alludes to rejection, projection and abjection. It is the moral allegory of condemnation [*Verurteilung*] as abjection that illuminates obliquely the intimate alliance of negation and secrecy, its definitive position in the construction of the subject's identity; condemnation sets the boundary of the tolerable, the qualities of the proper sphere, of that which is congruous with the subject's identity; it defines the limits between purity and contamination, of the inner and the outer.

Freud's empiricist, peculiar "Lockean" heritage⁷³ is simultaneously confirmed and negated by the allegories of negation. Negation implies what Hyppolite has named "the formation of the myth of the subject's inner and outer dimensions":

Il me semble que pour comprendre son article [Die Verneinung], il faut considerer la négation du jugement attributif et la négation du jugement d'existence, comme en deçà de la négation au moment où elle apparaît dans sa fonction symbolique. Au fond, il y a un premier mythe du dehors et du dedans, et c'est là ce qu'il s'agit de comprendre.⁷⁴

The puzzling dualism of negation had been adumbrated by Freud since his early works, and alluded to obliquely in the discussion of several issues. It was implied in the puzzling conceivable coexistence of two images of the same object in different territories of the psychical apparatus, the possibility of different memory traces of the same object, likely to endure different psychical processes, and submitted to different dynamic constraints: the theoretical incongruence of the simultaneous existence of an unconscious and a conscious image of the same object, which Freud named "the double

inscription" of a representation.

daß die *Bw* Phase der Vorstellung eine neue, an anderem Orte befindliche Niederschrift derselben bedeute, ist unzweifelhaft die gröbere, aber auch die bequemere. Die zweite Annahme, die einer bloß funktionellen Zustandsänderung, ist die von vornherein wahrscheinlichere, aber sie ist minder plastisch, weniger leicht zu handhaben. *Mit der ersten, der topischen Annahme ist die einer topischen Trennung der Systeme U_w und B_w und die Möglichkeit verknüpft, daß eine Vorstellung gleichzeitig an zwei Stellen des psychischen Apparats vorhanden sei, ja, daß sie, wenn durch die Zensur ungehemmt, regelmäßig von dem einen Ort an den anderen vorrücke, eventuell ohne ihre erste Niederlassung oder Niederschrift zu verlieren.*

Das mag befremdlich aussehen, kann sich aber an Eindrücke aus der psychoanalytischen Praxis anlehnen. (*Das Unbewußte*, SA, 1915, III: 134).^{*}

In his 1915 paper, Freud put forward the idea of a two-phase representation. While one trace remains unconscious, the other lingers as a new image in consciousness. However, Freud envisaged the distinct phases of representation as joined by a *negative* relation. The theoretical relevance of this issue was not to be adequately grasped until ten years later: in *Die Verneinung*, the vicissitudes of the different symbolic regimes of different representations of the same, unconscious object were approached through a previous insight: the relation of pleasure and unpleasure to a common process aroused both in primary and secondary processes, in speech and desire, in reflexive discernment and in silent, unutterable judgement. In a crucial passage from *Jenseits* which foretells the significant relation of pleasure and unpleasure to the "double inscription" Freud wrote:

Jedenfalls muß das, was am Erregungsvorgange die *Empfindungen von Lust und Unlust* entstehen läßt, beim Sekundärvorgang ebenso vorhanden sein wie beim Primärvorgang. (*Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, SA, 1920, III: 271)^{**}

^{*}The first of the two possibilities which we considered —namely, that the *Cs.* phase of an idea implies a fresh registration of it, which is situated in another place— is doubtless the cruder but also the more convenient. The second hypothesis —that of a merely *functional* change of state— is *a priori* more probable, but it is less plastic, less easy to manipulate. *With the first, or topographical, hypothesis is bound up that of a topographical separation of the system U_{cs.} and C_{s.} and also the possibility that an idea may exist simultaneously in two places in the mental apparatus —indeed, that if it is not inhibited by the censorship, it regularly advances from the one position to the other, possibly without losing its first location or registration.*

This view may seem odd, but it can be supported by observations from psychoanalytic practice. (FP, 11: 177)

^{**}Whatever it is that causes the appearance of feelings of pleasure and unpleasure in process of excitation must be present in the secondary process just as it is in the primary one. (FP, 11: 337)

Freud's development of the idea that what aroused *sensations* [*Empfindungen*] of pleasure and unpleasure must exist in both consciousness and unconsciousness, offers a purely dynamic model of the double inscription and it adds an unexpected, yet subtle, abstract turn to the allegories of negation, rendering negation exclusively in terms of energy. And yet the allegorical images of negation as the crucial psychical process in the genesis of subjectivity remained a challenging, unconstrued illumination of Freud's theory.

NOTES

1. *Die Fackel (1899-1936)*, 400-03, p.2.
2. Hermann Broch, 'Das Böse in der Wertsystem der Kunst', in *Schriften zur Literatur*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler, 2 vols (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975), II: *Theorie*, p.121.
3. Jean Duvignaud, *Le jeu du jeu* (Paris: Balland, 1980), p.107.
4. Jeanyves Guérin, 'Réurgences baroques au XXe siècle', in *Figures du Baroque*, ed. Jean-Marie Benoist (Paris: PUF, 1983), p.345.
5. See below, pp.270, 369
6. Gilles Deleuze, *Le Pli. Leibniz et le Baroque* (Paris: Minuit, 1988), p.47.
7. Gilles Deleuze, *Le Pli. Leibniz et le Baroque*, p.41.
8. Gilles Deleuze, *Le Pli. Leibniz et le Baroque*, p.42.
9. Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p.205.
10. Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p.185.
11. Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p.186.
12. Jean Rousset, *La littérature de l'age baroque en France. Circé et le paon* (Paris: Corti, 1953), p.186.
13. Jean Rousset, pp.183-190.
14. Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p.184.
15. Heinrich Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock* (1888; repr. Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1986), p.70.
16. Heinrich Wölfflin, p.70.
17. Walter Benjamin, *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*, p.200.
18. Monique Schneider, 'La maîtrise de la temporalité: un combat mythique', in *Le mythe et le mythique*, Colloque de Cerisy (Paris: Albin Michel, 1987), pp.36-37.
19. François Gantheret, *Incertitude d'eros* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), p.201. He adds an illuminating quotation from Hölderlin to his assertion on silence: "Qui nierait que l'analyse, c'est d'abord cela, et d'abord pour l'analyste: l'espoir fou du mot vrai, né dans le creux humide du silence, qui dira en vrai ce malheur et sa cause et son sens, qui le dira si royalement qu'il le dissipera dans le temps même de son dit, dans un éclair de lumière. Hölderlin [...]: ainsi est certes Notre Père, le Dieu du Ciel, qui du jour pensant aux pauvres et aux riches fait don, qui, au détour du temps, nous qui nous endormons, debout, de ses lisières d'or, tels des enfants, nous tient".
20. Vincent Descombes, *L'inconscient malgré lui* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), p.31.
21. Eugenio d'Ors, *La ciencia de la cultura* (Madrid: 1935; repr. Madrid: Rialp, 1964), p.152.
22. The d'Ors notion of the Baroque, which diverges both from Benjamin's and Deleuze's, conceived as an historical style is supported by his own notion of "metahistory" —different from the dubious conception of *metahistory* put forward by Hayden White— as a set of historical invariants. See Eugenio d'Ors, *La ciencia*

de la cultura (Madrid: 1935; repr. Madrid: Rialp, 1964).

23. Gerard Genette, *Figures II* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), p.222.

24. Gerard Genette, p.222.

25. Malcolm Bowie, p.168.

26. From his years of student to the end of his life, Freud asserted with remarkable subtlety his scatological beliefs the force of which seems to have never decayed throughout his life. In a letter written the eleventh of april of 1875, Freud comments to his friend Eduard Silberstein: "Das Gesetz von der Erhaltung der Kraft, von der Wechselwirkung der Naturkräfte, die wir als die schönsten Früchte der Forschung zu betrachten gewohnt sind, scheinen den Weltuntergang wie den Weltanfang zu involvieren." [The law of the conservation of the energy and the mutual action of the natural forces, that we are used to consider the most wonderful products of investigation, seem to involve *the end and the beginning of the world.*] (Sigmund Freud, *Jugendbriefe an Eduard Silberstein. 1871-1881*, ed. Walter Boehlich (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1989), p.126)

27. Sarah Kofman, "Il n'y a que le premier pas qui coute" (Paris: Galilée, 1991), p.26.

28. Richard Wölfflin, p.38-39.

29. For a thorough and lucid analysis of the paradoxical relation that Wittgenstein established with Freud's work, and its perceivable resonances in Wittgenstein's own work, see Paul-Laurent Assoun, *Freud et Wittgenstein* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988).

30. L.B. Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, IX, cited by Richard Wölfflin, *Renaissance und Barock*, p.39.

31. Emmanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, p.418.

32. Elizabeth Roudinesco explores, in the wake of the Lacanian thesis about the "discourses of psychoanalysis", what she names the psychoanalysis "in the impossible condition of its history". She does not hesitate to characterize the psychoanalytic enterprise as a subversive moment in the history of science and as a knowledge capable by itself of shattering the epistemological foundations of the theories of subjectivity. See Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Vers une politique de la psychanalyse* (Paris: Maspero, 1977). For a much less impassioned view of the singularity of the object defined by the psychoanalytic discourse, see Paul-Laurent Assoun, *Introduction à l'épistémologie freudienne*.

33. Guy Rosolato, 'Le négatif et son lexique' in *Le négatif. Figures et modalités*, ed. André Missenard, (Paris: Dunoud, 1989), p.20

34. Patrick Mahony, *Freud as a Writer*, expanded ed. (New York: Yale University Press, 1987), p.80.

35. Patrick J. Mahony, p.119.

36. Julia Kristeva, *Histoires d'amour* (Paris: Denoël, 1983), p.122

37. Jacques Le Beuf, 'Que sont les neurones devenus?', *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse; Excitations*, 39 (Spring 1989), [Gallimard], p.130.

38. In the Draft E, while trying to build a sound explanation of the limits of the qualitative transformations of endogenous and exogenous energy leading to the emergence of anxiety, Freud writes: "In this case only [with endogenous tension, the source of which lies in one's own body (hunger, thirst, the sexual drive)] specific reactions are of use —reactions which prevent the further occurrence of the excitation in the end organs concerned, whether those reactions are attainable with a large or small expenditure [of energy]." (Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887- 1904*, ed.

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson (London: Harvard University Press, 1985), p.80).

39.Indeed, Freud's conception of the neurone as it appears in the *Entwurf*, as a reservoir of memories, of traces or residues of perceptions which support the psychical operations of judgement, seems to contradict his own former assumption of the physiological, functional nature of the memory processes. This physiological-functional notion of memory rejects the idea of a fixed reservoir of images or traces as the definite element of memory.

40.This principle —which Freud took and reinterpreted from Fechner's conception— is perhaps one of the key concepts of the psychoanalytic theory and its early appearance in the psychoanalytic texts foretells the complexity of the "constancy principle" the definition of which aimed to give a more accurate account of the opaque dynamics of the psychical agencies, and the disquieting speculative notion of the late "Nirvana principle" (1920) —which condenses in an allegorical image the mute, imperative, secret action of the death instinct. The complex entanglement and unfolding of these three principles, which cannot be seen simply as concepts which signal three different stages in the development of Freud's theory, was to be briefly and explicitly summarized in a passage of *Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus* (1924). See below p.364

41.John Forrester, *Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), p.41.

42.Freud had explicitly adopted Mill's conception of the sign, which posited a peculiar semantic relation between the mental image of the sign and its object in the world; the closed universe of the word was related thus to the open web of attributes of the object; this conception was clearly developed in his early *Zur Auffassung der Aphasie*. Despite the later changes experienced by Freud's conception of language this distinction prevailed. It seemed to be a crucial theoretical element which supported his conception of repression in the metapsychological papers.

43.See above, p.198

44.I follow here Bettelheim's suggestion of using this phrase as the current and more accurate translation of the german *Besetzung*, instead of the unfortunate election of the *Standard Edition*, "cathexis". However, in other parts of the text, I preserve Strachey's convention.

45.Perhaps, one of the main contributions of Lacan to the exploration of Freud's conception of desire, was its remark about the awkwardness and, at the same time, preeminent position of "the thing" [*Das Ding*], in his lectures on the nature of desire. In the Seminar of the year 1959-60 on "the ethics of psychoanalysis", Lacan devotes two important sessions to this notion and others associated with it, namely, specific action [*spezifische Aktion*]. Lacan's subtle and polemic reading of Freud in this point, leads him to a singular notion of the primordial object relation: "*Das Ding* est originellement ce que nous apellons le hors-signifié. C'est en fonction de cet hor-signifié, et d'un rapport pathétique à lui, que le sujet conserve sa distance, et se constitue dans un mode de rapport, d'affect primaire, antérieur à tout refoulement." (Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire*, ed. by Jacques A. Miller (Paris: Seuil, 1973-), VII: *L'Éthique de la psychanalyse* (1986), p.68.)

46.Indeed, Freud's sustained throughout his life a complex and hesitating relation with Kantian postulates, which evolved from an open, crude rejection, clearly expressed in his early letters to his friend Silberstein, to an obscure yet reticent assessment, vaguely formulated in his later work.

47.Although it can be fairly asserted that Freud, in this early stage of his reflection, conceived this anatomical device as a real, substantial and physiological support for the memory traces, soon it transformed this miscarried conception into a consistent allegory of the structural mechanism in the origins of desire.

48.This open image of the object was first formulated by Freud in his work on aphasia, inspired by the conception of meaning of John Stuart Mill.

49.Jean Laplanche, *Vie et mort en psychanalyse*, extended ed. (Paris: Fayard, 1989), p.33.

50. This unexpected relation of the Freudian early notions of the primal object of desire to the Kantian conception of the *Ding-in-sich*, was stressed chiefly by Jacques Lacan not only in his lessons of 1959, but also, in the much more sophisticated paper 'Kant et Sade'.

51. The nature of this concept and its particular dimension in Freud's text will be analysed in the next chapter. See particularly p.226

52. It should be possible to posit a historical and philosophical relation between the *pleasure principle*, as put forth by Freud, and Brentanos' *intention*. Freud's paradoxical image of the psychical apparatus ruled by a "non-intentional intention", oriented by symbols, seems to encounter and overcome the inconsistencies of Brentano's conception, preserving, yet undeveloped, his fundamental critical assumptions regarding the notion of consciousness.

53. The indelible nature of the memory of primal perceptions is a recurrent motif in Freud's writing: it first appeared as a result of his reading of Hughling Jackson's contributions to the explanation of aphasia, and it reappears as a cardinal, yet unexplored, theoretical resource in the last phase of his theoretical work, *Fetichismus* (1927).

54. Julia Kristeva, *Soleil noir. Depression et mélancolie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), pp.77-78.

55. Repression involves a complex entanglement of a non-consistent narrative temporality; the obscure turning back of the subject's interpretation upon his own reminiscences, creates a new narration forged by the reflexive acknowledgement of signs, which had remained non-signified. This deferred interpretation goes well beyond a mere re-signification —as it has been sometimes referred to—, it goes beyond the simple reformulation of a conventional meaning. This reconstruction of the sense of past experiences is neither a mere restoration of a missing meaning nor the normalization of a previously unacknowledged or unacceptable sense. Freud's indefinite use of the notion of deferred action [*Nachträglichkeit*], exhibits the limits of the conventional view of the reconstruction of sense; the notion of deferred action aims at the obscure movement of speech by which the subject shapes its own memory and produces the tale of his own history.

56. Henri Bergson, *Matière et mémoire* (Paris: 1939; Paris: PUF, 1993), p.248.

57. This remark foreshadows the further evolution of Freud's notion of "trauma".

58. Derrida has emphasized that Freud's conception of *trace* redefines the usual conception of memory and obliterates also the traditional notion of representation. Indeed, Derrida stresses the dynamic implications of the notion of *facilitation* as a stroke, as writing. Thus, memory does not reduce to a mere sign, a relic of a perception, but should be thought of as a written mark, foreign to representation, but which makes it possible; the trace is the feature of a written signed impressed by the flood of energy upon the virtual matter of mind; a path which becomes a pure boundary of representation and precedes and shapes the signs of memory. See Jacques Derrida, "Freud et la scène de l'écriture", in *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1968), pp.293-339.

59. Derrida's reading construes the notion of *Bahnung* as writing. In his philosophical work the notion of *différance*, one of his contributions to the contemporary philosophical thought seems to guide his singular reading of Freud's *facilitation*: "C'est pourquoi sous le titre de 'point de vue biologique', la 'différence d'essence' [*Wesensverschiedenheit*] entre les neurones est 'remplacée par une différence de milieu de destination' [*Schicksals-Milieuverschiedenheit*]: différences pures, différences de situation, de connexion, de localisation, de relations structurelles plus importantes que les termes du support, et pour lesquelles la relativité du dehors et du dedans est toujours arbitrale. La pensée de la différence ne peut ni se dispenser d'une topique ni accepter les représentations courantes de l'espace." (Jacques Derrida, 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture', pp.303-304)

60. "La dimension du lieu —writes Nassif— est très précisément ce qui permet à deux types de causalité de s'intriquer en un même appareil". (Jacques Nassif, *Freud. L'inconscient* (Paris: 1977; repr. Paris: Flammarion, 1992), p.128). Nassif has remarked that the notion of language as a localized process, as the psychical response to the need for regulating the discharging of energy, would have impeded Freud a congruent explanation of the nature of the psychical process. Freud's conception was thus led to the notion of double causality of psychical processes. Language is to be conceived as determined by both physiological factors and psychical conditions. However, this double causality may be thought of as an invention of a double metaphor: the anatomical and physiological processes are fathomed by the means of psychical similes, and, in turn, psychical processes gave rise to a lavish physical and anatomical imagination. The psychical apparatus is endowed with the allegorical power of a fictional body.

61. See below, chapter V.

62. Malcolm Bowie, 'Freud and the Future', *Raritan*, XII:1 (Summer 1993), p.159.

63. Freud's intricate "argumentative grammar" is fully displayed in the late paper where he narrates his own experience at the Acropolis. Hans Sättele has analysed the complex dialectic of the proof exhibited by this text: "Como se ve, la afirmación falsa acerca del pasado no es simplemente sometida a la prueba de negación y después rechazada. En cambio, es objeto de una sorpresa, la cual incita a la reconstrucción de la lógica que la produjo, que permite finalmente asir algo de la verdad del sujeto." [It is possible to see that the false statement on the past is not simply submitted to the proof of negation and then rejected. Instead, surprise springs from it, and incites the subject to reconstruct the logic which produced it and allows him, finally, to grasp something about its truth.] (Hans Sättele, 'Del Sujeto de la Pragmática Universal', in *Crítica del sujeto*, ed. Mariflor Aguilar (México: UNAM, 1990), p.236).

64. John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by Alexander Campbell Fraser, 2 vol (Oxford, 1894; repr. Dover, 1959), I, p.194.

65. Freud alluded to the structural analogy of phantasy, fetishism and anxiety in his cardinal paper of 1927, *Fetichismus*. The allegorical nature of the fetish implies an act of negation: "der Fetisch ist der Ersatz für den Phallus des Weibes (der Mutter), an den das Knäblein geglaubt hat und auf den es —wir wissen warum— nicht versichten will. Der Hergang war also der, daß der Knabe sich geweigert hat, die Tatsache seiner Wahrnehmung, daß das Weib keinen Penis besitzt, zur Kenntnis zu nehmen" (SA, 1927, III: 384). "The fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and —for reasons familiar to us— does not want to give up." (FP, 7: 352). The fetish signifies at the same time the rejection of the perceived evidence, the negation of the mother's identity and an autonomous signification which enables the isolated, fragmented object to arouse the subject's desire.

66. Serge André, *Que veut une femme?* (Paris: Navarin, 1986), p.91

67. Nicholas Abraham has proposed a suggestive conception of phantasy. See Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok, *L'écorce et le noyau* (Paris: Flammarion, 1987), p.391.

68. This "strange" movement discernible in Freud's exposition has been already noticed and eventually condemned as a contradiction, even without having established the specific weight of this "paradoxical" rejection of the "secondary position" of secondary revision. Thus, Hans Kellner, for example, remarks: "It is logical to assume that "secondary revision" follows the other parts of the dream-work, which are primary. Freud acknowledges that this assumption is a natural one, as St. Athanasius might have acknowledged as merely "natural" the position held by Arius and his followers of the third century A.D. that the Father is prior to the son. Then Freud, like Athanasius, *denies* what seems natural. Secondary revision is cotemporal (to use the theological term), if not cosubstantial, with the rest of the dream-work. Freud, unlike Athanasius, does not seem too dogmatic about this, saying things like "We must assume", "probably", and "In any case". It is *time*, and thus *narrative*, that must be kept out of the topological machine" (Hans Kellner, *Language and Historical Representation. Getting the Story Crooked* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p.259). The hasty conclusion of Kellner does not account for the dynamic of repression which is one of Freud's major theoretical contributions to a conception of multifarious temporality of subjective

processes.

69. A fundamental reflection on the importance of the notion of hallucination and its role in the formation of identity was developed by Teresa Brennan in her text, *The Interpretation of the Flesh. Freud and Femininity* (London: Routledge, 1993).

70. See below, p.356

71. John Forrester, p.48.

72. Jean Hyppolite, 'Commentaire parlé sur la "Verneinung" de Freud' in *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, 2 vol (Paris: 1971; repr. Paris: Press Universitaire Française, 1991), I, p.388.

73. See above, p.179 and below, p.340

74. Jean Hyppolite, 'Commentaire parlé sur la "Verneinung" de Freud', p.391.

Chapter IV

Aphasia: towards the biological sovereignty of silence

I. The unfolding of aphasia

1. Freud as a reader of his own work

The affinity of Freud's writings with Baroque expression is apparent not only in the embedded structure of theoretical metaphors and allegories and in the crucial role played by contrasting scatological notions —the beginning and end of life— in the development of his theory, as well as in his passion for paradoxes, finiteness, transience, death and pain. It is also evident in cardinal features of its writing: both in the aim to expose the tensions involved in the construction of his own writing, and in the crucial role acquired in it by the reflexive reading of his own text, a clear manifestation of his consciousness both of the limits and the striving for totality which commanded his theoretical endeavour. A singular alliance between writing and reading stresses the Baroque tension of the temporality of writing in the unfolding of the Freudian text. His writings exhibit an unusual chronological structure made of interlocking and embedded series of added and overlaying texts and commentaries. He corrected tirelessly his most important texts. The number, nature and date of the notes and remarks he himself successively added to the earlier editions of his work are explicitly indicated and simultaneously embodied in the text. They constitute a sort of parallel text, almost as detailed, disquieting and fruitful as the main body of the text itself —Freud's notes sometimes show his abrupt and crucial hesitations, signalling several abysmal and unresolved opacities in the theory.

Moreover, these additions are meticulously dated. They bear the signs of their original appearance. They appear as archeological residues, as evidence of the unresolved inconsistencies in the theory. Freud exhibits himself as his own most demanding and devoted reader, yet a peculiar one. He expunged paragraphs, even pages. He mutilated his previous exposition or *deliberately weakened* its argumentative

structure. This effort shows a strange contradictory impulse: it seems to reveal a restrained, self-vigilated writing, expressing thriving and lavish theoretical imagination.

He seems to strive covertly for a style; he often betrays in his writing his wish for an *œuvre*, which, had it been expressed, would have contradicted his own epistemological principles. His ambiguous attitude regarding literature —simultaneously exalted and reticent— made of it an often tacit, yet sometimes oppressive ideal which seems to have incited him to build a monumental, coherent work, while preventing him from deliberately engaging in the tempting utopia of a congruent and exhaustive interpretation of the enigmas of subjectivity. Freud seems to have envisaged truth as a final end, as the implicit outcome of the coherence and congruence of the system built throughout the vicissitudes of his writing: this closely resembles the Baroque imperatives which implicitly informed the Romantic poetic enterprise that Freud so deeply admired. Indeed, his endless collection of fragments was imbedded in a larger, yet dismembered structure of other texts that seem to obey faithfully the Romantic project as Benjamin saw it:

Das Absolute war für Friederich Schlegel in der Athenäumzeit allerdings das System in der Gestalt der Kunst. Aber er suchte dies Absolute nicht systematisch, sondern vielmehr umgekehrt das System absolut zu erfassen. Dies war das Wesen seiner Mystik.¹

Absoluteness and finiteness are two inextricably bonded faces of the vertigo experienced in face of death. It is the primacy of the Absolute that evinces the finiteness of all human efforts, the weakness of the symbolic means to comprehend the intense violence of the dialogue between the imperiousness of the absolute and the tangible, discomfiting experience of finiteness. Benjamin saw as a characteristic of Romanticism the non systematic search for the System, the non systematic quest for the Absolute, for a timeless system of representations the completeness and wholeness of which should evidence the transcendental unity of the work. The desire for the Absolute joins the longing for an illuminating but inconclusive symbolic system. It

¹In the age of Athenaeum, for Friederich Schlegel, the System as the form of art, was the Absolute. But he did not seek this absolute in a systematic way; on the contrary, he sought the comprehension of the System in an absolute way. This was the essence of his mystic. (My translation)

constitutes a common ground for both the Baroque and the Romantic enterprises.

This confluence of the imperative of both closeness and openness reveals also a perceivable tension in the Freudian work. However, Freud's unavowed endeavour to apprehend the Absolute is explicitly rejected by him and silenced by a clear and acceptable claim: his resolute *belief* on the power of observation turned itself into a *promise* of truth. Thus, his devotion to a positivistic conception of truth appears as the consequence of the desire of the end of reflexion, to encounter the edge of thought, to contemplate its twilight, and to accept the blame for the failure of the *œuvre*. Freud did admit, tacitly, as a necessary impulse in the origin of his writing, the delusive promise of the *œuvre*. Freud's retrospective reading of his own work leads him to implacably introduce additions and corrections, which appear as an implicit pledge of future illumination: the intrusion of the late achievements into the early enquiries, a violent rejection of the increasing power of an evolving theory. Also, he explicitly devoted himself to fill in the gaps of his own theory, to repair the inevitable early fractures, to build a dense and congruent theoretical web, to sketch the future achievements of his theoretical enterprise and to add them to past texts; he intrudes in the temporal unfolding of his own text, incorporating incongruous, non pertinent issues in the middle of the expositon; he even suggested that well after his death, beyond the boundaries of his own work, there would be a much more accurate, biological explanation of certain notions, which appeared then as intolerably speculative. A future, biological truth would redeem his theory from present enigmas and obscurities.

The mirage of an everlasting work is dominated, however, by the sense of a never achieved certainty. The progressive settlement of textual folds, the abrupt accumulation of encroaching, later texts upon the early wavering exposition, the sudden, premature appearance of illuminations of future developments of his own theoretical thought rarefied the reading of texts with *future* refutations. This puzzling weave of temporalities is not evidence of the progressive approach of the text to the sought truth, but of the striving for *purification*.

In his doctrinal fragments, Friederich Schlegel wrote²:

Die romantische Dichtart ist noch im Werden; ja das ist ihr

eigentliches Wesen, daß sie ewig nur werden, nie vollendet sein kann.*

According to the Romantic conception, the unity of the *œuvre* is that towards which the being is driven, that which *the subject seeks even with assumed hopelessness and in silence. The transcendental ideal of the unity of the subject, of the soul, becomes an intrinsic condition of being, which ensures the actual progress of the theory. There is no evolution of the being without a will to achieve sameness.*

Perhaps, beyond the constraints of the Romantic imagination, Freud's own conceptual work is haunted by the spectre of infinite writing. For him, speculative thought—which he openly rejects—moves in a closed circle: the text forges its own autonomy, its own isolation. It evolves by folding in restlessly upon itself; the illuminating capacity of its theoretical constructions is inextricably related to the aesthetic emotion aroused by the affection involved in writing itself. It is this intrinsic relation between illumination and aesthetic emotion that constitutes, paradoxically, the openness of writing; thus, writing itself might be thought of as an infinite "work-in-progress" as it develops into an inexhaustible theoretical and aesthetic expansion.

None of Freud's texts was conceived as a closed universe nor as part of one. Paradoxically, his rejection of the isolation of theory led to an encompassing movement of writing, which seemed to revolve around a fixed yet unreachable, non-depictable point. The historical scope of each book thus becomes meaningless: the boundaries between a text and its surroundings, the internal cohesion of each text and the sequence of its arguments are negligible. Freud's *œuvre* is not to be found in the collection of texts and uneven and dispersed writings; they, indeed, reject categorization as an achieved, finished work. Yet, Freud's rejection of the closure of his own writing did not eradicate his passion for the *œuvre*, it merely reinforced an understated link: truth should emerge from an autonomous whole, from the dismembered *œuvre* which, nevertheless, experiences an imperceptible and permanent metamorphosis. Each of the cardinal works of Freud exhibits a spectrum of dated fragments originating at different stages of his theoretical development; entangled traces of successive and mutating

*The romantic poetic form is always becoming, this is its proper being, that it becomes infinite, never ending. (My translation)

chronological readings, relics of past stages of thought, suddenly fold back upon previous textual fragments; the writings swerve suddenly and violently from the main stream of argument. Freud's text becomes an imaginary crowd of residues of writings which expose the confluence of widely diverging impulses of thought and experience. Freudian thought exhibits the paradoxical endeavour to create a timeless text; a sense of timelessness emerges from the obsessive accumulation of traces of dated reflections. This timelessness evokes the invariant nature of the fictional system, a transcendental structure able to exhibit the immutability of truth. Freud devotes himself to the building of this mirage of a conceptual system. The image of a closed, timeless work was seen to confirm the truth of the *œuvre*, as well as the *œuvre* as truth.

The certain, quiet force of the textual metamorphosis does not only seem to have guided Freud's writing; it also, and even more compellingly, governed Freud's reading of his own work. The impossibility of the *œuvre* as consistent, unitary text, which Freud exhibited as a proof of genuine scientific thought, became then, paradoxically, the guarantee of the permanence of Freud's *achievement*, beyond the failure of his own thought.

The exhausting and detailed metamorphosis of his previous text, brought about by the writings which sprang from his own reading, numerous marginal remarks and notes, exhibited Freud's paradoxical longing: the persistence of his name and his ideas, beyond the vicissitudes of text.

Freud's "will to style" embodies his deliberate striving for fragmentariness, and his wish to achieve a careful, meditated shape in his phrases, in his unfolding arguments and in his persuasive exposure of his clinic evidence. Moreover, Freud's writing exhibits the effect of other visible constraints, of contradictory historical models for the construction of evidence, of the subtle pressure exerted upon the psychoanalytic thought by his unresolved aim both to achieve the ideals of Enlightenment and to embrace the Romantic exploration of the limits of human experience frequently burdened by reappearing images of death; Freud's text conveys the force of contrasting self-images, of the exacting demand which stems from his contradictory self-chosen portrait, engendered paradoxically by his urgent need for a definite identity.

His work, like the archeological, Baroque cities he cherished, is made up of inlaying pieces of meaningful remains of monuments and relics originating at different stages of construction; landscapes formed by rising, foreign evidence of already destroyed universes surrounded by a prodigal variety of live elements. Many of these abrupt monuments do not even bear a simple sign which would permit the recognition of the source, the origins, or even the date of their construction. As with archeological relics, only interpretation, the poignancy of an obstinate enquiry, the devotion of exegesis, has patiently forged a singular and encompassing perception of Freud's work: the roughness of the text might be seen as the result of the gradual settling of his own conflicting readings of himself. Despite its Baroque form, the Freudian text does not demand a thorough, but hopeless *deciphering*. Rather, in what may seem an unexpected paradox, it demands a meditative reading. Each embedded fragment allows unsuspected inflections of sense, the reappearance of notions that would linger as potential illuminations or emerging opacities condemned to remain unnoticed or disfigured. The interpretation of former texts is perturbed by the shadow of later potential senses, of which only dim traces are recognizable. Each shred of the later written reflection embedded in an earlier text either evokes still unknown stages of the built up theory, or carries implicit, subtle echoes of displaced or distorted concepts; later meanings which remain unattainable but inscribed in earlier texts seem to demand the reader's acquaintance with the whole Freudian *œuvre*, an acquaintance which the text itself explicitly denies.

There are also countless veiled and obscure passages of earlier text, which reappear in later works as relics of former constructions. Freud scatters over the text elusive signs which may or may not conduce us to his successive writings. This accumulation of fragmentary texts and reformulations arouses in the reader the need to assume the existence of a suspended sense.

The date inscribed in the notes arouses in its reader, paradoxically, a sense of the non-temporality of its meaning. The texts are not acknowledged as passing, transient and wasteful expressions of restricted validity, the significance of which will be soon outweighed by new ones. Freud seems to see his own texts as freed from the chronologies of their origin; all of them become strictly contemporary, or rather the

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privileged means to expound the relation between sexual and self-preserving instincts, which lead him to the crucial notion of narcissism, clearly related to this election of the object. The promotion of the *Anlehnung* to a definite allegorical status preserves essentially its dark and non elucidated facets.

But the chief effect of the deliberate oblivion of *Zur Auffassung* and its context was, perhaps, that it enhanced the allegorical resonance of psychoanalytic discourse. Freud's suppression of the traceable sources of psychoanalytic thought, the dimming of the context which determined the outcome of his path of thought, and the forging of a fictional autonomy of the theory, set conditions which seem to tally with those of allegorical expression as conceived by Benjamin. The omission of the source and context of the word gives rise to the allegorical sense of the tale of the "origins" of psychoanalysis. While trying to expound other related topics, the allegorical sense of *Anlehnung* and *Trieb* will shape the narration of Freudian cosmology: sexuality and autoanalysis, memory and the "talking cure", Oedipus and Rome, desexualization and sublimation, ego, super-ego and id.

3. The historical construction of muteness

a. The medical invention of muteness

In the Enlightenment, a subtle and unexpected social consciousness of perversion, deviation and monstrosity emerged, stirred by the new conception of an individual, rational identity and the parallel ascension of medical knowledge and social policies. By the end of the eighteenth century, the dominant conception of reason led to the definition of contrasting profiles of certain different kinds of psychical aberrations and the open recognition of sexual perversion as an expression of monstrosity. The taxonomies of deviation exhibited the invigorated social awareness of normal patterns of behaviour and extravagance. Joined to the prestige of observation as the definite empirical source of knowledge, the ascending prestige of medical discourse on psychical diseases and the new visions of sexual aberration led to the creation of new dominant taxonomies of abnormality. In his description of melancholy, Kant alludes

to the vicissitudes of the sublime conceived as a degenerative processes, which gave rise to a classification that included the extravagant, the monstrous, the fantastic and the lunatic. The dark side of the sublime, that which is beyond the boundaries of the realm of nature, brings about monstrosity.¹⁴ These aberrations of the sublime fused in a single category of *monstrosity* and the aesthetic and moral judgements of deviation; dispassionate description and passionate belief also had their source in conventional biological explanations. Later in the century, the conceptual sphere which had bred current images of monstrosity turned into positivistic medical criteria. Lanteri Laura broadly depicts the landscape of the medical attitudes towards these monstrosities by the end of the nineteenth century:

la clinique minutieuse des perversions conduit l'homme de science à isoler tout un groupe de conduites qui, malgré leurs variétés, ne suscitent que le rire ou l'horreur, et présument que leurs auteurs appartiennent soit à cette monstruosité dont la zoophilie reste le témoignage le plus évident, soit à ce grotesque dont la mise en scène, dans la maison d'illusions, dénonce si bien l'irréalité.

Nous voyons ainsi que tout un groupe de comportements pervers se trouvent décrits avec des caractéristiques qui font passer du pitoyable et du ridicule au monstrueux et à l'homicide, sémiologie précise, mais précisément dévalorisante.¹⁵

At the end of Enlightenment, biological and medical explanations seemed to have set firm, definite frontiers within which the unexpected, the outrageous, and even the unacceptable could find a new rational sense. In the settling of these boundaries, at least four relatively autonomous trends of knowledge converged: aesthetics, ethics, history and biology. Dominated by the biological and medical model, the conception of the soul and of the self gave rise to the vague notion of personality and of psychological symptom —conceived as a functional perturbation of physiological processes— which seemed to yield to the constraints imposed by natural order. Not only did biology appear as an autonomous and relevant domain of knowledge, but as the indisputable inheritor of Newtonian physical determinism. Through the path of biology, of medical models, the taxonomies of the cerebral pathologies and the anatomic descriptions of the nervous tissues brought together the classifications of perversions and those of the maladies of language:

Par là même [la doctrine des localisations cérébrales, présenté par Broca et développé par Charcot] l'étude des perversions entre naturellement dans la pathologie cérébrale et s'organise avec des modèles rendues familiers par l'études des aphasies.¹⁶

The monstrosities of sexual behaviour, the afflictions of the nervous systems and the aberrations of language came to be understood on a similar natural basis, by a common model and an identical anatomical and physiological set of principles.

The conception of language in the last years of the eighteenth century ambiguously expressed shades of the Baroque conception of the subject, which bloomed in the shadow of Rousseau's distinction between music and metaphor:

[des accents, des cris, des plaintes] voilà les plus anciens mots inventés, et voilà pourquoi les premières langues furent chantantes et passionnées avant d'être simples et méthodiques [...] L'image illusoire offerte par la passion se montrant la première, le langage qui lui répondoit fut aussi le premier inventé; il devint ensuite métaphorique quand l'esprit éclairé reconnoissant sa première erreur n'en employa les expressions que dans les mêmes passions qui l'avoient produite.¹⁷

According to Rousseau, language signalled the limits and the path of human decay: it involved both the full expressiveness of primordial language which conveyed the force of human passions, and the crepuscular fading of the spoken word stifled by the formulas of convention, as well as the vigorous impulse of tone and musical expression and the weakening of the force of communication evinced by writing.

A mesure que la langue se perfectionoit, la mélodie en s'imposant de nouvelles règles perdoit insensiblement de son ancienne énergie, et le calcul des intervalles fut substitué à la finesse des inflexions [...] L'étude de la philosophie et le progrès du raisonnement ayant perfectionné la grammaire ôtèrent à la langue ce ton vif et passionné qui l'avoit d'abord rendue si chantante.¹⁸

Rousseau conceived language as an instinctual response to the perception of the sameness of the other, and to the desire and needs which this sameness stirs. It is ingrained in the subject's own perception of his fellow men. Language is thus intrinsically historical and simultaneously rooted in the biological nature of human beings. The historical vicissitudes of language display emblematic images which signal

both the ruin of humanity, and, paradoxically, its ultimate means of redemption.¹⁹ Modern languages were to be seen as evidence of a lost pure nature, as a proof of the decay of expressiveness and the victory of a monotonous and deceiving clarity.

Rousseau affirms:

Par un progrès naturel toutes les langues lettrées doivent changer de caractère et perdre de la force en gagnant de la clarté, que plus on s'attache à perfectionner la grammaire et la logique plus on accélère ce progrès, et que pour rendre bientôt une langue froide et monotone il ne faut qu'établir des académies chez les peuples qui la parle.²⁰

The progression of the rationality of grammar involves the suffocation of its capacity to bear the subject's primal emotions. The progression of language yields to its own inescapable fate which is both the extinction of the preeminence of rhythm, metaphor and passion, and the achievement of the complex evolution of formal patterns brought about by historical and natural forces. The last paragraph of Rousseau's reflection on the origins of language leaves unresolved the intrinsic circularity of its sources and determining factors:

Ce seroit la matière d'un examen assés philosophique, que d'observer dans le fait et de montrer par des exemples combien le caractère, les moeurs et les intérêts d'un peuple influent sur sa langue.²¹

The social concern for the moral progress of humankind, which constituted a crucial issue of philosophy and ethics throughout eighteenth century, lead to a thorough reflection upon the moral consequences and systematic procedures of education. Reflection showed a profound concern about the conflicting, puzzling consequences of progress. Throughout the late Enlightenment there is a hesitant struggle against the humiliating judgement of Rousseau: it was necessary to prove that social progress was not necessarily bound to degrade progressively the expressive power of souls. The progressive, conflicting and ambiguous evolution of language did not seem to be, as Rousseau had emphatically posited, a late, somewhat perverse and impoverishing outcome of the capacities of humankind, which is not necessarily doomed to an inextinguishable longing either for primal, passionate, musical expression, or for the rhythmic appearance of silence, while it yields to the debasing clarity of logical

argumentation.

Thus, muteness is not a strange primal state, which exhibits animal, bodily expressiveness and the virtue of a pure universally understandable expression of grimaces, gestures and objects, as Rousseau had once asserted; animal muteness, silence, is not the primal fabric of communication subdued by the force of the passion of humankind, as he had forcefully affirmed in the *Essai*. For, if Rousseau conceived muteness as an essential feature of animal behaviour, the destiny of language appeared both equivocal and daunting: while the primordial age dominated by the musical eloquence of the word faded, the word detracted from the expressions of passions and emotions, and its meaning was restrained to conventional, lifeless images.

Nevertheless, simultaneously, the philosophy of Enlightenment encouraged a slightly different conception of language and its relation to the human faculties—Condillac is an outstanding example—, with the exaltation of the virtues of formal, conventional language. It was passionately denied that the evidence of the evolution of language was either a set of symptoms of degradation, or the emblems of the humiliation of human life brought about by civilization. Consequently, the monstrosities exhibited by language—muteness, aphasia, insanity, lunacy—were no longer seen as astounding ominous presages: a divine reply to a humanity that had ignored the ends of nature. Rather, these distortions were seen as tokens of the development of the individual organism, as signs of its natural disposition, of its biological transformation, as well as of its historical conditions.

Thus, monstrosity ceased to be seen as the sign of the radical solitude of a chosen, doomed or purified soul. Muteness appears both as a monstrosity, and as a malady, as a destiny and as a biological perturbation which could be healed if appropriately treated. In the twilight of eighteenth century, reason was seen to be able to *rectify* the designs of nature. The mere existence of pedagogy and of the systematic, positivistic approaches to education, the effort of reason to transform the nature of a devastated, or immature reason, the reflexive action of reason upon itself for the sake of its own perfection, became the testimony of the triumph of positive knowledge and of the calculated, scientific transformation of the self. Education began its metamorphosis into a science of the ruled, rational, positivistic moulding of the soul.

However, the notion of disease had changed; any inhibition of the faculties —muteness, deafness—, joined the sphere of the monstrosity which shaped, as a negative archetype, as a contrasting, feared, potency, the new profiles of consciousness.

In 1799, an obscure though symptomatic episode occurred in the province of Saint-Sermin (France). A boy was captured; incapable of articulated language, he resembled an animal. The legal authorities of the village tried to describe him: "his habits exhibit something extraordinary which resembles the state of the savages"²². The inadmissible, non classifiable muteness of a boy at the crossroads of animality, madness, savagism, childhood, idiocy or mere lack of education, perturbed the institutional policies of the hospital. It required, "both the attention of the police and the devoted curiosity of observers and naturalists"²³. Later, unable to deal with the monstrous phenomenon, the political and legal authorities turn him over to an educational institution. Michel Itard, a renowned therapist profoundly influenced by Condillac, takes charge of the boy.

Victor d'Aveyron se constituyó en el objeto paradójico de empresas divergentes: la delimitación de los alcances positivos de la especulación sensualista de Condillac, la definición de sus límites, la ponderación de sus fracasos; al mismo tiempo, la definición de las estrategias de confinamiento y "curación" institucional de las perturbaciones del alma, que afinaba la relativa validez de la *medicina moral* de Pinet, que irrumpía como una incipiente fractura en la concepción del alma humana, y que anunciaba los difusos comienzos de la psicoterapia.²⁴

Michel Itard invoked the prestige of positivistic methods of education when he initiated his ill-fated attempt to heal the Boy of Aveyron of his strange malady: an irreparable muteness provoked by isolation, by abandonment; a shattered capacity for language brought about by the absence of discipline. Indeed, Itard's enterprise was to systematically force the boy to acquire an *imaginary* language, to endow the boy with the illusory faculty of performing an impossible language; but the effort was useless.

²⁴Victor d'Aveyron was the paradoxical object of divergent [scientific and philosophical] endeavours: the delimitation of the empirical possibilities of the sensualist speculation of Condillac, the definition of its limits, the weighing of its failures; simultaneously, the definition of the strategies of confinement and of the institutional cure of the maladies of soul, which sought to base on solid ground the *moral medicine* of Pinet which appeared as an incipient fissure in the dominant conception of human soul and which foreshadowed the uncertain beginnings of psychotherapy. (My translation)

Itard adopted as instruments in this exacting and disciplined task a set of technical procedures originated in Condillac's conception of language.

Pedagogy, as it emerged from the Enlightenment, gave rise to an institutional practice of education conceived as the consequence of the positivistic knowledge of the self and of the systematic training of reflexive consciousness. The formation of the subject's character and of his own personality, the physiognomy of his soul, were conceived as the result of the different contributions of each of the faculties and senses. The doctrine of the relative autonomy of the faculties as derived from Condillac's meditations and from the contributions of the Enlightenment —chiefly due to the resonances of Kantian thought—, was joined to the prestigious physiological doctrine of the localized, specialized and differentiated sources of cerebral activity which had a definitive influence on the disciplines of education.

To teach Victor d'Aveyron the usages of language, the recognition of spoken and written words, to overcome the conceivable barriers of muteness, was also to expunge the stigma of monstrosity. Muteness emblematically begins then its equivocal history in the institutional grid of the nineteenth century as a hardly definable malady at the confluence of biology and ethics, of the modern, emerging disciplines of psychiatry and anthropology.

However, the severe linguistic discipline imposed on Victor d'Aveyron derived, in last analysis, from the eurocentric conviction of the supremacy of the "European" race. The peculiar trends of an emerging anthropology and the historical and nationalistic obsessions bred throughout nineteenth century beset the reflection on language. Muteness was to be vaguely associated with the obscure history of other radical perturbations of the self: the mute joined the fate of the animal, the idiot, the mad and the aborigine. Darwin asserted:

Idiots also resemble the lower animals [...] One idiot is described as often using his mouth in aid of his hands, whilst hunting for lice. They are often filthy in their habits and have no sense of decency; and several cases have been published of their bodies being remarkably hairy.²⁵

Throughout the nineteenth century, literature offered an exhaustive portrait of the horizons of poverty, exclusion and marginality —from Dickens, to the utopias of the

flesh of Restif de la Bretonne and the exacerbated, obsessive images of Sade's Society of the Friends of Crime, from the Naturalist to the Psychological Novel— and prepared a whole scenery for the new kinds of social, biological and anthropological monsters: the mad, the perverse, the child, the aborigine and the woman —who joined also this vast taxonomy of deviants:

differences between women and men, or between one race and another, were considered *essential*; that is to say, they involved 'natural' differences (a significant term), and not specific or accidental features. Simple biological descriptions, whether depicting reproductive functions, the symptoms of intelligence, physical attributes, or genetic heritage, were believed to construe the true nature of gender or ethnic identity, using the powerful language and 'evidence' of science. 'Femininity' or 'negritude' or 'oriental' characteristic were conceived as inborn or given features with which 'nature' endowed people.²⁶

The Enlightenment had prepared society for the arrival of education as science —pedagogy—, and for conceiving it as the particular cure of the hindered evolution of the "ignorant" self. It reinforced the conception of the infantile stage as a malady of evolution; the monstrosity of childhood joins that of ethnic differences —seen as a malady of cultural evolution—, and difference of gender. Monstrosity was then to be perceived as the set of symptoms of an arrested, "fixated" self.

The overlaying of social and philosophical taxonomies of deviation and those of medical monstrosity was to define the new trends of biological thought, the sources of medical taxonomies which sought to expound the relation between sickness and language. It is not by accident that the new physiognomies of the maladies of language did not appear in the field of medicine but in that of anthropology. Broca's discovery of the specific anatomical location of aphasic perturbations, in 1861, acquired an ambiguous significance: while it founded the new conception of language on the peculiar morphology of the brain, it offered a firm ground for speculations on the relation between culture and biological morphology, and for the belief in the supremacy of a particular race.

There is an issue almost definitively established by compared anatomy, because of the anatomic and physiological parallelism of human races, and, finally, because of the comparing of the different varieties of normal, abnormal and pathologic men of the same race: that the higher cerebral faculties —which constitute

the operations of understanding proper, as judgement and reflection—, reside in the frontal circumvolution, while the circumvolutions of the temporal, parietal and occipital lobes are dedicated to the feelings, the inclinations and the passions.²⁷

Broca's discovery agitated the universe of medicine, undermining the prevalent belief in the "essential" traits of the human faculty of language; he tried to found on a positivistic enquiry the anatomical conception of political, racial and cultural hierarchies, which, in turn, was to legitimate the struggle of Western Society against those who exhibited a "different racial disposition".

Il n'y a là rien d'original, et, sauf exceptions rarissimes, les anthropologues du XIXe siècle, après Buffon ou Linné, ont affirmé à la fois la nécessité de classer les espèces - ce qui est une opération intellectuelle caractéristique de notre culture - et de les hiérarchiser.

À cet égard, la craniologie et la mesure du cerveau n'ont fait que succéder à d'autres critères en vogue à la fin du XVIIIe siècle, par exemple l'angle facial, qui fournit une échelle allant de l'animalité au type grec.

De même, la génétique, la découverte des groupes sanguins qui, en elles-mêmes, ne débouchent sur aucun jugement de valeur, ont été utilisées pour renouveler le système d'interprétation hiérarchique.

On conçoit l'importance des débats sur l'origine des différences. Ces débats, interdits, voire impensables, durant le long âge théologique, s'imposent avec la découverte de la diversité naturelle.

Polygénistes et monogénistes s'y opposent, dans le prolongement du XVIIIe siècle, mais avec des informations et des arguments de plus en plus nombreux.²⁸

The emerging discoveries of cerebral anatomy, morphology and physiology sought to expose the underlying ground of the essential differences of human beings. Darwin, quoting the naturalist Karl Vogt, writes:

It is a remarkable circumstance, that the difference between the sexes, as regards the cranial cavity, increases with the development of the race, so that the male European excels much more the female, than the negro the negress.²⁹

The weakened struggle between the inherited and the acquired was to be enlivened in the nineteenth century by biology and natural history, which continued and transformed the controversy between Locke and the rationalists. Two relevant forces which

informed the institutional framework of the nineteenth century strengthened the positivistic conviction of the nature and significance of brain disease: on the one hand, the therapeutic impulse and its logic, and on the other, the notion of education founded on a taxonomy of deviations and of the correspondent remedies for the maladies of the mind. Muteness was to appear as a social as well as a biological disease, either as a sign of the breakdown of the civilizing enterprise, or, on the contrary, as evidence of the inherited degradation of the individual, which evidenced the difference between the biological predisposition to mental sickness and degeneration.

The case of Itard in France exhibits this bewildering confrontation between the non-physiological muteness and the institutional policies it generated and strengthened: the pedagogy of language appeared as the social cure of a malady of the soul. The brutal immersion of Victor d'Aveyron in the overwhelming and violently symbolic—chiefly linguistically ruled—universe might well be seen as a sort of severe, crude, "talking cure".

b. The appearance of aphasia

The notion of aphasia, conceived both as a disease and as a tragic monstrosity, brought to light the privileged position of the perturbations of language and of the distortion of the temporal phases of language acquisition in the conceptions and beliefs regarding the subject's evolution. A noticeable trait of aphasia is that it manifests itself as a singular perturbation of the subject's response to actual constraints on utterance. His expressive performance enacts past constraints; it obeys unbecoming or inappropriate impulses. The sequence of symptoms which were seen to indicate the evolution of aphasia went from a fixation, a mere arrest of the development of the faculties of language, to a steep involution of the subject's patterns of speech. Fixation was then associated with a discernible trace left by a mechanical injury or a disease of the nervous tissue, a trauma which provoked a perceptible regression of the subject's behaviour to ancient and well established patterns of response; the psychical apparatus seems to return to early stages of its linguistic development as the physiological destruction expands to deeper layers of the nervous tissues. Both notions, fixation and regression, were

definitive acquisitions of the medical conception of aphasia; they implied the notion of involution, of degradation both of behaviour and of the physiological performance of cerebral functions.

The doctrine of faculties—a heritage of the eighteenth century—rejected the conception of the negative progress of the expression of the passions, as it had been exposed by Rousseau in his fable of the origin of language. Every faculty was to be conceived as *potency*, as an essential condition of the self. Thus, the self was the ground of confrontation of numerous forces: not only did the spectrum of faculties, the conglomerate of separate regions of self, have different and opposing regimes; these regions also exhibited divergent and incongruous developments. Thus, each faculty was thought of as having its own evolving sequence of stages; the self was created by the discordant maturation of this spectrum of faculties. The primacy of evolution in the conception of cerebral functions and the conception of the biological nature of the struggling forces of the self favoured the enthronment of the biological model as the appropriate framework for the unveiling of the nature of the subject's identity.

Two different spheres of knowledge and of institutional policies, psychiatry and anthropology, were transformed by the power of the biological model. A common enigmatic topic, the disorders of language, imposed on the biological interpretation an unforeseeable strain. The studies of Galton and Broca, from very different points of view, were pervaded by echoes of the historical notion of *inheritance*. This notion had acquired an unexpected epistemological dignity, and was endowed with an explanatory capacity which derived both from its vague affinity to the notions of biological identity and evolution, and from its historical, political and anthropological resonances.

The notion of inheritance was introduced into the realm of biology along a strange speculative path: that of the rejection of death, the persistence of being and the rejection of the discontinuity of identity. However, Darwin's belief in the possibility of inheriting the incorporated memories of the experiences and practices of the predecessors introduced a complex and subtle assertion of the preservation of the identity of beings.

The notion of inheritance, though vigorously upheld by the views of biology,

had become a crucial notion for the interpretation of social and national history, for the conception of the cohesion and stability of the social bonds, as well as an instrument of self-legitimization of the political, imperial and economic enterprise of European countries. Evolutionist theory still offered a refuge against dread, but was also a means of legitimization of political despotism. The conditions of property had undergone a definitive transformation as the economic regime evolved into its modern patterns and the social regime adjusted to the violence of the Industrial Revolution. The progressive mutation of the conditions of reciprocity evinced the rotting of the conventional moral principles that mould the images of the self. However, inheritance involved a vague, yet powerful significance concerning the fate of individual identity and the meaning of death. As Giddens has written:

Modernity, it might be said, breaks down the protective framework of the small community and of tradition, replacing these with much larger, impersonal organisations. The individual feels bereft and alone in a world in which she or he lacks the psychological supports and the sense of security provided by more traditional settings.³⁰

The escatological significance of the notion of inheritance still manifests itself to-day in the realm of justice, which seeks to assure the continuity of the identity of the lineage beyond the death of the individual. The social conceptions of death obliquely determined the vicissitudes of the notion of inheritance. The conceptions of inheritance supported by anthropology and natural history throughout the nineteenth century, evinced the conflict between the notions of continuity and discontinuity of individual identity implied by those of kinship and lineage.

Thus, inheritance appears as the point at which the economic, biological and social discourses, as well as institutional policies converged. The tensions provoked by the mutation of civil life, the pressures put on the familiar traditional regime diversified and dissipated the emerging meanings of the notion of inheritance. However, this notion signals, as a crude symptom and in spite of its vastness and plurality of meanings, the intense social urgency of a collective understanding of duration, finiteness, death, and the obscure boundaries of pain.

Freud's theory shared with the discourse of evolutionism a common concern and a specific approach to the logic of the continuity of beings, and the image of their decay and death. Freud's vigorous Darwinism implied the acknowledgment of a disquieting topic:³¹ the enigmatic means by which a species achieves the transmission of experience from one generation to the other. There should be a ciphered, *secret* transmission of experience, which enables the organism both to adapt itself to the new conditions of the environment —a metamorphosis—, and to preserve the species. This *secret* transmission is the clue to evolution itself. The answer to the enigma of the inheritance of the individual experience, constrained to the terms of chance and adaptation, was to be poor and deceiving: it only implied the belief both in the existence of a silent, *secret register*, of a mysterious code, of an enduring, puzzling memory of the body's response to the surrounding conditions and in the *secret* transmission of this ciphered information from one generation to the next.

Moreover, Darwin's conception involved the appearance of *corporeal expressiveness* as an *unconscious*, yet meaningful response which serves the finality of nature, the preservation of the species. He wrote:

Actions of all kinds, if regularly accompanying any state of mind, are at once recognized as expressive. These may consist of movements of any part of the body, as the wagging of a dog's tail, the shrugging of a man's shoulders, the erection of the hair, the exudation of perspiration, the state of capillary circulation, laboured breathing, and the use of vocal or other sound producing instruments. [...] That the chief expressive actions, exhibited by man and by the lower animals, are now innate or inherited —that is, have not been learnt by the individual,— is admitted by everyone.³²

However, his conviction adumbrated the image of a *secret* transmission of the organism's identity as an unfathomable sequence of cryptic messages. Thus, the mutation of species was to be conceived as a silent, unfathomable metamorphosis of self-identity, as an abysmal, ciphered chronicle of the history of the struggle and of the inadvertent survival of the species, encrypted in the body —conceived as a precise, determined device. The theory of evolution made conceivable a biological theory of the significance of corporeal expressions unleashed only by silent, wordless perceptions, sensations, and emotions. Instinctual expressiveness could be seen, from the point of

view of the Darwinian imagination, as the foundation of sexuality, as the privileged response to the exigencies of the preservation of the species. Furthermore, sexuality was seen in itself both as an intrinsic outcome, and as the condition of expression.

In nineteenth century, Weismann's germ-plasm theory—which was to deeply impress Freud—offered an unexpected, suggestive, but dubious, chimerical support for the conception of the infinite transmission of the immutable identity of certain beings. Its almost unsustainable biological postulates implied an essential conviction: identity has a primordial origin; the changing physiognomies and shapes of the organisms veiled the force of invariant traits buried in countless layers, which preserved the essential immutable core of primordial beings. Not only simpler, but also ancient species, exhibited amazing means to preserve their own life and identity, which move them to adopt a peculiar pattern of reproduction, the simplest of them, bipartition, the engendering of their own double. Bipartition resembles an aberrant asymmetric mirror in which one image is a decaying individual, while the other becomes a new vigorous creature, a faithful reproduction of the original organism; it becomes a replica, a selected sample of a potentially countless set of identical beings; these elementary beings seemed to be able to perpetuate themselves identically, to expand their own biological confines.

Nevertheless, this topic did not explicitly appear at the early stages of the psychoanalytic thought, but rather at the moment when Freud was confronting a definitive challenge: the explanation of the alliance between repetition and unpleasurability, between the "will to self-destruction" and pain. That challenge led him to postulate the existence of another psychical realm, that of the death instinct, the impulse of live beings to return to primal inert matter. Death instinct, paradoxically, is thought of as the inherent impulse of live beings to exacerbate the domain of pleasure principle so as to drive the organism to seek its own disappearance, the total dissemination of its cohesive force. The death instinct is the exuberance, the lavishness, the exasperation of the pleasure principle, its extreme unfolding, its last and intolerable progression. However, the death instinct, as we will see later,³³ neither replaces nor obliterates the pleasure principle. It coexists with it as its negative counterpart: it is both its necessary consequence and its contorted image, its negation. Both antagonistic

forces struggle, in spite of the fact that one of them, ruled by the death instinct, is but the magnification and the exacerbation of the other, within the biological limits of the same organism. The conception of the death instinct was to pose, in Freud's universe, a never resolved paradox, a speculative enigma, a delicate conjecture, the support of which was, strangely enough, the expression of Freud's scatological Spinozist belief in the supreme impulse of the organism to persevere in the struggle for life.

Psychoanalytic thought experienced the impact of these conceptual tensions, which contributed to shape nineteenth century thought. The tension between the continuity and the discontinuity of the subject's identity determined the evolution of Freud's conceptual framework. It did not only upheld the conception of the intrinsic, potential boundaries of the evolution of the inner structures of subjectivity and its agencies, but also to define the dominant trends of normal sexuality, its metaphysical ends, and its deviations.

Freud's works not only enact the striving for discontinuity as an ideal of scientific discourse; they seek to expound the paradoxical force of inheritance, of continuity, in the psychical life, and also the intrinsic discontinuous nature of psychical processes. Freud does not depict the coherent and uncontaminated nature of the soul, but the shattered structures of subjectivity and of speech which manifest themselves in experience.

However, psychoanalysis put forward as its own utopia the subject's achievement of a non-fragmentary discourse at which psychoanalytic interpretation should aim: to restore the continuity of the subject's speech, to heal it from the intrusion of silence, of secrecy, of discontinuity.

The patient should achieve this utopian continuity of his own speech so as to overcome its perturbations, the silence ingrained in his own language.

Evolutionist thought determined the main topics and trends of the history of the biological conception of the mind in the nineteenth century and of certain Freudian notions which upheld his conception of subjectivity. According to it, the psychical apparatus appears as a settlement of successive layers of memory and a progressively complex arrangement of its intrinsic relations: evolution and involution were conceived as inverted reciprocal images; degradation becomes the inverted mirror image of the

increasing complexity of life. The development of the faculty of language involved two conflictive conceptions of the discontinuity of its own process: on the one hand, the evolution of the faculty of language is thought of as a continuous enhancement of the complexity and the expressive capacities of speech, suspended, punctuated by its own reappearing, rhythmic, cyclical destruction; each new stage involved either the partial or total destruction of the previous one, or its significant reorganization; on the other, language is seen as informed by a successive overlapping and interweaving of newly developed stages of experience; discontinuity appears as an imperfect eclipse of former experiences, as a partial veiling and distortion of the previously formed layers of articulated facets of language. This last conception of discontinuity was that which determined the path of psychoanalytic reflection.

According to nineteenth century notions of language and aphasia —and specially that put forward by Hughling Jackson—, the successive stages of the psychical evolution of language necessarily implied the preservation of early memories of language. Aphasia involved the dismembering of the distinct components of the word and simultaneously revealed the emerging remains of previous, even primordial stages of language acquisition; it was thus conceived as a debased functional performance of the *language apparatus*, a momentary or lasting suspension of speech, a degradation of meaning and the intrusion of silence; aphasia ought to have its source in the particular structure of language itself, in the heterogeneity of its elements, in the fragility of the internal relations of the facets and components of the word, in the precarious stability of the internal and external factors that concur to the act of speech, in the manifold processes —motor, affective, cognitive, perceptual— that contribute to the proper significance of the word. Degradation derives from the structure of the word itself; thus, it is foreign to any reflexive enquiry, to any attempt to expound, in terms of language, the intrinsic nature of the limits of the words. Language cannot explore and exhibit by itself, by the means of a reflexive comprehension of its analytical capacity, its own destruction: the maladies of silence, the shattering of the language capacity, deceive and resist the analysis of language; they even remain beyond comprehension, beyond the reach of the reflexive speech of the suffering subject.

Hughling Jackson convincingly depicted the degradation of language both as an

enfeebling of the meaningful, conventional use of speech, and as an enhancement of its affective expressiveness, but also as an involution, as a withdrawal of the capacity of language from its current stage into primordial stage of development, or as a restraint upon the variety and complexity of its potential associations. It is not only destruction but stillness that threatens the increasing expressive virtues of language.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, aphasia was to be clearly discernible from merely unfortunate utterances, from the intrinsic, abrupt barriers inherent in the dialogue and the reflexive usage of language, as well as from the violent implantation of silence and perplexity in the midst of speech; aphasia seemed to be clearly discernible from the sudden fog that often covers interpretation itself, and which seems to have no identifiable, but only a conjectural source. However, the symptoms of the true destruction of language, the visible token of the malady of words, the lasting silence of aphasia, which both surrounded and pervaded the curtailed capacities of speech, did not seem to stem unmistakably from the organic wound, from rotten tissues; it exhibited an uncertain locus, an elusive source, a nomadic settlement. Its etiology was to be forged by medical interpretation.

Wir stellen für die Beurtheilung der Function des Sprachapparates unter pathologischen Verhältnissen den Satz von Hughling Jackson voran, dass alle diese Reactionsweisen Fälle von functioneller Rückbildung (Dis-involution) des hochorganisirten Apparates darstellen, und somit früheren Zustandes in dessen functioneller Entwicklung entsprechen. Es wird also unter allen Bedingungen eine spät entwickelte, höher stehende Associationsanordnung verloren gehen, eine früh gewonnene, einfachere erhalten bleiben. (*Zur Auffassung der Aphasie*: 89)*

The concepts of fixation, dis-involution and regression were incorporated, yet reinterpreted and rearranged in Freud's theoretical framework; some of the concepts advanced in his early non-psychoanalytic papers suffered a harsh reconstruction in his late psychoanalytic work; but some of them remained tacitly unchanged. In his late and fundamental *Jenseits der Lustprinzips* (1920), Freud insists in the essential role of

*In assessing the functions of the speech apparatus under pathological conditions we are adopting as a guiding principle Hughling Jackson's doctrine that all these modes of reaction represent instances of functional retrogression (dis-involution) of a highly organized apparatus, and therefore correspond to earlier states of its functional development. This means that under all circumstances an arrangement of associations which, having been acquired later, belongs to a higher level of functioning, will be lost, while an earlier and simpler one will be preserved. (CA: 87)

fixation in the comprehension of the sources of malady:

Der Kranke sei an das Trauma sozusagen psychisch fixiert. Solche Fixierungen an das Erlebnis, welches die Erkrankung ausgelöst hat, sind uns seit langem bei der Hysterie bekannt. (*Jenseits der Lustprinzips*, SA, 1920, III: 223)*

Regression, a most powerful and disquieting concept in the psychoanalytic theory can be traced back to Freud's meditations on Hughling Jackson's explanation of aphasia: the concept of regression emerges from a theoretical approach to memory, from the anatomical and physiological view on the fixation and preservation of the previous stages of psychical development; thus, it is founded upon certain hypothesis about memory and representation; regression was seen to reveal the mechanisms of the self-preservation of experience. A remarkable feature of the concept of regression is that it involves the amazing "archeological" model of the mind, put forward by Hughling Jackson and adopted and transformed by Freud to suit his dynamic conception of psychical processes. Jackson contemplated the progressive destruction of aphasia and the retrogression of the performance of the "language apparatus", as a regression of the physiological response to *inner layers* and *previous stages* of linguistic experience; he envisioned the "language apparatus" as an organ made of overlaying layers of memory, increasing with experience and the transformation of linguistic experience, heightening the depth and enhancing the variety of the cerebral layers of memory. Perhaps, the crucial contribution of Hughling Jackson to the Freudian imagination was his thesis on the perpetuation of memories: according to him, the remnants of seemingly "lost" episodes and experiences of the subject are thoroughly preserved as indelible traces embedded in the subject's mind, and yet, they are inaccessible to reminiscence or evocation; they remain eclipsed, keeping however, the power to inform memory, to shape the perceptions of the inner and outer stimulus; thus, the subject hold emotionally to early acquired residues of language which determine the course of the subject's affective response.

But perhaps the most disquieting feature of Hughling Jackson's portrait of the mind, of the image of memory as clustering layers of remnants of experience, is the

*the patient is, as one might say, fixated to his trauma. Fixations to the experience which started the illness have long been familiar to us in hysteria. (FP, 11: 282)

assertion that these enduring vestiges of the subject's history remain as *timeless* tokens stripped from any trait able to reveal their singular chronologies or their peculiar history. In the deeper layers of the mind, memory becomes, as Hughling Jackson suggests in the light of the clinical evidence of aphasic patients, a purely allegorical thought, made up of signs that have "forgotten" their contexts, and of autonomous, loose representations of experiences, able to arouse abrupt and timeless images of the past, to bring about undeliberate evocations, to encompass in a single image a whole peculiar and autonomous universe of enigmatically fused images.

Furthermore, Freud also inherits from Hughling Jackson several notions besides this evolutionist, "archeological" model of the mind: the idea of the relevance of repetition and the fixation of certain patterns of linguistic usage, the image of the psychical apparatus likely to obstinately reproduce certain invariant associations that inform the subject's experience of language; the image of indelible paths fixed in the cerebral tissue by early experiences that govern the mechanisms and the intensity of the discharge of energy—which will give rise to the conception of *experience of satisfaction* in later enquiries of psychoanalysis—, the picture of expanding series of chained associations of words brought to light by reflexive thought. In Hughling Jackson's conception the immersion in the "archeological" depth of the layers of memory involved an increasing intensity of the affective content of the memories and the weakening of the symbolic force of the memory traces of the word, the word-residues. In the deepest layers of the soul the conventionality of signs disappears. In such primordial, deep layers of the soul, the abiding memories are only meaningless, yet expressive, emotionally charged, shreds of speech-like sounds; fragments of language which bear intense emotion, aroused by a primordial image. The depth of layers, the growing sediment of memories of different ages, involves also a progressive estrangeness of memory concerning the aims of consciousness. Memories of language, in the deepest layers of the mind, are foreign to time, intention and consciousness.

These "Jacksonian" contributions call to mind, no doubt, the structure of levels of Freudian psychical apparatus and stress the remarkable enigma of the nature of expressiveness and its relation to language.

II. Hysteria as a metaphor of aphasia

1. The Baroque muteness

Informed by a powerful yet contradictory religious expression, threatened by social affliction and disbelief, the Baroque conceptions of soul and body, their horizons of knowledge and universes of belief and the social moulding of the identity of the self were dominated by the experience of the exhaustion of reflexive language. The corporeal enactment of intense emotions prevailed. Baroque constructions —spiritual and material— reflected an intense contrast between the fragmentariness of language and the impregnable authority, the proliferating discordance and circularity of interpretations; the aftermath of the schism of the religious universe was the emergence of an acute perception of the self, of the inner agitation of corporeal forces, of the raptures of reflexive reason and the affection aroused by visible and figurative imagery; Baroque expressions exalted analogy as the dominant means for a legitimate apprehension of the world, as well as the primacy of mirror images and identification as the methods for the comprehension of theological mysteries; the Baroque sensibility celebrated the parables, the passion for scenery and theatrical images, the exemplarity of contrasting emotions —joy and pain— as fictional motives and the end of moral discipline, the weakened relevance of conventional meanings of language and the tribute to illumination beyond significance.

The work of Ignacio de Loyola, as a relevant expression of the Baroque atmosphere, achieved and displayed the fusion of the dominant trends of the aesthetic, religious, moral, and disciplinary currents of thought; it exposed the fundamental tensions of the Baroque which lead to an image of knowledge dominated by the desire for illumination. Loyola conceives the understanding [*entendimiento*] as "ilucidated by divine virtue" [*ilucidado por la virtud divina*] and endows the "internal feeling and taste of things" [*el sentir y gustar de las cosas internamente*] with a cardinal place in the disciplines of faith, a privileged method for the discernment of the signs of God.³⁴ Loyola's *Ejercicios espirituales*, one of the monuments of the Catholic Baroque, often displays analogous yet contrasting images of soul and body; they appear as malleable

stuff, surrendered to a rigid, purifying discipline. However, the discipline of the soul is forged as a faithful image of the disciplines of the body:

así como el pasear, caminar y correr son ejercicios corporales, por la misma manera todo modo de preparar y disponer el ánima, para quitar de sí todas las afecciones desordenadas, y después de quitadas para buscar y hallar la voluntad divina en la disposición de su vida para la salud del ánima, se llaman ejercicios espirituales.^{35*}

Thus, the discipline of the soul involved severe rules of behaviour, of calculated suffering, of serene resistance to the lure of evil, and an impatient apprehension of the subject's own feelings; the body was subdued by an abstract will which imposed on it the harsh discipline of the soul. Body represents allegorically the intimate presence of the Apocalypse, and the site of the deluding signs of evil which struggle against the salvation of the soul. Body remains the tangible, undeniable evidence of impending death, the putrefied flesh; it displays the landscape of the scatology of existence. A crucial stage prescribed for each of the *Ejercicios* composition [*composición*] —the evocation of an allegorical vision which constitutes the imagined scenery of the prayer— emphasises the scatological sense of body:

la composición será ver con la vista imaginativa y considerar mi ánima ser encarcelada en este cuerpo corruptible^{36**}

However, the discipline of the soul also exacted a disciplined body. Loyola defines corporeal rhythms, schedules, gestures, positions and an ascetic rule of feeding. But chiefly, the *Ejercicios*, impose on the follower of the Ignatian discipline a cyclic path which took the devout believer through a sequence of allegorical images leading to an acute perception of the silent signs of God, the proof of which was only the exulting experience of consolation and the joy of the soul, hallowed by suffering and pain. In the *Ejercicios*, discernment confounds itself with illumination. The mute signs of God were to be only discernible either in the feelings of joy or pain, or in the ecstasis of consolation.

*For just as strolling, walking, and running are bodily exercises, so spiritual exercises are methods of preparing and disposing the soul to free itself of all inordinate attachments, and after accomplishing this, of seeking and discovering the divine will regarding one's life orientation for the health of one's soul.

**the composition will consist of imagining and considering my soul imprisoned in its corruptible body.

However, even these signs were not seen as unequivocal; both evil and divine tokens engendered indistinguishable feelings of delusive resemblance:

acostumbra comúnmente el enemigo proponerles placeres aparentes, haciendo imaginar delectaciones y placeres sensuales, por más los conservar y aumentar en sus vicios y peccados.^{37*}

Evil and divine mute tokens arouse similarly ambiguous and deceiving inner experiences, the definite sense of which would *advent* to the soul as a deferred confirmation: only final virtue, a scatological meaning, an illuminated thought or action and a rejoiced spirit will bring to the soul the final certitude of the sense of the true signs of God. Only the sensation of pain provoked either by the regret for evil and sin, or by the identification with the passion of Christ would prove its unequivocal, divine origin:

demandar lo que quiero, lo cual es propio de demandar en la pasión, dolor con Cristo doloroso, quebranto con Cristo quebrantado, lágrimas, pena interna de tanta pena que Cristo pasó por mí.^{38**}

The creature reflects in the purifying convulsion of the fallen flesh, which allegorically enacts the passion of Christ, the true presence of God.

The *Ejercicios* strive against idle speech; words should acquire sense only by serving the subject's salvation; the only desirable meaning of austere acts and words should be consolation. Speech should be constrained to a single act: prayer. However, prayer was conceived by Loyola as an image of the speech of human love. The image of speech displays its manifold allegorical power: the dialogue between friends became the allegorical model for prayer, and, in turn, prayer itself became an allegory and model for every human use of language. Moreover, prayer, in the Ignatian *Ejercicios*, did not involve the full, expressive use of language, the exploration of the subtle capacities of speech. Prayer becomes a ancillary, worthless, transient instrument for the achievement of a lasting illumination; it is reduced only to a sequence of fragments;

[the enemy] He thus causes them to imagine sensual delights and pleasure in order to hold them more and more easily and to increase their vices and sins.

*to ask what I desire. In the Passion the proper thing to ask for is suffering with Christ suffering, a broken heart with Christ heartbroken, tears, and inner pain because of the great pain that Christ endured for me.

each single word, abstracted from discourse should be only a means to recall visions and resemblances, to arouse inner comforting feelings, to bring to mind images of Christ, which, in turn, appeared as allegorical models of the life and destiny of the subject himself.

la persona, de rodillas o asentado, según la mayor disposición en que se halla y más devoción le acompaña, teniendo los ojos cerrados o hincados en un lugar sin andar con ellos variando, diga Pater, y esté en la consideración desta palabra tanto tiempo, quanto halla significaciones, comparaciones, gusto y consolación en consideraciones pertinentes a la tal palabra, y de la misma manera haga en cada palabra del Pater noster o de otra oración cualquiera que desta manera quisiere orar [...] si la persona que contempla el Pater noster hallare en una palabra o en dos tan buena materia que pensar y gusto y consolación, no se cure pasar adelante, aunque se acabe la hora en aquello que halla, la cual acabada, dirá la resta del Pater noster en la manera acostumbrada [...] si en una palabra o en dos del Pater noster se detuvo por una hora entera, otro día cuando querrá tomar a la oración diga la sobredicho palabra o las dos según que suele, y en la palabra que se sigue inmediatamente comience a contemplar.^{39*}

Loyola depicts a labyrinth of reflected images. The vision of imagination represents, in his conception, the theological enthronement of a non-corporeal vision forged by a silent theatrical imagination which multiplies the allegorical, inner enactment of theological images of God; ideal images which should mould the action and the world of sinners.

The Ignacian enterprise sought to overcome through purification, silent understanding and mute illumination the violence of the inner and inherent meaninglessness of ordinary language. Barthes wrote:

il s'agit de produire des règles générales qui permettent au sujet de trouver quoi dire (*invenire quid dicas*), c'est-à-dire tout simplement de parler: il y a certainement au départ de la rhétorique et de la méditation ignaciennes (dont on verra le détail

*The person may be kneeling or sitting, whichever suits his disposition better and is more conducive to devotion. He should keep his eyes closed, or fixed on one position, not permitting them to wander about. He should then say, "Father," and reflect upon this word as long as he finds meanings, comparisons, relish, and consolation in the consideration of it. He should then continue the same method with each word of the "Our Father," or of any other prayer that he may wish to contemplate in this manner [...] during the contemplation on the "Our Father," if he finds in one or two words good matter for thought, and relish, and consolation, he should not be anxious to pass on, even though he spend the entire hour on what he has found. When the hour is over, he will say the rest of the "Our Father" in the usual way [...] if he has spent the entire hour dwelling on one or two words of the "Our Father," on another day, when he wishes to return to the same prayer, he may say the above-mentioned word or two in the usual way, and begin the contemplation of the word which immediately follows.

minutieux, comme s'il fallait réagir à chaque minute contre une inertie de parole) le sentiment d'une aphasie humaine: l'orateur et l'exercitant se débattent à l'origine dans une carence profonde de la parole, comme s'ils n'avaient rien à dire et qu'il faille un effort acharné pour les aider à trouver un langage. C'est sans doute pour cela que l'appareil méthodique installé par Ignace, réglant jours, horaires, postures, régimes, fait penser, dans sa minutie extrême, à les protocoles de l'écrivain (il est vrai, en général, mal connus, et c'est dommage): celui qui écrit, par une préparation réglée des conditions matérielles de l'écriture (lieu, horaire, carnets, papier, etc.), qu'on appelle communément le "travail" de l'écrivain et qui n'est le plus souvent que la conjuration magique de son aphasie native, tente de capturer "l'idée" (ce à quoi l'aidait le rhéteur), tout comme Ignace cherche à donner les moyens de saisir le signe de la divinité.⁴⁰

Freud shares with Loyola the conviction of the existence of a primordial aphasia, an intrinsic weakness of language; both profess a fundamental belief in the vainness of the expressive breath of language. From his early medical inquiries on aphasia and his experience with hysteric patients, Freud construed language as a purely ambiguous, intermediate object, as a mere passage into an intimate illumination of the truth of the subject's own history. The language of psychoanalysis, like that aimed at by Loyola's *Ejercicios espirituales*, was upheld by the utopia of the final, scatological, reconciled powers of expression; at the end, the subject would fulfil his aspiration to a purified language able to redeem the self from the foulness of its own history. The mutilated expressiveness of hysterical language, as that of a sinner, was to be overcome by the disciplined body and word; the promise of redemption of the Ignacian *Ejercicios* adumbrates a remote, final sphere of significance.

The work of psychoanalysis might be depicted, in the early years of its discovery, as a sort of methodic, magic conjuration which sought to heal the original aphasia of hysterics. The "talking cure" of psychoanalysis offered to the hysteric a supplementary, fragmentary discipline of speech; an exiguous rule for the discovery of her own history, a winding route to the realm of a silent memory, a means for the appropriation of sense which lied beyond the limits of her own evocation and speech. The "fundamental rule" of psychoanalysis, "free association", was conceived as a verbal and bodily discipline for overcoming the functional aphasia of the hysteric, the pain which burdened and hampered her speech. The language that stemmed from the

unrestricted application of the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis becomes only a *marginal*, transient discourse which reveals, in turn, the essentially neutral, restrained expressiveness of language.

Yet, certain relevant traits of language, envisaged as an inherently transitional object, were to be evinced by the rule of free association, which gave evidence of the strength and the menace of neutral objects. As Blanchot has pointed out,

le neutre est ce qui ne se distribue dans aucune genre: le non-général, le non-générique, comme le non-particulier. Il refuse l'appartenance à la catégorie d'objet qu'à celle de sujet. Et cela ne veut pas seulement dire qu'il est encore indéterminé et comme hésitant entre les deux, cela veut dire qu'il suppose une relation autre, ne relevant ni des conditions objectives, ni des dispositions subjectives [...] L'inconnu est toujours pensé au neutre. La pensée du neutre est une menace et un scandale pour la pensée.⁴¹

Neutrality is a quality which pertains to an uncertain, non-conclusive order; neutrality of language refers to a facet of verbal expression which refuses any taxonomy, and remains on the fringes of meaning. It hints at the boundaries of codes, the uselessness of naming, the denial of any significance likely to evoke any identifiable object, any depictable intention or finality.

Freud's psychoanalysis envisioned vague, conjectural objects on the fringes of representable experience: consciousness and the drive [*Trieb*], word and memory, pain and unpleasure, fear and anxiety, body and sexuality, all of them conceived as means for the depiction of the essential fabric of the soul; the objects of psychoanalytic theory exhibited a common, neutral condition. Indeed, the intermediate, neutral attribute of Freud's conceptual object were the result of an obliteration of his own topographical image of the psychical sources of representations. Those notions acquired, in Freud's universe, an intangible profile, an uncertain theoretical locus.

Allegory is a fundamental feature of Freudian writing; it is forged by a discourse which has yielded to the paradoxical impulse to expose its own finiteness by exhibiting its aim of achieving a faultless, all encompassing theoretical discourse. Allegory appears as the only figure able to signify the neutral, non-classifiable, yet cardinal relation between language and pain.

The history of psychoanalysis has taken a peculiar path. From its origins, it was chiefly concerned with the destiny of language, with its weakness, with the regime of its decline: psychoanalysis might be conceived as an effort to comprehend the exhaustion, the collapse of language, and the decay of its expressive force. Thus, psychoanalysis can be seen as a lasting meditation on the crumbling of representations, on their metamorphosis, and on the action of devastated, residual signs in the core of memory upon the course of the subject's experience; paradoxically, language becomes, in psychoanalysis, both a consequence and a veil of unnoticed, unsuspected thought processes, which constitute the subject's psychical structure. Language seems to emerge from an indiscernible history adumbrated by other signs written in the fragile matter of the subject's own primordial memory. The intimate history of the soul is revealed by language like a torn map composed by shreds of language, silenced but nevertheless capable of subduing the subject, of forcing him to accept a tacit, unprescribed end, foreign to his own will.

From his pre-psychoanalytic study, *Zur Auffassung der Aphasie*, to his last written, obscure contributions to psychoanalytic theory —the enigmatic aphorisms written shortly before his death— Freud seems to have been haunted by a passion for the extreme fragility of words, by the spectre of shattered speech. The whole Freudian enterprise seems to have been built upon the certainty of the wreck of the expressiveness of language and the settling of its vestiges beyond consciousness, joined to the belief in the apparently infinite endurance of memory. It is not language but its devastation which lured on Freud's thought on throughout his life. His thought lingered on the puzzle of lasting disquiet aroused by the non-said, by the enduring work of silence ingrained in the subject's experience of words. The Freudian text exhibits the traces of an imagination tantalized by the enigma of the mute persistence of residues of words, by the affects tied to the meaningless relics of significant expressions, by the silence and the oblivion embodied in meaningful words. After psychoanalysis, history, both of humankind and of the individual, may be thought of as the evoked narration built by the successive disintegration of the manifold bonds among diverging and elusive components of language, and by the tacit, spectral, yet compelling constraints on its use — this enigmatic "use of language" [*Sprachgebrauch*] to which Freud alludes

as a guiding light along the heuristic path of psychoanalytic theory.⁴²

2. Aphasia as a "disease of association"

The illusion of the discovery of the laws of thought —and, as a "natural" consequence, the laws of language— has bred countless controversies, and theoretical and intellectual enterprises since the nineteenth century. Fechner's physiological works, the logical models of George Boole, Franz Brentano's first sketches of what would become the phenomenological approach to consciousness, the singular phenomenology of pragmatism (phaneroscopy) of Ch.S. Peirce, the psychological reflections of Stuart Mill's *Logic*, among innumerable others, exhibit the will to knowledge which, in modernity, turned to the self and the mind as privileged objects, trying to find in its manifold incarnations the trends of psychical and symbolic development.

However, with the appearance of the Freudian discourse on aphasia, defined as a disorder of psychical association, a mutation of the idea of the laws of thought occurs: both association and aphasia illuminated unsuspected facets of thought, and at the same time acquired unconventional meanings. Association came to designate, in the framework of the successive reformulations of Freudian discourse, a constant displacement of energies along passages drawn on a chimerical anatomy, residues of words [*Wortresten*]; memory became the register of countless movements of significant amounts of energy among remains of words which emerged as potentially reappearing, fragmented utterances. Association also displayed a vague but persistent spectrum of meanings: it alluded to unstable, complex sound patterns that aroused an unaccountable web of meaningful relations, informing the subject's universe of unformulated and isolated evocations. Association thus "migrates" from the physiological substrate to the linguistic environment, from the physiological nature of the language apparatus to the intangible sphere of meanings, from the physiological body to the core of the soul. As Forrester has stated:

Freud used an array of anatomical facts to show that it was such connection fibres that were important in cerebral functioning. Such an argument also implied the functional 'anonymity' of these fibres. The model thus invoked was a homogeneous field of connection fibres, an abstracted physiology that could now be

converted into a purely psychological space. Any attempt to segment the field of language was vigorously resisted: at the level of the brain, connective fibres were found, while at the level of psychological space, there was only an assorted sphere of interdependent functions derived from association.⁴³

This metamorphosis of the notions of association and aphasia was fundamental to the development of Freud's conceptions. It indicates not only a definitive turning point in the historical development of his theory, but also suggests a limit, the exhaustion of theoretical thought.

However, the notion of aphasia will endure a characteristic transformation: it will be literally effaced from Freud's later, psychoanalytic discourse, yet, its sense will be preserved as an implicit model of his understanding of hysteria. As Freud engaged in the therapeutic use of hypnotism, he also accomplished a thorough revision and criticism of the anatomical and physiological theories of *aphasia*. Illuminated by the findings of the current physiological research of Wernicke, Meynert, Brücke and, as outstanding though somewhat marginal contributions in the German world, the works of Hughling Jackson and Charcot, Freud's vision of hysterical symptoms approached an allegorically construed image of the aphasic muteness; hysteria could be seen as the display of the obscure signs of a curtailed, hindered evocation.⁴⁴ It revealed itself unexpectedly as a *psychical* mirror image of physiological and anatomical aphasic disturbances.⁴⁵ The image of hysteria, as it emerged from clinic experience, was that of a puzzling mixture of disturbances of memory and speech, due to the experience of a brutal although unsignified perception. Nevertheless, this psychical image was not a faithful duplicate of the physical disease. In the hysteric, psychical muteness, the unfathomable barrier which obstructs the subject's memory, was to be thought of as a manifestation of a metaphorical disease, or an imaginary injury. The therapeutic experiences obtained from hypnosis, which led Freud to his aetiology of hysteria, drove the psychoanalytic reflection to a singular but decisive point.

The term aphasia would be uprooted from the Freudian discourse together with the physiological model of the psychical apparatus. However, hysteria was to be seen implicitly as a certain kind of aphasia, a peculiar "functional" impossibility of uttering

a complete, structured piece of narration. Hysteria, according to the early Freudian scheme, appeared as a disorder of language irreducible to a physiological disturbance or an anatomical injury. Aphasia was extirpated from the body of psychoanalytic topics, but was to reappear on the theoretical scene, as an unuttered allegory, as a tacit but distorted model of the remarkable muteness of hysteria: the tacit model of aphasia led Freud to conceive hysterical symptoms as the outburst of a pure narrative silence, as a functional, unacknowledged psychological impossibility, as a hindrance to memory; the symptoms of this psychological muteness manifested themselves as evidence of the subject's surrender to a psychological silence and his "election" of oblivion as an intimate fate. Thus, aphasia became the unstated allegory of hysteria: the unfathomable image of psychological muteness mirrored the enigmatic process, the insoluble enigma of the physical destruction of language. The precarious similarity between them was not the sequel of a sudden revelation, but perhaps a devious image incited by Charcot's theory of the relation between hysteria, aphasia and language. Indeed, Charcot posits in his *Leçons* –translated to German by Freud in the period of his attendance at Charcot's courses in La Salpêtrière–, an explicit relation, and an accurate distinction between organic aphasia and hysterical aphasia. It was for Freud only a short step to conceive the hysterical symptom as a sort of spiritual aphasia.

Subtly, the image of hysterical aphasia transformed itself into the notion of hysteria *as* aphasia. Freud conceived the hysterical malady as the outcome of the subject's experience of the sudden disintegration of the psychological components of language, the abrupt dismembering of signs, the impossibility of articulating words and recognizing the sense of speech, provoked by the experience of a certain intolerable episode. However, the faculty of language did not exhibit a visible lesion, a depictable wound; language underwent the "functional" severing of its elements, which impeded the subject's evocation and narration of this catastrophic, revolting scene. The manifestation of functional aphasia paralleled the symptoms of hysteria:

alle Aphasien auf Associations-, also auf Leitungsunterbrechung beruhen. Aphasie durch Zerstörung oder Läsion eines "Centrums" ist für uns nicht mehr und nicht weniger als Aphasie durch Läsion jener Associationsbahnen, die in dem Centrum genannten

Knotenpunkte zusammenlaufen. (*Zur Auffassung der Aphasie:*
69)*

The postulates of the aetiology of hysteria, like those of previous physiological models of aphasia, were supported by the hypothesis of the existence of different kind of "centres": anatomical, cerebral, hysterogenic, which determined and governed the specific behaviour of the apparatus. This hypothesis seems to underly Freud's later assumptions regarding the erogenic zones and his postulates as to the source of repression, conceived as a localized agency, a fixed psychological locus. These functional nodes were envisioned as the site of the capacity for unleashing a significant, symptomatic discharge of energy. The testimonies of Charcot's sessions leave no doubt about the weight he gave to the notion of centre in his conception of hysterical symptom. However, there was a supplementary feature in Charcot's conception: these centres were not only visible but touchable, located in the body. Not only were they perceivable, but also sensible centres, specifically circumscribed zones of the subject's perception.

The resemblance between aphasia —which involved anatomical centres— and hysteria —recognizable for its hysterogenic centres— was too seducing to be overlooked. Moreover, hysteria seemed to transform the silence of aphasia into confined tokens of primal dispersed bodily and verbal expressions, the malady changed into an incipient yet unyielding muteness, theatrical gestures, bodily pain and fragmented and straying utterances; hysteria, like aphasia, caused the subject's speech to revolve around primal, unrecoverable, fixed signs. The subject was driven to debase progressively the significance of its own expressions.

There is an immediate relation between hysteria and the breaking of the associative links which integrate the language apparatus. In hysteria, language eludes the impact of local, physical destruction, but it is hindered by unpleasure, by impending pain. The morphology of the symptom is elusive: there are no definitive, clearly depictable physical, anatomical symptoms; the only recognizable signs were

*We feel justified in rejecting the differentiation between the so-called centre or cortical aphasias and the conduction (association) aphasias, and we maintain that all aphasias originate in interruption of associations, i.e., of conduction. (CA: 67)

those of the "functional mutations" of silence:

Der Sprachapparat wahrscheinlich nicht bloß Localenzeichen gebe, sondern auch eine besondere Natur des Krankheitsprocesses durch eine Abänderung seiner functionellen Symptomatik verrathen dürfte. (*Zur Auffassung der Aphasie*: 72)*

Psychoanalysis acquired its unprecedented theoretical relevance in its complex vision of the non-said. From the time of his early work, Freud encountered, observing the enigmatic effects of hypnosis, the oblivion exhibited by hysterics, their resistance to recall specific episodes of their past life, their obstinate attachment to an unuttered narration of a past and nevertheless distressing experience; the hysterical symptom was seen as informed by the unaccountable yet undeniable presence of engraved psychical remains of a brutal episode, which determined its oblique, obscure manifestations of the symptoms and governed the subject's action. During hypnosis, the physician's commands seemed to penetrate the unconscious of the hysteric, and the words acquired an autonomous sense; they merged with other memories, only to rise from the core of subjectivity as if driven by the subject's *own* desire. They seemed to obey an ineluctable mandate, unaffected by the presence and voice of the physician. Recalling his early experience with hypnosis Freud summarizes:

der Vorsatz im Geiste jener Person in latenter Form oder unbewußt vorhanden war, bis der gegebene Moment kam, in dem er dann bewußt geworden ist. Aber nicht in seiner Gänze ist er im Bewußtsein aufgetaucht, sondern nur die Vorstellung des auszuführenden Aktes. Alle anderen mit dieser Vorstellung assoziierten Ideen – der Auftrag, der Einfluß des Arztes, die Erinnerung an den hypnotischen Zustand –, blieben auch dann noch unbewußt. (*Einige Bemerkungen über den Begriff des Unbewußten in der Psychoanalyse*, SA, 1912, III: 31)**

The image of a latent web of ideas associated with a compelling memory able to govern surreptitiously the subject's actions foreshadowed the notion of repression. But contrary to the current ideas about hypnosis, Freud maintained that the veil of memory neither

*probably a lesion of the speech apparatus did not only cause localizing signs, but that the special nature of the disease process might be revealed by a functional modification of its symptoms. (CA: 70)

**the order had been present in the mind of the person in a condition of latency, or had been present *unconsciously*, until the given moment came, and then had become conscious. But not the whole of it emerged into consciousness: only the conception of the act to be executed. All the other ideas associated with this conception—the order, the influence of the physician, the recollection of the hypnotic state, remained unconscious even then. (FP, 11: 51)

concealed *inert* residues of experience in the core of the psychical apparatus, nor created *isolated tokens foreign to the active psychical life of the subject*. On the contrary, these residues, these remaining traces silently determined the unsignified action and the unacknowledged, real behaviour of the subject.

A vast arrangement of associated, active memory traces yielded to the suffocating forces which kept them from emerging from the depths of memory. This image of a suffocating pressure—which would itself give rise to the notion of repression—imposed on a singular universe of associated ideas, arranged in a peculiar constellation, not only gave Freud the clue to the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis (free association); it also illuminated an specific trait both of phantasy and daydream: its distinctive narrative and visual expressions changing both in content and affective charge, yet able to adumbrate obliquely a repetitive impulse of desire.

Freud's personal account of contemporary notions of hysteria must be seen in the context of this encompassing metaphor of aphasia: the appearance of silence both veils and betokens a singular, harmful experience: an episode the unbearable, even abject, sense of which takes roots in the history of the subject's sexuality. In hysteria, Freud posits, a *non-signified* early sexual experience bursts upon speech, shattering the inner bonds of signs and impeding the actions associated with it. The psychoanalytic allegory of the phantasy of seduction,⁴⁶ which so strongly determined the destiny of psychoanalytic reflection, can be thought of as bred by an effort to understand the power of this non-significant memory, the shattering of the word which freed the charge of energy linked to its representational bond.

The dismembering of the word which, according to Freud, characterized hysteria, revealed the threefold structure of word representation. Word appeared as a precarious unity formed by the perception of the matter of signs—either the sounds of spoken word or the shapes of the written word—, and the mental image of the perceptible or imaginary features of the object of the word, as well as by an ancillary, diffuse, physical component of the sign: a charge of energy.⁴⁷ The dismembering of the sign is due to an extreme psychical reaction to the perception of an unspeakable experience.

Both asymbolic aphasia and hysteria seemed to stem from a collapse of speech,

but only as pure functional disorder, without involving any specific damage to the physiological substrate.

*Asymbolische Sprachstörung ohne Complication (mit Erhaltung aller Wortassocationen) kann sich vielleicht auch durch einen bloss functionellen Zustand des ganzen Sprachapparates ergeben, denn Manches deutet darauf hin, dass die Verbindung von Wort- und Objectvorstellung der erschöpfbarste Theil der Sprachleistung ist, gewissermassen ihr schwacher Punkt. (Zur Auffassung der Aphasie: 85)**

This early comprehension of the dismembering of the sign profoundly modified Freud's clinic approach to hysteria, and gave rise, also, to the theoretical construction of the notion of repression. It signified the appearance, on the psychoanalytic scene, of an experience which altered the understanding of sexual identity; according to Freud's conception, subjectivity can be conceived as emerging, paradoxically, both from the intrinsic incapacity of the word to represent the primordial experience of love, to evoke the shape of the loved object and the subject's affection attached to it, and from the irrevocably dominant presence of language in the subject's life. Sexuality has its origin in the inescapable conflict between the subject's requirements of energy and the curtailed expressive and representational capacity of the word. The hysteric's experience of a hollow utterance, of a lost, yet undefinable link which would have consolidated his own narration, of a gap in the subject's own history, echoes the destruction of the internal relation between the components of the word. However, the emotions aroused by the energy unleashed by the destruction of the word evince the relevance of the subject's oblivion. The harsh silence of the shattered word, betokens a broken memory, excluded, however, from the subject's evocations. A meaningful narrative fragment has been effaced from the immediate memory, frustrating the accomplishment of the narrative act. Shreds of the disintegrated word remain as firm though concealed vestiges which encumber the subject's discourse; hysterics display the compulsive though unperceived emptiness of their discourse, the diminished potency of evocation.

*Asymbolic speech disorder without complications, i.e. without disturbance of the word associations, may also result from a merely functional state of the speech apparatus as a whole; there are some indications that the link between word association and object associations is the most easily exhaustible component of the speech function, its weakest point as it were. (CA: 83)

Moreover, in Freud's early texts, most clearly in those which refer to aphasic disorders which implies an oblique allusion to hysteria, *the sense of the non-said is neither that of a merely concealed word nor of a forgotten, unfortunate utterance; the aphasic silence was not to be conceived as an isolated blunder, but as a sombre breakdown of the act of speech, as a narration dominated by a persistent yet befogged affliction.* Hysteria is the evidence —displayed by the symptom— of the disruptive arrest of the *will to narrate*, and of the failure of the narrating act: the hysteric's impulse to narrate has been pushed to a crucial point: the hysterical imagination *exhibits the oblivion* of its own historical origin; narration has been stripped of its own temporal tokens; reminiscences become a mere nomadic yarn, a fiction which openly exhibits the essential omission of its temporal links and its digressive impulse.⁴⁸

3. Oblivion and repression: the spring of hysteric muteness

Repression —the cardinal concept derived from the conception of hysteria— like most of Freud's essential concepts underwent a continual and fundamental revision throughout his theoretical enterprise. However, from the time of the early formulations it appeared as a crucial notion which implied the convergence of the dynamic, topographical and economic dimensions of psychoanalytic reflection, as well as implicit considerations on the symbolic nature of the psychical process. From its first appearance, repression was not simply a description of the conflict between the agencies of subjectivity. In its first and most powerful and suggestive sense, repression was neither the image of forgetfulness, nor a term referring simply to the subject's defense against the intense energy stirred by an appalling episode already experienced. In the Freudian constellation of concepts, repression and censorship preserve their full suggestive power: they incite the conceptual imagination to envision an allegorical struggle between incarnated forces. Repression and censorship acquire an unsettling relevance in the Freudian theory; yet, their epistemological nature is ambiguous: they are both allegory and description. They have the power to *enact*, to render into a theatrical, mythical struggle the psychical dynamics of memory residues, actions and

discharges of energy, intensities and tensions which provoke the breaking of word residues; however, the mere fictional plot evinces the symbolic nature of the process. Repression is not reducible to a mere physiological response; rather, it refers to the psychical, symbolic representation of bodily energies. The allegorical power of the notion of repression and its fictional development, seem to uncover and expound the symbolic nature of hysterical oblivion; thus, they *depict* by fictional means—a mixture of representations, metaphors, characters and figures—the tensions between psychical representations and their ambiguous sense. Freud's astounding achievement is to have envisaged repression as a pure symbolic process; moreover, this notion proved to be the cornerstone of his contribution to the understanding of hysterical malady. Jean Hyppolite remarked:

Janet parlait, dans l'hystérie, d'une dissociation du moi, ou d'une impuissance du moi à synthétiser, à s'unifier. Freud parle de *refoulement*. La description de Janet n'est précisément qu'une description, celle de Freud est une compréhension.⁴⁹

The concept of *repression* implies a radical desegregation undergone by both speech and language. But it clearly appeared that this dismembering of the word was neither innocuous nor incidental. The dissolution of the internal links of the word was not a simple, meaningless calamity. It liberated unbounded energy. However, the intrinsic, grammatical and semantical relations of speech offered uneven resistance to the intruding, shattering force of inner energy; the cohesion of discourse forces a displacement [*Verschiebung*] of the energy; signs and utterances associated with repressed representation acquire an exorbitant, unbearable energy content which manifests itself in a desultory narrative imagination, as well as in a sensation of anxiety which defaces the image of the self.

The notion of repression does not depict the dynamic dismemberment of the word, but its unforeseeable sequels. The dismembering of the word resists reflexive thought. However, its effects are visible as symptoms, and construable from the web of silence and emotions aroused by language itself. When the memories of the words, the subjective relics of language, convey conventional meanings, consciousness is capable of immediately evoking them; however, the mnemonic residues associated with an unbearably painful incident remain beyond the reach of active memory, but burst

upon the the subject's consciousness as unidentified, albeit distressing emotions.

As has been obstinately —and almost universally— remarked, Freud explicitly denies that the mnemonic traces of the signs can convey any sense of temporality, for they are confined within the limits of the subject's unconscious.⁵⁰ Unconscious representations, Freud has emphasized, are completely foreign to any temporal reference. Memory traces can only bear the sense of temporality by the various kinds of associations of simultaneous and sequential perceptions; perceivable objects do not bear recognizable marks of their own temporality. However, against current interpretations, it is possible to assert that a sense of temporality, is, indeed, implied by the patterns of unconscious representations. Temporality is inherent in association: it involves a proximity in time and space, a coexistence or a concomitance, a discernment of a sequence or of a resemblance; association also conveys, implicitly the sense of precedence or causality. Freud's theory of repression —and its resonances in his distinction between primary and secondary repression, his visions of fetishism, the conception of cathexis [*Besetzung*] and his tortuous understanding of masochism— alludes to an elusive though adequate notion of an unconscious sense of time and duration, aroused not by memory-traces but by their associations built by primary thought, by the silent discernment of unconscious processes.

Consequently, the crucial feature of the concept of repression is its transitional nature: it enables Freud to move from the horizon of physiology to the sphere of sense.

Hyppolite remarks:

Les symptômes de l'hystérie ne sont pas des troubles physiques quelconques sans rapport avec la totalité d'une vie et d'une histoire. Ils ont un sens; il faut remonter de ces significations au sens originaire qui est le leur dans une histoire particulier.⁵¹

The symbolic manifestations of repression condense the chronicle of the subject's psychical genesis and development, the stages of his affective life, the history of his love attachments. The outcome of this condensation, the obscure sense of the sequence of collapse and gathering of memories, the veiled relics of the loss of loved objects or of their abandonment, forge themselves the history of inner, successive failures of language. However, repression is still a privileged yet uncertain key to the understanding of the subject's creation of sense, which rises enigmatically from the

underlying, unaccountable fabric of the physiological processes.

Perception projects the spatial relations into a memory of proximity, and, in turn, into a peculiar experience of time. Thus, the sense of time arises from primary thought—which governs desire—, by the silent judgment which links memory and perception, and perhaps even from the enigmatic relation between physical energy and psychical representation; Freud explicitly posited the idea that time appears as the outcome of the pulsating nature of cathexis [*Besetzung*], of the appearance and disappearance of the representation of the loved objects.

Freud's frequently quoted expression: "Repression proper, therefore, is actually an after-pressure" (FP, 11: 147) [*Die eigentliche Verdrängung ist also ein Nachdrängen (Die Verdrängung, SA, 1915, III: 109)*] accounts for the distinctive chronologies of repression. Freud explicitly seeks to reformulate Kant's notion of time as a formal condition of intuition.

Ich gestatte mir an dieser Stelle ein Thema flüchtig zu berühren, welches die gründlichste Behandlung verdienen würde. Der Kantsche Satz, daß Zeit und Raum notwendige Formen unseres Denkens sind, kann heute infolge gewisser psychoanalytischer Erkenntnisse einer Diskussion unterzogen werden. Wir haben erfahren, daß die unbewußten Seelenvorgänge an sich "zeitlos" sind. Das heißt zunächst, daß sie nicht zeitlich geordnet werden, daß die Zeit nichts an ihnen verändert, daß man die Zeitvorstellung nicht an sie heranbringen kann. Es sind dies negative Charaktere, die man sich nur durch Vergleichung mit den bewußten seelischen Prozessen deutlich machen kann. Unsere abstrakte Zeitvorstellung scheint vielmehr durchaus von der Arbeitsweise des System W-Bw hergeholt zu sein und einer Selbstwahrnehmung derselben zu entsprechen. Bei dieser Funktionsweise des Systems dürfte ein anderer Weg des Reizschutzes beschritten werden. Ich weiß, daß diese Behauptungen sehr dunkel klingen, muß mich aber auf solche Andeutungen beschränken. (*Jenseits des Lustprinzips, SA, 1920, III: 238*)

*At this point I shall venture to touch for a moment upon a subject which would merit the most exhaustive treatment. As a result of certain psychoanalytic discoveries, we are to-day in position to embark on a discussion of the Kantian theorem that time and space are 'necessary forms of thought'. We have learn that unconscious mental processes are in themselves 'timeless'. This means in the first place that they are not ordered temporally, that time does not change them in any way and that the idea of time cannot be applied to them. These are negative characteristics which can only be clearly understood if a comparison is made with the conscious mental processes. On the other hand, our abstract idea of time seems to be wholly derived from the method of working of the system Pcpt.-Cs. And to correspond to a perception on its own part of that method of working. This mode of functioning may perhaps constitute another way of providing a shield against stimuli. I know that these remarks must sound very obscure, but I must limit myself to these hints. (FP, 11:299)

The conscious experience of time, as it follows from psychoanalytic theory, has its roots in the reflection of consciousness upon itself: the folding, the turning back of discernment upon its own self perceptions [*Selbstwahrnehmung*]. Consciousness contemplates itself, and discerns the nature of its feelings, attachments and perceptions; that which arises from the sustained meditation of consciousness upon the images of its own processes constitutes the abstract representation of time.

Freud's celebrated, and inevitably quoted formula: "hysterics suffer from reminiscence", unveils the dense representation of time implied by his conception of hysteria: this significant aphorism comprehended a relevant, often neglected feature of the experience of time: its relation to pain. Freud's hysterics are subdued by the force of their own impeded memory, yet they are unable to overcome the sense of timelessness which pervades their own history. This aphoristic expression also illuminates a disquieting contradictory feature of the hysteric's narration: the scandalous image of reminiscence without evocation; the hysteric's reminiscences are stale, a pure painful affection without image or concept, empty, a failed act of narration, arrested speech, a collapsed tale stirred by unrecoverable memories. Yet, the most relevant feature of Freud's dazzling aphorism, is his stress on the intimate relation between the lavish nature of time experience and the unrecognizable, secret yet distressing source of perceptions of pain. *Hysteric's reminiscence*, as seen from Freud's point of view, reveals the inextricable alliance of pain, functional aphasia, a broken psychological universe, a mutilated memory, a restricted language, discernible in the wreck of the narrative act and of the untruthfulness of its signs.

Hysteria bears testimony to an extinction of the narrative power of signs; a yet unfathomable —sexual— experience, has left behind, as only evidence, a meaningless, intense affliction, conveyed by the narration of the subject's own devastated history.⁵² Hysteria appeared, in the Freudian universe, as the affirmation of the subject's identity by negative means: the exhibition of his own ruined and dismembered history.

III. Allegory and conceptual dualities: territories of psychical processes

Broca's striking findings after his studies of the cerebral regions, and his conception of memory as an anatomically located set of vestiges settled the chief trends of the Localizationist School which became a stablished paradigm of medical conceptions on language in the nineteenth century. However, Freud rejected Broca's views and the developments put forward by his German followers, Wernike, Meynert and Brücke amongst others. He asserted, quite adventurously, following the insights of Hughling Jackson, that the psychical correlate of representation is not a certain cerebral *locus* but a *functional process*. Jacques Nassif, analysing Freud's early theoretical constructions, posited that the explanatory power of the notion of *process* in psychoanalysis, can be seen as an inheritance from Hughling Jackson's neurological studies:

la neurologie jacksonienne, en mettant en avant le concept de "procès", permettait d'arracher la question de la conscience à la problématique des rapports de l'âme et du corps, puisque, nos allons le démontrer, le concept de procès échappe à ces deux catégories du psychique et du somatique.⁵³

Wernike's "positional" theory (cortico-centric) of cerebral structure, as well as Meynert's contributions to the knowledge of aphasia, both of them developments of Broca's localizational conception, would undergo, in Freud's theory, a profound metaphorical transformation. The force of the anatomical description of the location of linguistic capacities faded; Wernike's description of cortical nervous tissue turned into Freud's metaphor of consciousness, which stressed only its topographical sense. In psychoanalytic theory, consciousness has neither an actual, anatomical location nor a tangible substance: with the metaphorical mutation, the notion of anatomical position lost its spatial and material reference and acquired a functional sense with all its implications regarding *temporality*. The landscape of consciousness allegorically exhibited the duration and manifold temporality of psychical processes; the notion of memory trace —rooted in anatomical descriptions— underwent in Freud's proposal, a thorough revision. The traces of evoked figures no longer had their abode at a definite anatomical site; they lost their own territory; the relics of memory ceased to be conceived as psychical vestiges likely to evoke a condensed, frozen image of a past

perception; rather, they appeared as flashing representations, created by the movement of excitations which enlivened a narrative display of the subject's experience. Allegory confers on consciousness the tangibility of an anatomical tissue: it appeared as the envelope of the soul, the palpable yet unalterable screen of memory, the membrane which keeps note of sensations and feelings, the psychical epidermis which isolates the subject from its environment. Thus, Freud interpreted the description of anatomical position as a metaphor which bore an unexpected, yet illuminating sense of temporality, relevant to his conception of the psychical processes.

But the concept of process, *alone*, as illuminating as it might be, did not obliterate the uncertainty and ambiguousness of Freud's distinction between body and soul [*Seele*]. Freud envisioned psychical processes as Baroque arrangements of contrasting spaces—an obscure, only partially illuminated physiological space and the brightness of perception and consciousness—, which did not clearly correspond to any sharp distinction between inner and outer spaces. Both remained similar but irreducible, parallel, contrasting universes. However, the explicit formulation of the *parallelism* between psychical processes (mind) and physiological processes (body) introduced disquieting, contradictory resonances in Freud's conceptual imagery. Freud's notion of parallelism, echoed literally, perhaps involuntarily the arguments of John Stuart Mill regarding the psychological enquiry. Indeed, Mill wrote in *A System of Logic*:

[that] every mental state has a nervous state for its immediate antecedent and proximate cause, though extremely probable, cannot hitherto be said to be proved, in the conclusive manner in which this can be proved of sensations; and even were it certain, yet every one must admit that we are wholly ignorant of the characteristics, of these nervous states; we know not, and at present have no means of knowing, in what respect one of them differs from another; and our only mode of studying their successions or co-existences must be by observing the successions and co-existences of the mental states, of which they are supposed to be the generators or causes. The successions, therefore, which obtain among mental phenomena, do not admit of being deduced from the physiological laws of our nervous organization; and all real knowledge of them must continue, for a long time at least, if not always, to be sought in the direct study, by observation and experiment, of the mental successions themselves.⁵⁴

The notion of process, which appeared in the polemics about aphasia, broadened the breach between the organic and the psychical, but it prefigured perhaps the most significant contribution of Freud's theory: the radical heterogeneity of body and soul (mind) foreshadows the advent of the Freudian notion of the unconscious. Indeed, Freud puts forward an explicit relation between both foreign processes —the psychical and the physical—, which is neither causal nor determined. Freud wrote:

Die Kette der physiologischen Vorgänge im Nervensystem steht ja wahrscheinlich nicht im Verhältniss der Causalität zu dem psychischen Vorgänge. Die physiologischen Vorgänge hören nicht auf, sobald die psychischen begonnen haben, vielmehr geht die physiologische Kette weiter, nur dass jedem Glied derselben (oder einzelnen Gliedern) von einem gewissen Moment an ein psychisches Phänomen entspricht. Das Psychische ist somit ein Parallelvorgang des Physiologischen ("a dependent concomitant")
(*Zur Auffassung der Aphasie*: 56-57)*

This parallelism does not refer to any direct causal determination, but to a reciprocal *echoing* of psychical and physical processes. Thus, psychical processes can be conceived as the unforeseeable outcome of the pressure exerted by the biological constraints upon the representational apparatus of subjectivity.

This "concomitant dependency", which Freud had already posited and stressed in his early neurological studies, did not refer to an abstract, equivocal, omnicomprehensive process. What Freud denies is the existence of a causal, reciprocal, determining link between the physical and the psychical sphere. Rather, each process preserves its own logic, exhibits a characteristic development. The energy of the physical realm contrasts with the energy of psychical processes in ways which can only be grasped by allegorical images.

The early sense of the concept of *process* precedes and prepares the way for the appearance of the functional *and* spatial metaphor of facilitation [*Bahnung*]. Like the notions relevant to the physiological approach to aphasia, the notion of facilitation appeared at an early stage of psychoanalysis only to be seemingly abandoned almost immediately: it provided a spatial image which combined the notions of resistance,

*The relationship between the chain of physiological events in the nervous system and the mental processes is probably not one of cause and effect. The former do not cease when the later set in; they tend to continue, but, from certain moment, a mental phenomenon corresponds to each part of the chain, or to several parts. The psychical is, therefore, a process parallel to the physiological, "a dependent concomitant". (CA: 55)

fixation, and repetition, in a single metaphor charged with resonances of aquatic and topographical meanings. It enabled Freud to put forward the image of the self as a depictable topographical map, as the allegory of a web of fixed passages which defined the profiles and responses of psychical processes; the ego was only an elusive incarnation of an immutable diagram of pathways for the discharge of excitation—which, in turn, prefigured the late concept of ego. However, for these pathways he offered no material evidence: the specific "topography" of ego and desire is an abstract image construed from the visible "topography" of silence and muteness. Different notions converged in an entangled series of metaphors: psychical energy—conceived according to the thermodynamic distinction between free and bounded energy—gave rise to a hydraulic metaphor, which, in turn, supported the dynamic conception of ego, later incarnated in an allegorical character involved in countless intrigues and violent encounters with the other psychical agencies. The "functional" topography of aphasia produced a proliferating series of metaphors, in which psychical processes found a corporeal figure.⁵⁵

However, the notion of process itself preserved its explanatory efficacy. The privileged place of the notion of representation in psychoanalysis can only be acknowledged if we see it as a synthesis of topographical and temporal models of psychical processes:

Was ist nun das physiologische Correlat der einfachen oder der für sie wiederkehrenden Vorstellung? Offenbar nichts Ruhendes, sondern etwas von der Natur eines Vorganges. Dieser Vorgang verträgt die Localisation, er geht von einer besonderen Stelle der Hirnrinde oder längs besondere Wege. Ist dieser Vorgang abgelaufe, so hinterlässt er in der von ihm afficirten Hirnrinde eine Modification, die Möglichkeit der Erinnerung. Es ist durchaus zweifelhaft, ob dieser Modification gleichfalls etwas Psychisches entspricht; unser Bewusstsein weist nichts dergleichen auf, was der Namen "latentes Erinnerungsbild" von der psychischen Seite rechtfertigen würde. So oft aber derselbe Zustand der Rinde wieder angeregt wird, entsteht das Psychische als Erinnerungsbild von Neuem. Wir haben freilich nicht die leiseste Ahnung davon, wie die thierische Substanz es zu Stande bringen mag, so vielfältige Modificationen durchzumachen und auseinander zu halten. (...) Lässt sich nun am physiologischen Correlat der Empfindung der Antheil der "Empfindung" von dem "Association" unterscheiden? Offenbar nicht. "Empfindung" und "Association" sind zwei Namen, mit denen wir verschiedene Ansichten derselben Processes belegen. Wir wissen aber, das

beide Namen von einem einheitlichen und untheilbaren Process abstrahirt sind. Wir können keine Empfindung haben, ohne sie sofort zu associiren; mögen wir die beiden begrifflich noch so scharf trennen, in Wirklichkeit hängen sie an einem einzigen Vorgang, der, von einer Rindenstelle beginnend, über die gesammte Rinde diffundirt. Die Localisation des physiologischen Correlats ist also für Vorstellung und Association dieselbe, und das Localisation einer Vorstellung nichts Anderes bedeutet, als Localisation ihres Correlates, so müssen wir es ablehnen, die Vorstellung an den einen Punkt der Hirnrinde verlegen, die Association an eine anderen. Beides geht vielmehr von eine Punkt aus, und befinden sich an keinem Punkte ruhend. (*Zur Auffassung der Aphasie: 58*)²

Despite the extreme density of his exposition, Freud makes clear the metaphorical notion of process. Freud took a further step, a fundamental one, articulating sensation²² [*Empfindung*], association [*Association*] —“in reality they belong to a single process” [*in Wirklichkeit hängen sie an einem einzigen Vorgang*]²³— and representation [*Vorstellung*] —“The localization of the physiological correlates for representation and association is, therefore, identical.”²⁴ [*Die Localisation des physiologischen Correlats ist also für Vorstellung und Association dieselbe*]²⁵—. This relation between heterogeneous psychical process leads to an abstract image of anatomical space. Both

What then is the physiological correlate of the simple idea emerging or re-emerging? Obviously nothing static, but something in the nature of a process. This process is not incompatible with localization. It starts at a specific point in the cortex and from there spreads over the whole cortex and along certain pathways. When this event has taken place it leaves behind a modification, with the possibility of a memory, in the part of the cortex affected. It is very doubtful whether this physiological event is in any way associated with something psychic. Our consciousness contains nothing that would, from the psychological point of view, justify the term “latent memory image”. Yet whenever the same cortical state is elicited again, the previous psychical event re-emerges as a memory. We have, of course, not the slightest idea how animal tissue can possibly undergo, and differentiate, so many various modifications. But that it is able to do so is proved by the example, of the spermatozoa in which the most varied and highly differentiated modifications lie dormant and ready to develop.

Is it possible, then, to differentiate the part of “perception” from that of “association” in the concomitant physiological process? Obviously not. “Perception” and “association” are terms by which we describe different aspects of the same process. But we know that the phenomena to which these terms refer are abstractions from a unitary and indivisible process. We cannot have a perception without immediately associating it; however sharply we may separate the two concepts, in reality they belong to one single process which, starting from one point, spreads over the whole cortex. The localization of the physiological correlates for perception, and association is, therefore, identical, and as localization of a perception means nothing else but localization of its correlate, we cannot possibly have a separate cortical localization for each. Both arise from the same place and are nowhere static. (CA: 56)

²²We do not follow here the very dubious translation of the notion of *Empfindung* which appears in the English translation of this text as “perception”.

²³The English translation use the same term for Freud's notions of sensation [*Empfindung*] and (re)presentation [*Vorstellung*]: perception. This fusion and confusion of terms introduces a significative deviation which has serious consequences for the interpretation of Freud's text.

representation [*Vorstellung*] and association [*Association*], he suggests, refer to the same physiological correlate. Thus, the psychical notions of "sensation", "representation" and "association" acquire a purely *functional* meaning, paradoxically detached from their anatomical territory, yet linked to an intangible, allegorical path. Freud asserts that the "possibility of remembrance" involves necessarily the modification of this fictional, physiological substrate [*so hinterlässt er in der von ihm afficirten Hirnrinde eine Modification, die Möglichkeit der Erinnerung*]⁵⁶; which does not involve, in turn, the actual correlative alteration of consciousness.⁵⁶ Psychical processes have become abstract images, beyond the reach of consciousness and have acquired a disquieting autonomy.

In one of his latest and most revealing, condensed accounts of his own theory, *Notiz über der "Wunderblok"* (1925), Freud repeated an unexpected, even odd, metaphor, forged by Meynert. This metaphor had been quoted by him, not without some ironic remarks, many years before in *Zur Auffassung der Aphasie*, in the context of a different conceptual discussion. Later, he resorted to the same metaphor to persuasively account for the relation between the conscious and the unconscious. In spite of the drastic transformation of the context, Freud's metaphor acquired a suggestive theoretical relevance: consciousness is envisioned as growing tentacles [*Fühler*] which embrace and incorporate foreign matter⁵⁷:

Es wäre so, als ob das Unbewußte mittels des Systems W-Bw der Außenwelt Fühler entgegenstrecken würde, die rasch zurückgezogen werden, nachdem sie deren Erregungen verkostet haben. Ich ließ also die Unterbrechungen, die beim Wunderblock von außen her geschehen, durch die Diskontinuität der Innervationsströmung zustande kommen, und an Stelle einer wirklichen Kontaktaufhebung stand in meiner Annahme die periodisch eintretende Unerregbarkeit des Wahrnehmungssystems. Ich vermutete ferner, daß diese diskontinuierliche Arbeitsweise des Systems W-Bw der Entstehung der Zeitvorstellung zugrunde liegt. (*Notiz über den "Wunderblock"*, SA, 1925, III: 369)⁵⁷

⁵⁶it leaves behind a modification, with the possibility of memory, in the part of the cortex affected. (CA: 56)

⁵⁷It is as though the unconscious stretches out feelers, through the medium of the system *Pcpt.-Cs.*, towards the external world and hastily withdraws them as soon as they have sampled the excitations coming from it. Thus the interruptions, which in the case of the Mystic Pad have an external origin, were attributed by my hypothesis to the discontinuity in the current of innervation; and the actual breaking of contact which occurs in the Mystic Pad was replaced in my theory by the periodic non-excitability of the perceptual system. I further had a suspicion that this

But in this summarized presentation –as frequently occurs in Freud's work– the original conceptual tension between conscious and unconscious led to another: the opposition between inner and outer subjective spaces. The spatial boundaries of the self arise from symbolic processes: they are fictional resonances of a primordial psychical process. The perception of rhythm, of periodicity,⁵⁸ does not only appear as the subject's means of defining the frontier between the outer and the inner stimulus, but as the way of recognizing the essential difference between contrasting qualities of the energy processes: inner energy appears as an uninterrupted flow, while external energy is perceived as an onrush. Thus, periodicity and discontinuity characterize the relation of the psychical system to the objects of the world. It is this rhythmic, fluctuating movement, the sequence of fading and reappearance of distinct presences that informs both consciousness and the subject's experience of time. In a significant passage of his *Metapsychology* he had clearly acknowledged:

Das Ich bedarf der Außenwelt nicht, insofern es autoerotisch ist, es bekommt aber Objekte aus ihr infolge der Erlebnisse der Icherhaltungstrieb und kann doch nicht umhin, innere Triebreize als unlustvoll für eine Zeit zu verspüren. Unter der Herrschaft des Lustprinzips vollzieht sich nun in ihm eine weitere Entwicklung. Es nimmt die dargebotenen Objekte, insofern sie Lustquellen sind, in sein Ich auf, introjiziert sich dieselben (nach dem Ausdrucke Ferenczis [1909]) und stößt andererseits von sich aus, was ihm im eigenen Innern Unlustanlaß wird.

Es wandelt sich so aus dem anfänglichen Real-Ich, welches Innen und Außen nach einem guten objektiven Kennzeichen unterschieden hat, in ein purifiziertes Lust-Ich, welches den Lustcharakter über jeden anderen setzt. Die Außenwelt zerfällt ihm in einen Lustanteil, den es sich einverleibt hat, und einen Rest, der ihm fremd ist. Aus dem eigen Ich hat es einen Bestandteil ausgesondert, den es in die Außenwelt wir und als feindlich empfindet. Nach dieser Umordnung ist die Deckung der beiden Polaritäten:

Ich-Subjekt — mit Lust

Außenwelt - mit Unlust (von früher her Indifferenz)
wiederhergestellt. (*Trieb- und Triebchiksale*, SA, 1915, III: 98)*

discontinuous method of functioning of the system *Pcpt.-Cs.* lies at the bottom of the origin of the concept of time. (FP, 11: 434)

*Insofar as the ego is auto-erotic, it has no need of the external world, but, in consequence of experiences undergone by the instincts of self-preservation, it acquires objects from the world, and, in spite of everything, it cannot avoid feeling internal instinctual stimuli for a time as unpleasurable. Under the dominance of the pleasure

The contrast between the experience of a continuous internal excitation and a discontinuous flow of energy defines the frontier between the different spheres of "objective signs". A clear discernment of this discontinuity is the evidence of outer energy. Yet, the memories of the contrasting experiences acquire the symbolic sense of the presence and absence of loved objects, which have been transformed into tokens by the self-reflexions of consciousness. Freud was impelled to introduce here supplementary, disquieting categories: the subject's awareness of the quality of energy is not enough to set its own boundaries and to build its own identity as opposed to the outside world. The perception of the quality of inner energy must correspond to certain sensations: pain, unpleasure, and pleasure. Thus it is feeling, the reflexive perception of inner dynamics, that enables the subject to build up reality from the dispersed evidence of discontinuous perception of world objects. Consequently, the objective world does not emerge from pure perception, from a lucid awareness of the qualities of extraneous signs, but also from the vestiges of threatening, distressing stimuli which adumbrate the painful memory of a primordial, lost object. Freud formulates this conflictive dynamic of pain as the transformation of fictional characters: *real ego* turns into a *purified pleasure-ego*.

The subtle metaphorical sense of the notion of process implicitly replaces, in Freud's universe, the illuminating power of the current metaphor of anatomical regions. His conception of a stratified psychical apparatus, taken from the physiological enquiries of Hughling Jackson, engendered a further, uncomfortable metaphor: the psychical apparatus appeared as *chronologically assorted layers* of timeless residues of perceived and recognized objects. Thus, the image of psychical agencies is that of encompassing

principle a further development now takes place in the ego. In so far as the objects which are presented to it are sources of pleasure, it takes them into itself, 'introjects' them (to use Ferenczi's [1909] term); and, on the other hand, it expels whatever within itself becomes a cause of unpleasure.

Thus, the original 'reality-ego', which distinguished internal and external by means of a sound objective criterion, changes into a purified 'pleasure-ego', which places the characteristic of pleasure above others. For the pleasure-ego the external world is divided into a part that is pleasurable, which it has incorporated into itself, and a remainder that is extraneous to it. It has separated off a part of its own self, which it projects into the external world and feels as hostile. After this new arrangement, the two polarities coincide once more: the ego-subject coincides with pleasure, and the external world with unpleasure (with what was early indifference). (FP, 11: 133-134)

surfaces, folding membranes, volumes that interpenetrate; a *positional* conception of the subjective agencies turned into *visual* theoretical allegories: consciousness appeared as the outer layer of subjectivity; it is depicted as a tenacious barrier which divides inner and outer universes. The metaphorical mutation induces a radical ambiguity in this dualism of psychological territories. Inner and outer —it has often been emphasized—, constitute an unstable, yet definitive allegorical order in Freud's categories.⁵⁹

Freud's later conceptual oppositions between the world and inner vestiges of loved objects, between sensation and perception, only offer a shallow and elusive theoretical foundation always on the verge of a new redefinition. Yet, their ephemeral limits display distinct, albeit delusive reflections of the Baroque contrast between the inner and the outer. The ancient and enigmatic duality of body and mind, which came to life so violently at the dawn of rationalism, also exerted a profound influence in Freud's conception. The relation between the body as a whole, and the brain, which seems to have been the source of Freud's original physiological enquiry, acquired a new and unprecedented sense: the distinction between body and mind ceased to be a purely anatomical and physiological problem or, a question which revolved around the various definitions of reason. The mind-body problem which triggered intricate philosophical debates, involved, in Freud's case, inextricable conceptual tensions: the distinction and representational relation between the physical and the psychological, between unconsciousness and consciousness, between sensation and perception, between instinct [*Trieb*] and culture, between feeling and representation, between discernment and desire, between the inherited and the acquired, some of them ancient and unresolved cardinal philosophical problems, and which were to prove crucial questions for the modern conception of subjectivity.

IV. The strangeness of the body

John Stuart Mill, in *A System of Logic* —work which was probably very well known to Freud from the very beginning of the psychoanalytic enterprise—, described thoroughly and persuasively the sources of the conceptual antagonism between body

and mind; the apparent discord involved above all the notion of sensation. John Stuart Mill observed:

It is usual, indeed, to speak of sensations as states of body, not of mind. But this is the common confusion, of giving the same name to a phenomenon and to the approximate cause or conditions of the phenomenon. *The immediate antecedent of a sensation is a state of body, but the sensation itself is a state of mind.* If the word Mind means any thing, it means that which feels.⁶⁰

As it has been already remarked, Freud's conception of parallel processes, which implies an uncertain causality—his puzzling "dependent concomitant"—, reciprocal resonances and endless sequence of symmetric yet contrasting topographical pictures, calls to mind immediately the Baroque conflict between the illuminated and the obscure, contiguous spaces, between the opposing senses of moving volumes. However, these mirrors reflect grotesque images. Freud's model of the "dependent concomitant" brings into a relationship incomparable domains. This relation does not suggest a discernible analogy, but a radical asymmetry between both processes. The body—conceived as a source of energy and as the definitive origin of perceptions—continues to be envisaged as an obscure pole, as an enigmatic realm linked by representation to the psychical apparatus.⁶¹ The asymmetry involved in representation resembled that of a symptom which had lost or radically misconstrued its own sources. The body emerges as a conjectural object,⁶² foreign even to the suggestive images evoked by the thermodynamic metaphor.

Representation, indeed, was Freud's term for the psychical outcome of unaccountable bodily processes. It implies Freud's early acquired conviction that the knowledge of physiological transformations is beyond the reach of reflexive consciousness and resists evocation. A violent conclusion regarding the nature of subjectivity emerges: the self is uprooted from its own physical matter and abstracted from the plenitude of its own sensations.

The body construed by consciousness is a purely functional and conjectural entity, the mere source of impulses, of perturbations perceived as feelings; its image is just that of a dense, dark source of psychical processes. Ego, although foreign to the body, is conceived as its shadow, its emanation, an effigy which looms from the

subject's memory of the original and ineffaceable paths of stimulus and response; the identity of ego is built up from the paths between accumulated, settled residues of the perceived objects and actions. Its shape has been moulded by an unfathomable regime of perception.

Body will preserve in psychoanalytic theory its image of an outer rind, of an object, the alien identity of which is inherent in its boundary position:

Der eigene Körper und vor allem die Oberfläche desselben ist ein Ort, von dem gleichzeitig äußere und innere Wahrnehmungen ausgehen können. Er wird wie ein anderes Objekt gesehen, ergibt aber dem Getast zweierlei Empfindungen, von denen die eine einer inneren Wahrnehmung gleichkommen kann. Es ist in de Psychophysiologie hin reichend erörtert worden, auf welche Weise sich de eigene Körper aus de Wahrnehmungswelt heraushebt. Auch de Schmerz scheint dabei eine Rolle zu spielen, und die Art, wie man bei schmerzhaften Erkrankungen eine neue Erkenntnis seiner Organe erwirbt, ist vielleicht vorbildlich für die Art, wie man überhaupt zur Vorstellung seines eigenen Körpers kommt. Das Ich ist vor allem ein körperliches, es ist nicht nur ein Oberflächenwesen, sondern selbst die Projektion einer Oberfläche. Wenn man eine anatomische Analogie für dasselbe sucht, kann man es am ehesten mit dem "Gehirnmännchen" de Anatomen identifizieren, das in de Hirnrinde auf dem Kopf steht, die Fersen nach oben streckt, nach hinten schaut und, wie bekannt, links die Sprachzone trägt. (Das Ich und das Es, SA, 1923, III: 294. Emphasis added)

In accordance to Freud, inner perception —and its extreme and singular manifestation: pain— fashions the experience of the body as an image which delimits the frontiers of the psychological world. The body is, in this view, the source and the outcome of the experience of pain which evinces the limits of perception and the failure of consciousness.

Pain appears as an overwhelming, intense energy, which dissipates the contours

*A person's own body, and above all its surface, is a place from which both external and internal perceptions may spring. It is seen like any other object, but to the touch it yields two kinds of sensations, one of which may be equivalent to an internal perception. Psycho-physiology has fully discussed the manner in which a person's own body attains its special position among other objects in the world of perception. Pain, too, seems to play a part in the process, and the way in which we gain new knowledge of our organs during painful illnesses is perhaps a model of the way by which in general we arrive at the idea of our body. The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface. If we wish to find an anatomical analogy for it we can best identify it with the 'cortical homunculus' of the anatomists, which stands on its head in the cortex; sticks up its heels, faces backwards and, as we know, has its speech-area on the left-hand side. (FP, 11: 364-365)

of the perceived, giving rise to an exorbitant, pure feeling which not only pervades and constitutes the image of the body but also arrests psychical representation; indeed, perceived pain reveals the radical eclipse of perception; it involves an intensity of energy which debases the qualities of the perceived object; it becomes a pure sensation which lacks the range of distinct, discernible sensual qualities. However, pain remains an ambiguous notion: it refers both to a psychical disturbance provoked by a discharge of energy into the psychical system, and to its perception and representation in the realm of consciousness. This duality allows Freud to conceive an unperceived, unconscious pain, despite his firm denial of the possibility of conceiving "unconscious sensations".⁶³

The intrinsic bond between body and pain reveals itself to be unaccountable: pain appears only as an uncertain, fluctuating, discontinuous burst of energy into the perception of a non-significant body. It introduces in the subject's experience a blazing discontinuity and engraves in the flesh the poignant evidence of the finiteness of the body; it signifies its confines. Pain arouses the subject's singular awareness of the body, it endows it with a paradoxical, fictional yet tangible sense of materiality; pain confers on the subject's own body an absolute but alien and hostile intimacy. The body acquires a perceivable reality after the outburst of pain; its violence creates the body out of those perceptions which reveal its sudden crumbling, which foreshadows its disappearance; it creates the image of the body while exposing its fragility and its impending destruction; pain forges the body as negative matter, as a substance which should acquire its identity at the moment of its own eclipse: thus, the everyday perception of the body emerges from the rhythmic effusion of pain and its eclipse; the body can be seen as the aftermath of painful experience. Pain forges the existence of the body as a totality from the mute devastation, from the remains left by the suffering experience in the territories of the body; its ephemeral, dispersed intensity gives rise to the congruence of its image. Pain becomes a perceptible quality, a presence in itself which pervades the body and prevents its forgetfulness; it reveals its totality by severing it, exposing the painful segments as debased traces of life. The silent familiarity of the body, its ellusiveness, its unnoticeable density emerges as the token of the pure transience of pain.

The overwhelming intensity of pain, Freud insists, may be considered an essential resource for the complex building of the subject's image of the body. In the psychoanalytic conception, pain shapes the physiognomy, the sense and the density of the perceived, symbolic body. The body is conceived as a folding surface, an unapprehensible membrane interposed between the subject and the world. Yet, it also appears as a tangible facet of the psychical apparatus, turned into a protective envelope.

In Freud's terms, the body appears metaphorically as a folding surface; it confers on the subject the capacity to distinguish the outer from the inner; to build the identity of the self as dense flesh. However, it also engenders a psychical identity. Ego itself is conceived by Freud as a psychical simile of this enveloping membrane; it is moulded by the *projection of the body upon psychical processes*; but also, by the settled remains of experience; ego takes the form of a progressively dense layer of fixed energy conduits, vestiges of perceptions both of the body and of outer images, memories of achieved or failed actions, of hallucinatory and real satisfaction; ego is thus the result of the permanent encounter of silent, primary thought with the "necessities of life". It is conceived as a later agency, as an aftermath of the struggle of primary thought with the elusive and painful spectre of world objects; it is the outcome of the progressive unfolding and transformation of the inner, primal qualities of the psychical apparatus; ego is also conceived as the mute assortment of the memories of the subject's loss of his love objects. Moreover, the complete psychical apparatus is envisioned as a series of membranes which proliferate after the primordial cleavage of the subject's identity.

Freud's early image of the breach between body and brain anticipates the conceptual tension between psychical and physical, between mind and body: the original physiological duality —body and brain— transforms itself into an abstract, metaphorical image: the unity of the subject is seen as the relation between a biological layer enveloped by a psychical stratum, which is, in turn, formed by overlaying psychical coverings. Each new folding, each new envelope involves a cleavage, a distinction between incomparable features of the subject's agencies. This sequence of cleavages multiplies the echoes of the Cartesian enquiry regarding the enigma of the relation of body and mind.

However, psychoanalysis found in the notion of drive [*Trieb*] a firm but mythical explanation—as Freud himself admitted—for the constitutional cleavage between body and mind.

Indeed, one of Freud's lasting contributions to the psychoanalytic conception of subjectivity is, undoubtedly, the notion of drive (instinct, in Strachey's version). This Freudian notion acquired a theoretical relevance comparable to that of representation; it refers to a conjectural process that blends in a single figure the uncertain conception of psychical energy, the hypothesis of the concomitance between psychical and physical orders, the notion of an active force and the assertion on the symbolic nature of the process of thought; it also became the metaphorical image at the core of the notion of desire. Freud himself did not hesitate to acknowledge explicitly the speculative—mythical (Freud)—nature of this concept.⁶⁴ This peculiar conceptual extraterritoriality of drive accounts for its uncertain position and relevance in Freud's theory:

Die Trieblehre ist sozusagen unsere Mythologie. Die Triebe sind mythische Wesen, großartigen in ihrer Unbestimmtheit. Wir können in unserer Arbeit keinen Augenblick von ihnen absehen und sind dabei nie sicher, sie scharf zu sehen. (*Neue Folge de Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse*, SA, 1933, I: 529)*

Thus, drive [*Trieb*] depicts the action exerted by excitation upon the psychical, symbolic response, the figurative and representational resonance of unfathomable intense corporeal energies. It names both the capacity of the psychical sphere to represent the physical, unaccountable force of biological energy and the capacity of a physical, shapeless energy to unleash symbolically governed psychical, object-oriented energy. Drive, as has been tirelessly emphasized by different readers of Freud's work, has the structure and the elements of representation; yet, it is also an impulse which brings together both universes; it is neither psychical nor physical, both pure impulse and representation.

*The theory of the instincts is to say our mythology. Instincts are mythical entities. Magnificent in their indefiniteness. In our work we cannot for a moment disregard them, yet we are never sure that we are seeing them clear. (FP, 2: 127)

Wenden wir uns nun von der biologischen Seite her zur Betrachtung des Seelenlebens zu, so erscheint uns der "Trieb" als ein Grenzbegriff zwischen Seelischem und Somatischem, als psychischer Repräsentant der aus dem Körperinnern stammenden, in die Seele gelangenden Reize, als ein Maß der Arbeitsanforderung, die dem Seelischen infolge seines Zusammenhanges mit dem Körperlichen auferlegt ist. (*Trieb und Tribschicksale*, SA, 1915, III: 85)*

It is this intermediate position of the drive between both spheres that determines the relevance of the drive in Freud's conception of subjectivity: drive appears simultaneously as an impulse, as an action, as a relation, even as an object endowed with a meaningful content, completely foreign to the purely dynamic tensions of the corporeal discharge of energy.

However, the autonomous, invariant *regime* of the drive, its symbolic performance, veils the nature of the physiological functions and their behaviour. The biological ground in which drive—understood as a symbolic, dual structure—takes root is beclouded by perceived and spectral images which it itself informs. Drive [*Trieb*] stands by itself; its own extraneous mechanisms lead it to turn apart from its physical foundations, yet echoing them as an alien and opaque image. Its own, specific symbolic form is determined by its own intrinsic structure: "its 'pressure', its 'aim', its 'object' and its 'source'" (FP, 11: 118) [*Drang, Ziel, Objekt, Quelle des Triebs (Triebe und Tribschicksale*, SA, 1915, III: 85)]. The mixture and collision of energies, which constitute the represented event, its reference, clearly appear as pure conjecture, a speculative image which provides a firm but perturbing hermeneutical clue to the mysteries of desire.

It is clear, however, that Freud's conception implies two distinguishable energies: on one side, a physiological energy, free from any constraint other than that of physical laws; on the other, psychical energy which appears as a token, as an impulse likely to represent the disturbances of the psychical stability; it carries a meaningful content and is governed, in the orientation and intensity of its discharge,

*If now we apply ourselves to considering mental life from a biological point of view, an 'instinct' appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its connection with the body. (FP, 11: 118)

by sheer symbolical determinations.

The singular allegories of body, constructed by psychoanalysis, illuminate the enigmatic relation, posited by Stuart Mill, between body, sensation and feelings. Indeed, despite the fact that body and feelings are clearly opposed concepts, they also establish, in Mill's view, an intrinsic, causal dependence. Thus, sensations and feelings become closely related phenomena in Mill's terms, and reveal themselves to be the fundamental processes of the mind, foreign to biological constraints, and yet, reacting to their inherent changes and processes. However, Mill's distinction was to be reformulated by Freud, in a late contribution: while sensation and feelings spring from inner sources, perceptions respond to intrusions of energy from without:

Wir wissen schon, wo wir hiefür anzuknüpfen haben. Wir haben gesagt, das Bewußtsein ist die Oberfläche des seelischen Apparates, das heißt, wir haben es einem System als Funktion zugeschrieben, welches räumlich das erste von der Außenwelt her ist. *Räumlich übrigens nicht nur im Sinne der Funktion, sondern diesmal auch im Sinne der anatomischen Zergliederung.* Auch unser Forschen muß diese wahrnehmende Oberfläche zum Ausgang nehmen. Von vornherein *bw* sind alle Wahrnehmungen, die von außen herankommen (Sinneswahrnehmungen), und von innen her, was wir Empfindungen und Gefühle heißen. (*Das Ich und das Es*, SA, 1923, III: 288)*

1. Visual metaphors and the symbol: projection and representation

As we have remarked, the notion of body, in Freud's theory, emerged as a dazzling metaphor: it lost its concrete profile and designated an opaque substrate of the flows of energy, inaccessible to reflexive consciousness.

The fertility of this image results from the conjunction of diverse conceptual constellations and disciplinary domains. In the final decades of nineteenth century, at the zenith of an unprecedented transformation in the revolution in optical technology, the invention of photography and the rudiments of cinema, at the peak of crucial social transformations which enlivened a powerful new regime of visibility, Meynert

*We already know the point from which we have to start in this connection. We have said that the consciousness is the *surface* of the mental apparatus; that is, we have ascribed it as a function to a system which is spatially the first one reached from the external world —and spatially not only in the functional sense but, on this occasion, also in the sense of anatomical dissection. Our investigations too must take this perceiving surface as a starting point. All perceptions which are received from without (sense-perceptions) and from within —what we call sensations and feelings— are *Cs.* from the start. (FP, 11: 357)

proposed, in the context of his discussion on aphasia, an optical concept to expound the constitution of the body's image: the notion of *projection*.

Optical and anatomical metaphors proliferate in Freud's theory; the term *projection* sprung from the attraction exerted on him by Meynert's metaphor of the retinian image, which condensed in a simple figure the unaccountable process by which the vast web of currents of the corporeal stimulus converged into a single, flow of sheer energy. However, the retinian image conceived as a "point-by-point" physiological icon of the world, created by the eye, accounted only for a partial phase in the scheme of flows of energy of the whole body.

Wie gestaltet sich nun die Abbildung des Körpers in der Gehirnrinde, welche durch solche Bahnen mit der Peripherie verbunden ist? Meynert nennt diese Abbildung eine "Projection", und einige seiner Bemerkungen lasse schliessen, dass er in der That eine Projection, d.h. eine Abbildung Punkt, des Körpers in der Hirnrinde annimmt. In diesem Sinne dient z.B. der so häufige Vergleich der Hirnrinde mit der Retina des Auges, einem Endorgan, dessen Nervensubstanz von mehreren Autoren ein "Stück vorgeshobenes Rindengrau" genannt wurde. (*Zur Auffassung der Aphasie: 49*)

Projection, as an optical metaphor, seems to rise from the constraints imposed by scientific conceptions on the emerging psychology; science resorted to the imperious, legitimate triumph of visibility; nineteenth century scientific discourse, captivated by the new potencies of observation, yielded to the biological, evolutionist imagination, and to the philosophical speculations which surrounded it.

Freud a été fasciné, au début de sa carrière, par l'aide inappréciable que les perfectionnements du microscope apportaient à ses travaux d'histologie, et par la personnalité de Charcot, "un visuel, comme il se nommait lui-même, un voyant (*ein Seher*)", qui s'émerveillait "qu'on puisse voir soudain de nouvelles choses - de nouveaux états morbides - qui pourtant étaient vraisemblablement aussi anciennes que l'espèce humaine". Les études de Freud sur l'hystérie l'ont mis en présence de patients qui "donnent à voir" et chez lesquels il s'est intéressé particulièrement aux troubles de la vision. Mais c'est aussi à leur contact que sont nés ses premiers doutes sur la possibilité d'accéder à la vérité

In what way, then, is the body represented in the cerebral cortex which is connected with the periphery by means of these tracts? Meynert calls this representation a "projection", and some of his comments indicate that he actually envisages a projection, i.e. a point by point representation, of the body in the cerebral cortex. This is suggested by the frequent analogy he draws between cerebral cortex and retina. The latter is an end organ which several writers have called an outlying piece of cortex. (CA: 47)

comme on contemple une image, de tenir sous son regard, ainsi que le chirurgien fait d'une tumeur, la scène traumatique ou le souvenir transparent permettant de remonter jusqu'à l'origine du mal. Ce qui est en jeu, l'inconscient, n'est jamais donné dans une image, mais ne peut qu'être conjecturé, mis en perspective par l'établissement de rapports, passant forcément par le langage, tel qu'il fonctionne dans la cure analytique.⁶⁵

The knowledge of body revealed itself as a mirage, reduced to the landscape of a functional self-image of the mind. The acuteness of the inward vision, the reflexive consciousness turned upon sensations and feelings, made up the image of the self and emphasized the enigma of flesh. *Projection* appears as an meagre image of the inner body. The "topographic" images of the brain, the language apparatus, the psychical apparatus and the body were translated into functions and vestiges. The representation of body exhibited its own fragmentariness. The notion of *projection* forged a dimmed image of the flesh, and rendered it into a bare functional figure; the optical metaphor uncovered the fictional nature of sensations.

The early Freudian notion of projection, blended into a single image not only the optical metaphor of the formation of images, but also Wernicke's fluvial metaphor of the stimulus, which strengthened and unfolded the insinuating power of the optical allegory.

Wie gestaltet sich nun die Abbildung des Körpers in der Gehirnrinde, welche durch solche Bahnen mit der Peripherie verbunden ist? Meynert nennt diese Abbildung eine "Projection", und einige seiner Bemerkungen lasse schliessen, dass er in der That eine Projection, d.h. eine Abbildung Punkt, des Körpers in der Hirnrinde annimt. In diesem Sinne dent z.B. der so häftige Vergleich der Hirnrinde mit der Retina des Auges, einem Endorgan, dessen Nervensubstanz von mehreren Autoren ein "Stück vorgeshobenes Rindengrau" genannt wurde. (*Zur Auffassung der Aphasie*: 49)

Meynert's metaphor conveyed the idea of an implicit but unavoidable assymetry between centre and periphery –a relation which resembles the opposition between the

⁶⁵In what way, then, is the body represented in the cerebral cortex which is connected with the periphery by means of these tracts? Meynert calls this representation "projection", and some of his comments indicate that he actually envisages a projection, i.e., a point by point representation, of the body in the cerebral cortex. This is suggested by the frequent analogy he draws between cerebral cortex and retina. The latter is an end organ which several writers have called an outlying piece of cortex. (CA: 47)

body and the mind—, and also echoed the definitive tension between the inner subjective sphere and the outer world. Moreover, this notion of projection introduced an unsettling image of the body: it construed it as a foreign, extraneous object transformed by a secret code into an amalgam of energy and stimuli. Freud accepts and develops Wernicke's insights, only to encounter the confines of the explanatory power of his fluvial images. Following the physiological findings of Henle, he acknowledges the curtailed image of the body produced by the structure of the nervous system. A consequence of this theoretical approach was the notion of body as a peripheral cluster of nomadic energies moving along fixed and dissipating trenches. The image of this peripheral body endures a radical transformation while it travels through the gray masses. The poorness of the metaphor of the retinian image—a point-by-point internal, physiological, reproduction the external world—and the simultaneous though deceiving illuminations of the fluvial metaphor, which seemed to elucidate the emergence of the body's identity, led, nevertheless, to a disquieting consequence: the body was envisaged only as a distorted, fragmentary image bred by the stimuli of the body fused into the spinal cord. The word body named an obscure web of flows of energy, which enveloped the central organs.

Wir ersehen nur so viel, dass die nach Durchsetzung von grauen Substanzen in der Hirnrinde anlangenden Fasern zwar noch eine Beziehung zur Körperperipherie enthalten, aber kein topisch ähnliches Bild derselben mehr geben können. (*Zur Auffassung der Aphasien: 55*)*

The image of the body dissipates; the immense variety of the body's excitations fuses into a pure flow of nervous stimuli. Moreover, the suggestive force of the notion of representation, which also implied an elliptic reconstruction of the scheme of the body, was also a product of the captivating eloquence of optical devices. In this early context of optical metaphor, representation was seen to display an heterogeneous and, in a way, distorted image of body, which turned out to be, in itself, a surrogate image of *projection*:

*We can only presume that the fibre tracts, which reach the cerebral cortex after their passage through other grey masses, have maintained some relationship to the periphery of the body, but no longer reflect the topographically exact image of it. (CA: 53)

die Abbildung in Rückenmarksgrau eine Projection, so wird es vielleicht passend sein, die Abbildung in der Grosshirnrinde eine Repräsentation zu heissen und sagen, die Körperperipherie sei in der Hirnrinde nicht Stück für Stück enthalten, sondern in einer minder detaillirten Sonderung durch ausgewählte Fasern vertreten. (*Zur Auffassung der Aphasien*: 52)*

The conceptual asymmetry between *projection* and *representation* does not refer to unequal quantities of stimuli. Representation does not only offer a broad image of the perceived inner corporeal alterations, it also integrates the selective corporeal responses into an open spectrum of the intruding stimuli. The image of the body has its source in an uncertain physiological scheme. Thus, the notion of representation refers to the visible totality of the non-representable, subtle complexity of the physiological system, which gives rise to the body's deceiving, psychical image. The notion of body allegorically portrays the wholeness composed by shreds and mixtures of disjointed excitations, a rough image made of porous matter offered as tangible evidence to consciousness. Freud, indeed, alludes to the nature of the represented body in a compelling allegory:

[Die nach Durchsetzung von grauen Substanz in der Hirnrinde anliegenden Fasern] Sie enthalten die Körperperipherie, wie —um ein Beispiel dem uns hier beschäftigenden Gegenstande zu entlehnen— ein Gedicht das Alphabet enthält, in einer Umordnung, die andere Zwecke dient, in mannigfacher Verknüpfung der einzelnen topischen Elemente, wobei die einen davon mehrfach, die anderen gar nicht vertreten sein mögen. (*Zur Auffassung der Aphasien*: 54-55)**

The allegory of the poem, since this first seemingly incidental appearance in Freudian text, has never been extirpated from the repertoire of the favorite psychoanalytic images; not only is it particularly meaningful to psychoanalysis, but it might be seen as a subtle contribution to a never formulated poetics of subjectivity. Envisioned as a simile of biological organisms, the text seems to acquire the features of a living being;

*If the way in which the periphery is reflected in the spinal cord is called a "projection", its counterpart in the cerebral cortex might suitably be called "representation", which implies that the periphery of the body is contained in the cerebral cortex not point by point, but through selected fibres, in a less detailed differentiation. (CA: 51)

**[the fibre tracts, which reach the cerebral cortex after their passage through the gray masses] contain the body periphery in the same way as —to borrow an example from the subject with which we are concerned here— a poem contains the alphabet, i.e., in a completely different arrangement serving other purposes, in a manifold association of the individual elements, whereby some may be represented several times, others not at all. (CA: 53)

in turn, the alphabet, referred to as a set of signs, significant only for their relative *position*, lacking any possible autonomous sense, suggests the relations between different bodily sources of excitation and its psychical image. This allegory adumbrates a singular perception of the body which integrates the stimuli of autonomous layers in a functional structure which completely transfigures the original content of such selected excitations that have been allowed into the representational link.

Thus, the effigy of body, from the very beginning of Freud's reflection, was portrayed as an array of functions which have lost even their singular spatial and anatomical qualities:

dass das Prinzip (the reconstitution of spinal projection into the brain cortex) derselben ein rein functionelles ist, und dass topische Momente nur insoweit beibehalten werden, als sie mit den Anforderungen der Function zusammenfallen. Da nichts dafür spricht, dass in der Hirnrinde diese Umordnung wieder rückgängig gemacht wird, um eine topographisch vollständige Projection zu ergeben, so dürfen wir vermuthen, dass die Körperperipherie in den höheren Hirntheilen, wie auch in der Hirnrinde, überhaupt nicht mehr topische, sondern bloss functionsgemäss enthalten ist. (*Zur Auffassung der Aphasie: 55*)*

The abstract metaphor of the body seems to derive from the asymmetric structure of *projection*. Since *Zur Auffassung der Aphasie*, the psychoanalytic image of the body was nothing more than a conjectural object. However, the illusion of a functional substrate of psychical processes builds up a persuasive image of body and sexuality.

The allegorical image of the body was to confer on the conception of sexuality an unexpected sense which excluded it from the current trends of reflexion. Sexuality was to be thought of as a peculiar, autonomous process of generation and discharge of energy, as a cluster of functional physical *and* psychical processes that condenses bodily energies, gathered from different and untraceable sources disseminated in the body, and which stir specific psychical representations. Thus, sexuality should be conceived as the outcome of the confluence of a vast web of energy flows, with its

*If it were possible to follow in detail the rearrangement which takes place between the spinal projection and the cerebral cortex, one would probably find that the underlying principle is purely functional, and that the topographic relations are maintained only as long as they fit in with the claims of function. As there is no indication that this rearrangement is reversed in the cerebral cortex to produce a topographically complete projection, we may suppose that the representation of the body periphery in the higher parts of the brain, and also in the cortex, is no longer topographical but only functional. (CA: 53-54)

origin in countless dispersed regions of the body, which lack any specific, singular character considered from a strictly dynamic point of view. The image of sexuality turned into that of a peculiar machine for the distribution of energy flows and ruled by the symbolic patterns set by primary thought, by obscure constraints foreign to consciousness. It is an image of entangled and fading, reappearing signals, which illuminates the dark, unrelenting impulses of sexuality, its thresholds, its decline, and the exhaustion and suffocation of desire.⁶⁶

With the allegorical abstraction of body, the distinction between *projection* and *representation* acquired a definitive place in psychoanalytic theory: it stressed the obscure identity of the physiological body and the elusiveness of sensation; it strengthens, paradoxically, the interpretative explanation of sexuality conceived as a symbolically driven energy response.

A slight but crucial change of the dominant trends of Freud's thought would become evident later, in the *Metapsychological papers*. In this set of astounding works, the dominant optical metaphor which underlays Freud's thought will acquire unprecedented overtones: projection turns into the inverted image of introjection; the opposition between them puts a disquieting additional accent on the previous notions of the inner and the outer dimensions of subjectivity, distorting abruptly the extension of their meanings, imposing on them supplementary, marginal, yet definitive senses: that of the struggle between pleasure and unpleasure, of the distinction between the object of love and the perceived object, of the contrast between the obscure depth of physiological energy process and psychological excitations, of the conflict between the symbolic sense of assertion [*Bejahung*] and negation [*Verneinung*]; projection and introjection thus involved the opposition between the identity of the subject and of foreign objects, between preservation and destruction. The sense of the optic metaphors acquired an unforeseen richness, embodying the whole process of the formation of the psychological identity and its development.

Projection, as conceived at the later stages of psychoanalytic thought, seems to name the act by which the subject construes an actual, experienced situation as the repetition of a previously unsuspected, secret representation, "expelling" an inner, yet unacknowledged representation. The notion of projection neither depicts a real

transformation of the primordial memory, nor evidences an actual expulsion of a distressing object. Projection does not dissipate the inner anxiety of the subject, separating and shielding him from the appalling, visible image of his own debased yet unrecognized nature; projection construes an inner, secret image of a seemingly foreign, threatening appearance which informs perception and remains as a conscious image. However, throughout Freud's work, the notion of projection preserved and enhanced its optical meanings: it often implied the subject's forging of a visible image; projection closely resembles the scenic composition of a dream; yet, in projection the subject's experience corresponded to actual perception. Projection *suspends* the consciousness of the delusive nature of an enacted dream or a created chimerical image; projection builds the image of inner tensions as incarnations of intensities and qualities of the energy processes, as visible portraits, as theatrical scenes which loom up like mirages, as threatening, unanticipated presences.⁶⁷

Projection —which preserve a vague resonance of an actual ejection [*Ausstoßung*— is informed by the act of negation. The projected image is built up from the relics of the unbearable memories of the subject's own psychical world, it is the visible sign of inadmissible, repressed remains of the self, just as the negative particle appears as the visible verbal signal of the suffocated residues of primary thought. Thus, projection, like negation, is a symbolic manifestation —image or word— which both sets and exhibits the boundaries of the psychical identity and signifies its finiteness.

2. Intangible epidermis: the allegories of consciousness

From the early stage of Freud's thought, the enigma of consciousness occupied a fundamental and yet disquieting place in his work. It was both an issue in his most violent controversies against philosophy, especially against those "philosophies of consciousness" —which encompassed almost the whole of Western Philosophy— that excluded the notion of the unconscious, and an obscure facet of his own theoretical construction. The notion of consciousness proved to be crucial, and one without which the central notion of the unconscious would have appeared as a sheer speculative invention. Consciousness became a central concern of Freud's theoretical endeavour.

On several occasions he expressed his wish to write a specific work devoted specifically to this notion and related topics. However, this work was either never written, or destroyed.

As we have already remarked, Freud resorted to a metaphorical parallelism between the "position" of consciousness in the psychical apparatus and the anatomical, enveloping position of the cerebral cortex. Consciousness appears both as a shield and as an abstract membrane which enables the psychical apparatus to "commerce" with the world, while protecting it from the unforeseeable violence of its surroundings. However, with the notion of consciousness Freud reverses the path of other metaphorical constructions: the dissipation of the spatial and anatomical features of the body, interpreted by metaphors of function and time, corresponds to the characterization of functional features of psychical agencies—conscious, unconscious—in terms of energy, by metaphors of anatomical and corporeal formations. Consciousness eventually appear as an *intermediate* layer between the outer and the inner, a membrane which envelops the internal psychical agencies, protecting and isolating them from the exterior world [*Außenwelt*]. The notion of memory no longer refers to some material sign eventually deposited in the psychical apparatus as a residue of experience, but to the functional displacements of energy. Thus, consciousness does not only appears as a *diagram*, as a coating, but also as a topographical image of a vague, anatomical organ. This topography had lost its specific characteristics and appeared as an uncertain scheme, as a functional map of the psychical sphere.

However, Freud preserves with it his distinction between the self's reflexive identity and the experience of the outer object. He resorts to the difference between sensation and perception in his effort to understand how the subject draws the boundaries between the inner and the outer. Thus, consciousness itself appears as the boundary between the inner and the outer. Consciousness and perception are envisioned as a single, pervious system; the stimuli passes through them without provoking a lasting transformation; this system preserves no trace of experience. Perception keeps no evidence either of the world or of its own experience; it behaves as a *neutral*, immutable witness of psychical inner transformations and of the world's events, just as consciousness does.

However, the "neutral" condition of consciousness represents, in Freud's conceptual sphere, a privileged feature of psychical processes. Freud had already anticipated this unalterable condition of consciousness in his most significant early work, the *Entwurf einer Psychologie*. In it, he depicted the *neutral, "impartial" [unvoreingenommen]* nature of the neurons involved in perception, which appeared as both capable of being influenced, while remaining unchanged by these persistent mutations of their own state of excitation:

Die Neurone sollen also sowohl beeinflußt sein als auch unverändert, *unvoreingenommen*. (*Entwurf einer Psychologie*, GW, Nachtragsband: 391)*

This conjunction of the capacity of being influenced while remaining unchanged will be, in Freud's conception, a definitive feature of consciousness. In a "speculative" fragment of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920), Freud seems to realize the consequences of this early image and to explore them in a new theoretical context. He ventures an explicit description of the neutral position of consciousness, resorting to a puzzling physiological image which he had spurn in his early non-psychoanalytic period:

Da das Bewußtsein im wesentlichen Wahrnehmungen von Erregungen liefert, die aus der Außenwelt kommen, und Empfindungen von Lust und Unlust, die nur aus dem Innern des seelischen Apparates stammen können, kann dem System W-Bw eine räumliche Stellung zugewiesen werden. *Es muß an der Grenze von außen und innen liegen, der Außenwelt zugekehrt sein und die anderen psychischen Systeme umhüllen*. Wir bemerken dann, daß wir mit diesen Annahmen nichts Neues gewagt, sondern uns der lokalisierenden Hirnanatomie angeschlossen haben, welche den "Sitz" des Bewußtseins in die Hirnrinde, in die äußerste, umhüllende Schicht des Zentralorgans verlegt." (*Jenseits der Lustprinzip*, SA, 1920, III: 234. Bolds are mine, R.M.)**

However, consciousness did not only appear as a merely passive, inanimate device, or

[...] neurons must be both influenced and also unaltered, unprejudiced (SE, I: 299)

*What consciousness yields consists essentially of perceptions of excitations coming from the external world and of feelings of pleasure and unpleasure which can only arise from within the mental apparatus; it is therefore possible to assign to the system *Pcpt.-Cs.* a position in space. It must lie in the borderline between the outside and the inside; it must be turned towards the external world and must envelop the other psychical systems. It will be seen that there is nothing daringly new in these assumptions; we have merely adopted the views of localization held by cerebral anatomy, which locates the 'seat' of consciousness in the cerebral cortex —the outermost, enveloping layer of the central organ. (FP, 11: 295)

as a region of the mind where the inner processes unfold themselves as sequels of desire, displaying a series of evoked figures and representations; it was conceived as a folding membrane, as an outgrowth of the inner layers of the psychical apparatus, which turns both inwards and outwards, offering a certain resistance to the emergence of rising impulses, linking the deep regions, the source of feelings, with the outer motifs of perception.

Despite the abrupt changes in Freud's train of thought, the early image of the parallelism between the psychical and the physiological processes will be preserved, yet deeply transformed by singularly coined, non-conventional concepts.⁶⁸ The theoretical consequences of Freud's parallelism challenged even the illuminating capacities of both metaphorical and fictional discourses which determined the development of the concepts in the history of psychoanalysis.⁶⁹

Freud's theory embodies odd, yet suggestive, reiterative and evanescent images of consciousness —antennas and tentacles— and subtle, fictional and theoretical versions of opposing terms. Freud alludes vaguely to consciousness in his narrative vision of the primordial, allegorical struggle between Eros and Thanatos, love and destruction, while seeking in Empedocles' fables a philosophical support for his own conjectures; the elucidation of consciousness calls for the powers of metaphor, of ellipsis, of narrative and fictional devices and even conventional, isolated images —in a peculiar argumentative sense—, as privileged supports for the fragmentary allegorical display.

Consciousness became a simile of a cortical surface, a fictional, almost allegorical psychical reference of an imaginary anatomical topography.⁷⁰

3. The interior unfolding of anaclasis [Anlehnung]

Despite the strong implications of the notion of parallelism, which sunders the body from the mind, the notion of **anaclasis** occupies an essential place in Freud's theory. Since its early appearance, the concept of anaclasis [Anlehnung]⁷¹ both deepens and dissipates the precarious distinction between the physical and the psychical. Anaclasis

refers to the reciprocal and undetermined transformation provoked by the relation between physical processes and symbolic action. Not only does the bodily outburst of energy transform the course and the end of symbolic action; symbolic action, in turn, informs and determines the production, rhythms and ends of excitation, distorting the autonomous regime of the biological body. This concept evinced a cardinal, challenging enigma. However, the intrinsic paradox involved in this notion has often been neglected by translators and commentators; even in canonical psychoanalytic reflection. Laplanche and Pontalis did not hesitate to affirm:

In our opinion the notion of anaclasis has not yet been fully extricated from Freud's work; for the most part, consideration has been given only to its part in the conception of object-choice — a conception, which, far from furnishing a complete definition of anaclasis, presupposes its existence *in the heart of any theory of instincts*.⁷²

Anaclasis encompasses uncertain contradictory notions —parallelism, representation, mirror image, concomitance and allegory— which relate biological processes and psychological agencies. These covert, metaphorical notions display a contrasting landscape of relentless forces exerted upon Freud's aesthetic aims and his scientific argumentation. Moreover, the original, implicit dualism of anaclasis and the uncertain causality involved in the *bond* between psychological and physical determinations, led Freud to a further distinction: he confronted the challenging enigma of the difference between sexual and non-sexual psychological experience. Sexuality, envisaged metaphorically as the undetermined convergence of inner flows of energy which both inform and subdue the symbolic patterns of psychological life, conferred on the notion of anaclasis a peculiar sense. In a late text, Freud's notion of anaclasis, freed from the dense echoes of physiology and the implications of the notion of parallelism, gave rise to a profuse unfolding of metaphors.

Anaclasis embraces, together with the relation between body and mind, the metaphor of sexuality and its metamorphosis. The development of subjective processes implies the transformation of the link between the symbolic triggering of desire and the source of hallucinatory satisfaction and its biological basis. The exigencies imposed on the primary thought by the surrounding universe produces a progressive cleavage of the

subject's symbolic response. Sexuality becomes absolutely foreign in its aims and sources to the bodily sources of energy, and yet, it remains bounded up with them. However, the features of their relation are progressively obscured. Laplanche writes:

la pulsion sexuelle s'étaye sur une fonction non sexuelle [...] ce qui est décrit comme étayage c'est un *appui*, à l'origine, de la sexualité infantile sur l'instinct, si l'on entend par instinct ce qui oriente cette "fonction corporelle essentielle à la vie".⁷³

Anaclasis thus implies a complete metamorphosis of the experience of satisfaction which turns apart from the search for a pure discharge of energy, and becomes completely determined by primary thought and arising memories. Indeed, psychical representation, although it springs from a physical source, is essentially guided by perception, the memory traces of the experience of pleasure and the vestiges of lost loved objects. However, perception is not a simple, sovereign facet of consciousness; it is also a limit condition of the self: perception is likely to turn to inner processes of excitation —the perception of the discharge—, to focus on pleasure and its symbolic source, as well as to extraneous objects. Thus, anaclasis conjoins in a single concept the inextricable series of symbolic and bodily processes; it involves the perception both of the object and of the inner source, the rhythm and the intensity of excitation, of the sensation of pleasure, as well as of the memories of objects and actions, primary thoughts and the subjective experience of time governed by reflexive consciousness.

The physiological process appears not as a direct cause, but as a "remote" though necessary source of the representational process. Physiology responds to a "pure" representation of the loved object; it is this mere representation of the object, which could be both a delusive image and an actual perception, that should lead the dynamic bodily process not only to a mere discharge, but to the actual achievement of pleasure; the energy processes culminates in a rapture of consciousness. The fulfilment of the conditions of the dynamic stability of the body is thus achieved by the complex convergence of the actions governed by primary and secondary autonomous symbolic processes, symbolic constraints and perception.

Freud acknowledged, from the time of his writings on aphasia, the vague, yet necessary and compelling force of physiological processes. Nevertheless, Freud's dualism —the undetermined parallelism between both domains of the subject's

identity— transpose the causal relation between excitation and its representation. The *sources* of excitation differ from its *cause*. While the *sources* of excitation might be conceived as dispersed anatomical centres which contribute with their own flow of energy to sexual arousal, the *cause* of the sexual impulse is attributed to the presence of a symbolic object. An exacting dualism is preserved in the radical cleavage of sexuality which differentiates the sources and the causes of subject's desire. Moreover, Freud's two components of the paradoxical explanation of the genesis of desire and sexuality are not mutually exclusive; they bring about a complex image of psychical causality. However, the obscure link between the physical substrate and the primordial elements of thought —the ineffaceable primordial set of traces of the loved object— remains an elusive, abysmal and disquieting issue:

Unser Bewusstsein weist nichts dergleichen auf, was der Namen "latentes Erinnerungsbild" von der psychischen Seite rechtfertigen würde. So oft aber derselbe Zustand der Rinde wieder angeregt wird, entsteht das Psychische als Erinnerungsbild von Neuem. Wir haben freilich nicht die leiseste Ahnung davon, wie die thierische Substanz es zu Stande bringen mag, so vielfältige Modificationen durchzumachen und auseinander zu halten. (*Zur Auffassung der Aphasie*: 58)*

The state of corporeal excitation prompts the psychical apparatus to restore a previously formed and preserved latent mnemonic image [*latentes Erinnerungsbild*], which, nevertheless, remains inaccessible to consciousness. Surprisingly, at a definite point in the discussion Freud suddenly confesses his absolute ignorance of the nature of the whole process. His ignorance will be never cleared up. Rather, this enigma will persist in the fabric of psychoanalytic concepts. In the *Entwurf* (1895), the notion of representation supports Freud's incipient and hesitating attempt to understand the nature of psychical experience and the correlated and essential notion of desire. *Desires*, according to Freud, imply a complex, articulated labyrinthine web of representations which stem from the image of the primal, mythical encounter with an object of love, likely to relieve the primordial pain caused by the peremptory laws of necessity.

*Our consciousness contains nothing that would, from the psychological point of view, justify the term 'latent memory image'. Yet whenever the same cortical state is elicited again, the previous psychical event re-emerges as a memory. We have, of course, not the slightest idea how animal tissue can possibly undergo, and differentiate, so many various modifications. (CA: 56)

However, constrained by the obscurity which surrounds his implicit conception of pain, Freud's notion of desire will acquire, later in his work, an uncertain content; the role played by the undetermined, yet crucial conception of pain led him to the unresolved paradoxes of masochism, discussed in his significant paper of 1924, *Das ökonomische Problem von Masochismus*.

V. The rejection of destruction: the psychopathological symptom

The history of Freud's notion of representation redefined, in turn, the scope of the notion of symptom. This notion summarizes the implications of the dynamic conception of repression and strengthens the postulate of the transitional nature of the drive [*Trieb*]. The notion of symptom reveals the impact that the conception of parallelism between psychical and physical processes had on Freud's theoretical constructions, and the perplexities it brought about. The "dependence concomitant" offered no clear place for the notion of symptom. A seemingly irreducible chasm between physiological and psychological processes and the shattering of causality threatened the significance of the notion of symptom. Symptom was conceived as an uncertain token of the finiteness or the failure of the subject's psychical response to the requirements of the world. As in an optical device, the image of the psychical process created by the symptom reflects an uncertain, diffuse shadow of the elusive inner agitation, the nature of which rejects any definite image. Consequently, the visibility of the psychical symptom produces an optical aberration: the image forged by the symptom of its own internal cause moulds and often creates, in turn, the identity of its own actual malady, of its own origin. Symptom appears as a sign which stems from the malady but, in turn, determines the malady itself. Contrastingly, discordant images fused into the elusive matter of a symptom which remains attached to a deceiving and untraceable, "functional perturbation" of the physiological process. However, what Freud obstinately refers to in his early work as "functional perturbations", "functional diseases", primal references of symptom, remained unfathomable.

The unavoidable abstraction of the symptom from its perturbed physiological

origin conferred on this singular set of corporeal and psychical signs of suffering an allegorical meaning which confounds itself with the aetiological description of the malady. The significant assymetry of Freud's *symptom* becomes evident: it is a set of visible, corporeal aberrations of the expected behaviour, of distressing, unspeakable emotions turned into tokens unlikely to reveal any *visible, discernible* origin. The psychical symptom is only a set of shadows, echoes, resonances which do not rise from a perceivable physical wound, or rotten tissue, but from a conjectural wreck of memory: there is no clinical evidence of the malady save distorted and astounding signs that exhibit anxiety and delusion, the rarefying of love, the isolation of the self and the decay of desire.

An enigma seems to have haunted Freud's theoretical imagination from the days of *Zur Auffassung*: the spectre of destruction. In the logic of nineteenth century medical enquiry, the evidence of anatomical destruction was necessarily linked to symptom. However, some clinic evidence was of an enigmatic nature: aphasia, for example, displayed a range of symptomatic behaviour, the cause of which was not to be found in the destruction or decomposition of tissues. Paraphasic perturbations offered some puzzling evidence. Paraphasia was well defined, in Freud's *Zur Auffassung*, as a sort of "minor" *aphasic* perturbation: deviant usages of words were assumed to be caused by similarities of sound or meaning, or by partial confusions of phonetic articulation. But this paraphasic behaviour appeared either in states of tiredness, or as sequels to distressing affections [*störender Affecte*] and emotional shocks; it thus appeared in perfectly healthy [*Gesunde*] people. The boundary between pathological "symptoms" and normality had become uncertain:

An dieser Stelle sei nur erwähnt dass die bei Kranken beobachteten Paraphasie sich in nichts von derjenigen Wortverwechslung und Wortverstümmelung unterscheidet, die der Gesunde bei Ermüdung, bei getheilter Aufmerksamkeit, bei Einfluss störender Affecte an sich beobachten kann, durch die z.B. unsere Vortragenden uns so häufig das Zuhören peinlich machen. Es liegt nahe, die Paraphasie im weitesten Umfange für ein rein functionelles Symptom, für ein Zeichen minder exacter

Leistungsfähigkeit des Sprachasservationsapparates anzusehen.
(Zur Auffassung der Aphasie: 13-14)*

The notion of symptom ceased to be a sign of abnormality or disease; rather, it became the visible emanation of a slight, untraceable, diffuse perturbation. This dilution of the clear boundaries between normal and pathological states usually implied by symptom led Freud to the exploration of dream and the psychopathology of everyday life. Thus, any symptom of insanity, but also every hint of deviation in everyday experience, could evince the fundamental nature of the psychical apparatus. Entirely foreign to the compelling cause-effect relation, the notion of symptom was thus upheld by two main uncommon notions: *functional perturbation* and *distant action*. The symptom was not to be conceived as a *sign* immediately referring to an altered psychical state; rather, it should be seen as a contingent, variable, historically defined token.

Symptom and trauma, linked at the beginning of Freud's reflection by a weak resemblance, progressively broadened the breach between their respective interpretations. Each of them acquired different senses and a specific, yet uncomparable relevance to the psychoanalytical discourse.

Their original confusion, which take roots in the effect of the analysis of aphasic disorders, led to a sharp differentiation. Aphasic symptoms seemed to be provoked by the sudden accumulation of energy at a definite "point" at which the flow of nervous excitations was interrupted—either by a foreign agent or by inner functional perturbations. Gathered at a certain point where the destruction had occurred, the congested flow of stimulus discomposed the regularities of language. The images associated with this explanation are still invoked by Freud's later usage of the notion of trauma, which will appear, twisted by the optic of the unconscious, as an allegorical version of the medical term; this allegorical shade was cast upon the notion by the paradoxical scenic display of hysterics: the experience of perceived but unrecognizable signs and silences.

*At this stage we only want to mention that the paraphasia observed in aphasic patients does not differ from the incorrect use and the distortion of words which the healthy person can observe in himself in states of fatigue or divided attention or under the influence of disturbing affects—the kind of thing that frequently happens to our lecturers and causes the listener painful embarrassment. It is tempting to regard paraphasia in the widest sense as a purely functional symptom, a sign of reduced efficiency of the apparatus of speech associations. (CA: 11)

Moreover, symptom in Freud's work does not only embody a metaphor of corporeal energy, but a theory of representation conceived as *distant action*; symptoms hint at a functional perturbation of the soul, discernible only within the fuzzy field of interwoven symbolic actions and physical responses. Freud shows from the very beginning of his reflection a lasting concern for this *distant action* [*Fernwirkung*]—probably a heritage of mesmerismus and his own work with hypnosis—of perceivable signs which did not reveal organic but functional damage. However, the destiny of the notion of *Fernwirkung* in psychoanalytic thought was to remain a strange, unpredictable name of the irreducible strangeness of psychical representations; yet it was to support, implicitly, the notion of original repression: a "'nucleus of crystallization' capable of attracting other incompatible ideas without the intervention of conscious intention."⁷⁴ Trauma, on the other hand, took its place in certain psychoanalytic arguments about the progressive settlement of residual signs of experiences on successive layers of the psychical apparatus, engendered by the need to govern the outburst of internal energy. It became a sort of monument, a memory of silent internal catastrophes which bore no reference to a definite causal experience but only to the inner perception of the irruption of meaningless pain. Fixed memories—an essential feature of trauma—acquired the shape of archeological evidence. They bear witness, paradoxically, both to the intrusion of oblivion and to the tenacity of memory.

Distant and undetermined, the sources of the perturbations of language engendered a manifold display of aberrations in verbal behaviour. The expressive "richness" of the symptoms was not to be seen either as the expected aftermath of physical destruction, or as a deviant functional process:

Nur wissen wir, dass die Theile des Gehirns, deren Erkrankung sich überhaupt durch Symptome verräth, uns immer nur Localsymptome ergeben, wobei es uns überlassen ist, aus Nebenumständen des Falles oder aus dem Verlaufe der Affection die Processdiagnose zu errathen. Der Sprachapparat aber verfügt über einen solchen Reichthum an symptomatischen Ausdrucksweisen, dass wir von ihm allein erwarten könnten, dass er nicht nur die Localität, sondern auch die Natur der Läsion

durch die Art und Weise der Functionstörung verrathen wird. (*Zur Auffassung der Aphasie: 29*)*

The poignant visibility of the symptom contrasts with the imperceptibility of the lesion: once the function becomes the source of the disease, the signs of sickness only reveal a cleavage in the fictitious fabric of the mind; destruction was not to be seen as a tangible process, but as a conjectural, befogged, fictional plot, which had material, brutal and painful effects on the subject's life. The only evidence of illness was the rhythmical display of significant signals, which exhibit themselves as debris of a veiled and ciphered decay and breakdown of the subject's desire. Yet, these isolated, neglected clues to malady inlaid in language or in the body are provoked by the silent moulding action of drives. The singular historicity, the evolution of the fictional physiognomy of symptoms, imposes another condition on its visible display: they reappear, they persist, they obstinately trespass upon the flow of speech or upon the flesh.

Freud's thesis on the indestructibility of memory traces and their relentless action seems to account for the obstinacy of symptom and its resistance to change. By a subtle turn, the repetition of symptom turns itself into a symptom. The early experiences of Hughling Jackson with aphasia illuminated and supported the legitimacy of this reversion. However, the comprehension of repetition was to require, in Freud's theory, a supplementary notion: *death instinct*. The obstinacy of the symptom, a token in itself, led Freud to explore the subject's experience of time and finiteness, to assume the speculative teleology of nature inherent in nineteenth century physics: energy systems as well as living beings seemed to be bound to drain the energy from their own system, to drive themselves to a physical state of inertness; this "physical fate" aroused, in turn, a psychical spectre: the impulse to destruction; it stirs the subject's unspeakable hurling into death and the tacit wish for it; the experience of time leads to the aim for stillness. Forrester observed:

If lesions of the brain give rise to symptoms at all, conclusions as to the localization of the damage can be drawn, whereas we have to guess the diagnosis of the pathological process from special circumstances of the case or from the course of the illness. The speech apparatus, however, is exceptional, in saving at its disposal such a wealth of symptoms that it may be expected to betray, by the type and manner of the disturbance of function, not only the site but also the nature of the lesion. (CA: 27)

to a first approximation the distinction between the language of the symptom and speech can be expressed as follows. The symptom is marked by its permanent character, its 'chronicity' (even if it is a question of repeated 'acute', rather than 'chronic' symptoms). The language of the symptom is characterized by its relative imperiousness to discursive change, a permanence seemingly independent of all 'external' factors. In the *Project*, Freud called it an 'immovable symbolization'.⁷⁵

The indestructibility of the memory traces of language was to be a lasting contribution of Hughling Jackson's work which prevailed in Freud's conception of the unconscious. However, the conjecture of the persistence of memory traces aroused paradoxical resonances: it upheld the myth of the subject's longing for the return to a primordial state and for self-destruction; it settle a theoretical frame for the understanding of the desire for the extinction of excitation and for the plenitude brought about by insensibility and inorganic quietness; yet, it also offered an explanation of the subject's the denial of self-destruction, the perseverance of images and the tireless outburst of desire. In this light, destruction acquired a supplementary sense in psychoanalytic thought which enhanced its relevance to the comprehension of symptom and desire as an intrinsic force in psychical processes. Freud's enterprise may be conceived as a vast and thorough meditation on the fragmentation, limits and destruction of psychical life: a philosophical reflection on the psychical significance of *traces and remains*. The resonance of his positivistic theoretical statements adumbrate another, more powerful, perhaps poetic, enquiry into language; fragments of representations, of words informing the unconscious, emerge as tokens pertaining to a sort of *negative* language: the significance of fragmentation itself, the significance of the destruction of meaning, the sense of muteness, the eloquence of traces and residues, the significance of the signs left by the disappearance of presence, by the perseverance of love despite the destruction of bodies. Yet this significance is foreign to meaningful expression. A barren, purely residual evidence of the disappearance of language, arises, in Freud's view, from silence and pain, from the demolished core of the logic and meaningfulness of language. Other regularities moulded the senseless shreds of silence: perhaps the rhythms of this visible yet opaque, secret, *negative* language—a language foreign to collective signs, even to meaning itself—the expressive, unaccountable and crude

accents of emotion, and the insistent exhaustion and uselessness of meaning which arouse empty cadences of speech, constitute the main concern of psychoanalysis.

Laplanche and Pontalis begin their reflection on the memory-trace with an unsettling remark:

The psychological notion of the memory-trace, which Freud evokes constantly in his metapsychological works, implies a conception of memory that he never fully expounded.⁷⁶

Memory names the persistence of word-remains [*Wortrest*], of a fragmented language; it is a map of isolated, allegorical wounds in the subject's fictional identity. Freud made of Wernicke's words a cornerstone of his theory of subjectivity: "memory as the foundation of all intellectual operations".

Symptom represents memory in its primal dimension; it appears as an encompassing expression which enacts oblivion as the pure, meaningless expression of memory. The symptom —memory— governs the singular dynamics of the impeded expressions of malady, the reappearance of emotional discharge, the rhythms and symbolic expression engendered within the psychical apparatus.

Thus, the images of the vestiges of words confound themselves, from *Zur Auffassung* onwards, with those of fixed, energetic, purely emotional [*kräftigen Fluch*] but meaningless expression, with imprecations the only possible sense of which is the crude manifestation of emotion. The heritage of Freud's brief meditation on aphasia will exert a lasting influence in his later psychoanalytic thought. What is preserved as a token of the destroyed faculty of language is a residue of language [*Sprachreste*], engraved upon the layers of the psychical apparatus as a local sediment of words charged with energy. It is no longer language, but meaningless signs, the subject's last resort regarding the actual demands of reality and the exacting rules of language; language dissipates only to give rise to the oppressive power of broken and senseless reminiscences. These vestiges of language seem to expose the unsignifiable, intractable regularity of primary thought; yet, they are related in an uncertain way to soul disturbances. In Freud's exacting enquiry, the obsession for destruction took the form of a passionate denial which revealed its brutal evidence and its intrinsic presence in the subject's soul.

NOTES

1. Walter Benjamin, *Der Begriff der Kunstkritik in der deutschen Romantik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974), p.40.
2. Friederich Schlegel, '"Athenäums"-Fragmente', in *Kritische und Theoretische Schriften*, ed. Andreas Huyssen (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1978), p.91.
3. Surprisingly, there is a noticeable coincidence between Freud's credo and the presuppositions held by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. It might be illuminating to contrast in both authors the tension between the fragmentary approach to the phenomenon and the metaphysical presuppositions of the unity of world and its consequent image in language.
4. Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975; repr. 1980), p.3.
5. A conception of invariant patterns and effects of reading is involved in Freud analysis of E.T.A. Hoffman's *Der Sandmann*. Freud's analysis is supported by the implicit thesis of immanent capacity of a text to arouse terror and the sensation of the uncanny; there is no trace in Freud's reflection of a conception of a historically determined reading.
6. Sigmund Freud and Lou A. Salomé, *Letters*, ed. Ernst Pfeiffer (London: Hogarth, 1918), p.81.
7. Malcolm Bowie, *Freud, Proust and Lacan: Theory as Fiction*, p.97.
8. Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhem Fliess, 1887-1904*, p.28.
9. Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhem Fliess, 1887-1904*, p.74.
10. Ludwig Binswanger, *Analyse existentielle et psychanalyse freudienne. Discours, parcours et Freud*, trans. Roger Lewinter (Paris: Gallimard, 1970), p.190.
11. Roland Kuhn, *Preface* in Sigmund Freud, *La conception des aphasies*, trans. Claude van Reeth (Paris: Press Universitaires de France, 1983), p.36.
12. See above, p.162
13. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Blaise Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnac Books, 1973), p.30.
14. Kant distinguishes a special kind of sublime feeling: the melancholic manifestation of the sublime, which he calls the *terrifying sublime* [*Schreckhafterhabene*]. He discerned different facets in the sublime, which led him to build his peculiar taxonomy of the deviations of temper and monstrosities; among them was possible to find the extravagant, the fantasist, the lunatic. See Immanuel Kant, *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (1766), in *Werkausgabe*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel, 12 vol (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988), II: *Vorkritische Schriften bis 1768*, 2, pp.832-834.
15. Georges Lanteri Laura, *Lecture des perversions. Histoire de leur appropriation médicale* (Paris: Masson, 1979), p.44.
16. Georges Lanteri Laura, p.50.
17. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essai sur l'origine des langues*, ed. by Jean Starobinsky (Paris: 1781; Paris: Gallimard, 1990), p.67-69.

18. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, p.138.
19. "A mesure que la langue se perfectionoit, la mélodie en s'imposant des nouvelles règles perdoit insensiblement de son ancienne énergie, et le calcul des intervalles fut substitué à la finesse des inflexions". (Jean Jacques Rousseau, p.138).
20. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, p.86.
21. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, p.145.
22. 'Letter, 20 de Nivoso, año 8, written by the el comisar of the government of Saint-Sernin, to the president of the administrative office of the Civil Hospital of Saint-Afrique', quoted by Harlan Lane, *The Savage Boy of Aveyron*.
23. 'Letter, 3 of Pluvioso, year 8' from the Commissioner of the Administration of the canton of Saint-Sernin. Quoted by Harlan Lane, p.21
24. Raymundo Mier, 'El niño de Aveyron (1800): la pedagogía como conjuro del silencio', in , ed. by Sarah Corona (Mexico: UAM, [in print]).
25. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (London: 1871; repr. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1980), p.271.
26. Joanna de Groot, "'Sex" and "Race": the Construction of Language and Image in the nineteenth century', in *Sexuality and Subordination*, ed. by Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall (London: Routledge, 1989), p.95.
27. Paul Broca, 'Observations on the site of the faculty of articulated language' in *Bulletin de la Société d'Anthropologie*, August 1961, Vol. VI, pp.330-337 (repr. in *La naissance de la neuropsychologie du langage, 1825-1865* (Paris: Flammarion, 1969), p.65.
28. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Race et civilisation. L'autre dans la culture occidentale* (Paris: Syros, 1992), p.97.
29. Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, p.567.
30. Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (California: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp.33-34.
31. For a thorough revision and pondering of the relation between Darwin and Freud, see Lucile V. Ritvo, *Darwin Influence on Freud. A Tale of Two Sciences* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1990).
32. Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), preface by Konrad Lorenz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp.349-350.
33. See below, p.363
34. Ignacio de Loyola, *Ejercicios Espirituales*, in *Obras de San Ignacio de Loyola*, 5ª ed, edited by Ignacio Iparraguirre, S.I., Cándido de Dalmasas, S.I. y Manuel Ruiz Jurado, S.I. (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1991), p.222.
35. Ignacio de Loyola, p.221.
36. Ignacio de Loyola, p.236.
37. Ignacio de Loyola, p.294.
38. Ignacio de Loyola, p.266.

39. Ignacio de Loyola, p.276.

40. Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier et Loyola* (Paris: Seuil, 1971), p.51.

41. Maurice Blanchot, *L'entretien infini* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p.440.

42. See among his early psychoanalytic writings - *Über den psychischen Mechanismus hysterischer Phänomene* (1893)- to certain of the later and most important ones, *Das Unbehagen der Kulture*, and *Das Unheimliche*, Freud often resorts to this term to express and emphasize a peculiar position of psychoanalysis regarding language: "Est besteht gleichsam eine Absicht, den psychischen Zustand durch einen körperlichen auszudrücken, und der Sprachgebrauch bietet hierfür die Brücke" (SA, 1893, VI: 19) Freud only depicts briefly here, without further developments, two extremely differentiated roles of language in the complex formation of symptom: both as an element in the silent internal psychical conflict which emerges as pain, and as a "bridge" which eases the "translation" of the symbolized conflict into a definite physiological response. Nevertheless, in the complex theoretical developments of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, Freud alludes to the opposition between the "use of language" [*Sprachgebrauch*] and the "feeling of language" [*Sprachgefühl*] as a cardinal distinction relevant to the psychoanalytic approach to language. "Existe un momento cardinal en el texto de Freud, muy próximo a la apertura de la discusión: la primera confrontación con el enigma de la cultura está marcada por una frase sin circunscripción posible. *Para definir los rasgos de la cultura - escribe Freud - hay que dejarse llevar por el uso del lenguaje [Sprachgebrauch].* Esta frase es la huella de otra indecisión exhibida en el texto. Inmediatamente, Freud corregirá. *No. Deberá abandonarse al sentimiento del lenguaje [Sprachgefühl].* Esta vacilación de Freud es un indicio. Quizá es posible admitir, a partir de esta indecisión de Freud, la urgencia de pensar la cultura como edificada sobre una presión disgregante de dos órdenes cuya primacía es indeterminada: una ética del lenguaje, un juego a la vez dominado por la excentricidad del lenguaje abierto a un campo de regulación cuya materia es fluctuante, imposible de ser admitida o incluso recobrada como totalidad; o bien una estética radical, marginal, que somete el lenguaje a otra torsión, a otro despojo: doblegarse ante la tensión surgida desde su propia materia desprendida de todo apego a la significación. "There is a crucial point in Freud's text, which paves the way to the full exposition of an important discussion: Freud's first encounter with the enigma of culture is signaled by a phrase for which we have no possible framework of interpretation: [...] At once, Freud will try to rectify: ... He hesitates. And this hesitation shows his necessity to think culture as if built under a pressure which stems from two different orders the primacy of which remains undetermined: either an ethic of language, a game dominated by the intrinsic eccentricity of language, made of the weave of an unfathomable matter, a universe without circumscription, which cannot be apprehended as a totality, or a radical, marginal aesthetic which imposes to language certain disquieting contortion; language is stripped from its own attachment to meaning." (Raymundo Mier, 'Cesar Vallejo: ética y fragilidad; cultura y evocación en Freud', *Anamorfosis*, 2, (December 1992). (My translation))

43. John Forrester, p.22.

44. Forrester has remarked the relation, in Freud's aetiology of hysteria, between the hysteric's almost untraceable silence, and asymbolic aphasia. "On the model of the word/object systems, what has happened is that a relation between the *specific* word presentation and the *specific* object association has been refused—a similar mechanism to that which Freud called symbolic aphasia." (John Forrester, *Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis*, p.31). However, what must be expounded is the root of this double *specificity*, foreign to the structure of the word itself, but related to the singular nature of the narrative failure, the conditions which impeded the uttering act.

45. In numerous passages, Freud's description of hysteric symptoms almost resemble a detailed account of the disturbances of aphasia. In the early years of the Freudian enquiry, in one of his first works on hysteria, *Über den psychischen Mechanismus hysterischer Phänomene* (1893), Freud writes: "Ein Beispiel von Sprachstörung liefert die wiederholt erwähnte Patientin Breuers. Diese sprach während einer langen Periode ihrer Krankheit nur englisch; weder sprach, nor verstand sie das Deutsche. Dieses symptom ließ sich auf ein Ereignis noch vor Ausbruch ihrer Krankheit zurückführen. In einem Zustande großer Angst versuchte sie zu beten, fand aber keine Worte." (*Über den psychischen Mechanismus hysterischer Phänomene*, SA, 1893, VI: 19) [Breuer's patient, to whom I have so often referred, offered an example of a disturbance of speech.

For a long period of her illness she spoke only English, and could neither speak nor understand German. This symptom was traced back to an event which had happened before the outbreak of her illness. While she was in a state of great anxiety, she had attempted to pray, but could find no word. (SE, III: 33)

46. Julia Kristeva has translated into semiotic terms this enigmatic sexual scene which determines the construction of the sense of sexuality itself. "Ce que nous appelons un sens est la capacité de l'infans à en enregistrer le signifiant du désir parental et à s'y inclure à manière propre, c'est-à-dire en manifestant les aptitudes sémiotiques dont il est capable à ce moment de son développement et qui lui permettent une maîtrise, au niveau des processus primaires, d'un à non encore autre - (de la Chose) inclus dans les zones érogènes de cet infans sémiotisant." (Julia Kristeva, *Soleil noir*, p.73) The son's acknowledgement of the parent's desire is the nucleus of the phantasy of seduction, which remains non-signified, as a "corps étranger" in a non-sayable, forbidden, yet unformulated facet of the subject's experience.

47. André Green stresses this simultaneous and paradoxical *autonomy* and *heteronomy* of the symbolic forms which convey the affective energy: "la représentation se déploie dans les sens divergents du fantasme et du langage, l'affect s'étale de ses formes les plus brutes à ses états les plus nuancés" (André Green, *Le discours vivant* (Paris: Press Universitaires Françaises, 1973), p.100). The threefold nature of the sign was to be later, radically transformed in 1926, with the redefinition of the notion of anxiety.

48. The frequently quoted passage of *The Unconscious*: "The processes of the system *Ucs.* are *timeless*; i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all. Reference to time is bound up once again, with the work of the system *Cs.*" (FP, 11: 191). This early but obstinate intuition about time, was recovered by Freud and stated almost with the same words in 1920. Freud confronts then Kant's notion of time and puts forward an unexpected connection: Kant's notion of time as intuition may be fully comprehended, in Freud's terms, as the comparison [*Vergleichung*] between the two psychical different temporalities. A negative temporal quality of primary processes related to the *experience* of time and a perceived quality which stems from a reflexive movement of consciousness upon itself, the construction of a self perception [*Selbstwahrnehmung*]: "At this point I shall venture to touch for a moment upon a subject which should merit the most exhaustive treatment. As a result of certain psychoanalytic discoveries, we are to-day in a position to embark on a discussion of the Kantian theorem that time and space are 'necessary forms of thought'. We have learnt that unconscious mental processes are in themselves 'timeless'. This means in the first place that they are not ordered temporally, that time does not change them in any way and that the idea of time cannot be applied to them. These are negative characteristics which can only be clearly understood if a comparison is made with *conscious* mental processes. On the other hand, our abstract idea of time seems to be wholly derived from the method of working of the *Pcpt.-Cs.* and to correspond to the perception on its own part of that method of working. This mode of functioning may perhaps constitute another way of providing a shield against stimuli. I know that these remarks must sound very obscure, but I must limit myself to these hints. (FP, 11: 300). [Ich gestatte mir an dieser Stelle ein Thema flüchtig zu berühren, welches die gründlichste Behandlung verdienen würde. Der Kantsche Satz, daß Zeit und Raum notwendige Formen unseres Denkens sind, kann heute infolge gewisser psychoanalytischer Erkenntnisse einer Diskussion unterzogen werden. Wir haben erfahren, daß die unbewußten Seelenvorgänge an sich "zeitlos" sind. Das heißt zunächst, daß sie nicht zeitlich geordnet werden, daß die Zeit nichts an ihnen verändert, daß man die Zeitvorstellung nicht an sie heranbringen kann. Es sind dies negative Charaktere, die man sich nur durch Vergleichung mit den bewußten seelischen Prozessen deutlich machen kann. Unsere abstrakte Zeitvorstellung scheint vielmehr durchaus von der Arbeitsweise des Systems W-Bw hergeholt zu sein und einer Selbstwahrnehmung derselben zu entsprechen. Bei dieser Funktionsweise des Systems dürfte ein anderer Weg des Reizschutzes beschritten werden. Ich weiß, daß diese Behauptungen sehr dunkel klingen, muß mich aber auf solche Andeutungen beschränken." (*Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, SA, 1920, III: 238)]

49. Jean Hyppolite, 'Philosophie et psychanalyse' (1959), in *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, I, p.410.

50. For a contrasting point of view in the discussion of the notion of the experience of temporality, specially related to Bergson's conception, but which might cast some light upon Freud's discussion, see Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *La phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: 1945; repr. Paris: Gallimard, 1992), pp.469-493.

51. Jean Hyppolite, 'Psychoanalyse et philosophie' (1955), in *Figures de la pensée philosophique*, I, p.375.

52. See below, p.356

53. Jacques Nassif, *Freud. L'inconscient*, p.123

54. John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, p.591.

55. Jacques Derrida has already remarked the meaningful theoretical force of this notion. Cfr. Jacques Derrida, 'Freud et la scène de l'écriture', 1968.

56. The abruptness of this statement may be attenuated if its pre-psychoanalytic character is taken into account, and if it is seen as a preliminary outline of his later conception of consciousness; its importance derives from the fact that it may offer certain hints of the relation between consciousness and "primary processes".

57. See pp.289, 366

58. The idea of a periodical processes, as analogical reproduction of the object by the frequency of the stimulus was originally suggested by Descartes. Later, Kant sought the explanation of the nature of illusion and madness in similar models. Freud redefined this notions according to the basic postulates of his neuron theory: there seems to be a direct relation of Freud's efforts to incorporate this notion in a congruent systematic theoretical proposal with the delusive attempts of Fliess to apply his theories in his own medical treatments. Indeed, the concept of rhythm, derived from Fliess' exorbitant idea of periodicity and found its place early in psychoanalysis history, and perhaps could be traced in certain conceptions: psychical cycles, returns, alternations, inversions, which pervade Freud's entire work.

59. See for example: "in other problematic contexts, Freud carefully avoids ontologizing or substantializing the limit between outside and inside, between the biophysical and the psychic. But in the *Psychopathology*, and elsewhere he requires this limit not only to protect this fragile, enigmatic, threatened defensive state that one calls "normality" but also to circumscribe a solid context (once again stereotomy), the unity of the field of coherent and determinist interpretation, that which we so calmly call psychoanalysis *itself*." (Jacques Derrida, 'My Chances/*Mes chances*: A Rendezvous with Some Epicurean Stereophonies', in *Taking Chances: Derrida, Psychoanalysis and Literature*, ed. Joseph H. Smith and William Kerrigan (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p.25. (The italics are J.D.'s, the bolds are added.)

60. John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, p.589.

61. The nature of the body appeared as an insoluble enigma for the reflexive consciousness. It exhibits the absolute limit of the subject's introspective power, which delimit the sense of self identity.

62. Pontalis has remarked an essential, inverted metaphor in the freudian discourse: "Freud nous a légué deux grandes métaphores du psychisme: la métaphore du système nerveux et celle de l'animalcule protoplasmique" (Pontalis, J.-B., "Le psychisme comme métaphore du corps", in *Entre le rêve et la douleur*, Paris, Gallimard, 1977, p.219. Similarly, Elizabeth Gross has emphasized the position occupied by the metaphor of the body in Freud's conception of the ego and the super-ego, a metaphor that offers an lucid explanation of the dynamics of the second theory of the psychical apparatus. See Elizabeth Gross, 'The body of significations', in *Abjection, Melancholia and Love. The Work of Julia Kristeva*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (London: Routledge, 1990).

63. See above, p.60

64. See above, p.277

65. Max Milner, *On est prié de fermer les yeux* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), p.254.

66. The importance of the thesis of Ernest Jones on the *aphanisis*, often neglected, should deserve a detailed and serious analysis which, nevertheless, goes beyond the scope of the present work.

67. The complex exposition of his notion of projection appeared in his reflexion on the "optic fable" of E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Der Sandmann*. See Sigmund Freud, *Das Unheimlich*, SA, 1919, IV, pp.243-274.

68. These concepts might be thought of as non-significant, as terms resisting a clear definition and even a depictable sense. Nicholas Abraham proposed the term *anasemic* to name the particular quality of the psychoanalytic's use of its notions: "Le langage de la psychanalyse ne suit plus les tournants et les tournures (*tropot*) du parler et de l'écriture habituels. Plaisir, Ça, Economique, Dynamique, ne sont pas métaphores, métonymies, synecdoques ou cathacèses, ils sont, par la vertu du discours, des produits de dé-signification et constituent des figures nouvelles, absentes dans les traités de rhétorique. Ces figures de la antisémantique [...] on proposera d'appeler par le nom forgé d'*anasémie*." (Nicholas Abraham and Martha Torok, *L'écorce et le noyau*, p.211) This conception of the language of psychoanalysis seems to be related to the notion of allegory as it has been put forward in this work. However, the relation between anasemic terms and allegory demands a detailed analysis: it involves also an interpretation of writing and the theoretical relevance of style. It even, illuminates with a different light, Bettelheim's reflections on the Strachey's translation of the Freudian corpus. See Bruno Bettelheim, *Freud and the Human's Soul* (The Hogart Press: 1983; London: Penguin, 1989).

69. Freud writes: "Die Meynertsche Lehre vom Gehirnbau verdient den Namen einer "cortico-centrischen". In der ihm eigenen, weitgehenden Ausdeutung anatomischer Verhältnisse äussert Meynert, dass die Hirnrinde durch die Ausserlichkeit ihrer Lagerung zum Umfassen, zum Aufnehmen der gesamten Sinneseindrücke geeignet wird. Sie wird von ihm ferner einem zusammengesetzt protoplasmatischen Wesen gleichgestellt, das einen Körper, dessen Bestandtheile es sich assimilieren will, überzieht, indem es sich zu einem Höhle umgestaltet. Das gesammte übrige Gehirn erscheint als Anhang und Hilfsorgan der Grosshirnrinde, der gesammte Leib als eine Armirung ihrer Fühlfäden und Faugarme, welche ihr die Bedingungen gewähren, das Weltbild in sich aufzunehmen und auf dasselbe einzuwirken." (*Zur Auffassung der Aphasien*: 47) [the general problem of brain function. Meynert's theory of the organization of the brain deserves to be named "cortico-centric". In his far-reaching speculations on anatomical conditions, which are so typical of him, Meynert expressed the view that the cerebral cortex, by its superficial situation, was particularly suited for- the reception and retention of all sensory stimuli. He also compared the cerebral cortex to a complex protoplasmic, organism which expanded over an object it wanted to incorporate by taking the shape of a cavity. The whole remaining cerebrum thus appeared as an appendix and auxiliary organ of the cerebral cortex, and the whole body as an armour of feelers and tentacles which enabled it to incorporate and to modify the picture of the external world. (CA: 45)]

70. Allegories of space are found in Freud's entire work. One of his last written paragraphs is concerned with the Kantian debate about the subjective nature of space: Gantheret observes that Freud hesitates between two contradictory psychoanalytic explanations on the origin of the *sense* of space: "Mais d'autre part, dans les dernières notes théoriques, à notre connaissance, écrites par Freud, le 22 août 1938: 'L'espace peut être la projection de l'étendue de l'appareil psychique. Il n'est pas d'autre dérivation probable. A l'instar des déterminants a priori, pour Kant, de notre appareil psychique. Psyché est étendue; elle ne sait rien de cela.

71. The notion of *anaclasis* has a peculiar nature which is not apparent in the translation either to French or even to the English in the *Standard Edition*. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Blaise Pontalis have made explicit this masking effect of the translation: "what must unavoidably escape the reader of Freud in translation is the fact that the concept of *anaclasis* *Anlehnung* is a cornerstone of the first freudian instinct theory [...] [the uses of *Anlehnung*] are translated in various ways, however, so that no clear picture of the concept emerges for the non-German reader." In this remark, Laplanche and Pontalis rejoin the harsh critic raised by Bettelheim against Strachey's English translation which has become the "official" freudian source of reference.

72. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Blais Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London: Karnak Books, 1988), p.31. Laplanche, in one of his most important contributions to the psychoanalytic reflection, makes a brief but acute critique to both the French and the English translations. See also Jean Laplanche, *Vie et mort en psychanalyse*, pp.30-41.

73. Jean Laplanche, *Vie et mort en psychanalyse*, p.31.

74. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Blaise Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, p.393

75. John Forrester, p.132.

76. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Blais Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, p.247.

Chapter V

Profiles of darkness: the sexual metaphor and the allegories of pain

I. In praise of the obsolescence of gender

The denial of psychical destruction, which Freud asserted throughout his work, constitutes a cornerstone of his therapeutic enterprise, despite its conflict with his own conception of sexuality. The conception of bisexuality, as is well known, appears at an early stage of the psychoanalytic enterprise. It indicates a crucial point in the development of his conception of sexuality. In a letter dated the 7 of August of 1901, Freud writes to Fliess:

As far as I can see, my next work will be called "Human Bisexuality". It will go to the root of the problem and say the last word it is granted me to say - the last and most profound. For the time being I have only one thing for it: the chief insight which for a long time now has built itself upon the idea of repression, *my core problem*, is possible only through reaction between two sexual currents.¹

The work in question, as it occurred several times during Freud's life, was either completely modified or never written, even perhaps, destroyed. Nevertheless, the quoted passage hints at what would become a definitive issue in his enquiries: the hypothesis of bisexuality as a condition of the understanding of repression. This hypothesis was not just the mere repetition of the current, dominant view, which stemmed from the prominence of embryology and genetics in the scientific landscape of the nineteenth century, as an outcome of the enthronement of evolutionism. As Thomas Laqueur puts it:

More generally the triumph in embryology, during the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, of epigenesis (the view that complicated organic structures arise from simpler undifferentiated ones rather than from preformed entities inherent in the sperm or the egg) would seem to undermine root and branch difference. Science revealed an embryo in which the Wolffian duct, named after Kaspar Friedrich Wolff, was destined to become the male genital tract, and the Mullerian ducts, after Johannes Müller, would become the Fallopian tubes and the ovaries. Until about the

eighth week, the two structures coexist. Furthermore, it was known by the middle of the nineteenth century that the penis and the clitoris, the labia and the scrotum, the ovary and the testes, begin from one and the same embryonic structure. The scrotal sac, for example, is a modification of the labia majora, a version of the embryonic labiscrotal swelling in which the lips grow longer, fold over, and join along the scrotal raphe. Here, even more powerfully than in the early coexisting two ducts, the old Galenic homologies seem to find new resonance. Modern representations of the development of the external genitalia bear a remarkable resemblance to Vesalius' or Leonardo's illustrations, and modern charts of genital embryology seem faithfully to reproduce Galen's lecture on woman as inverted male.²

The hypothesis of bisexuality encounters a fundamental problem of psychoanalytic conception, clearly formulated in the brief commentary included in Freud's letter. It presupposes the underlying existence of sexual *duality*: the struggle between "two sexual currents" from the very beginning of life. Freud was not indifferent to the ordinary conception of an evolving matter which begets two separate genders. An unusual reflection on the nature of this duality remained underdeveloped in his work: the enigma of sexuality, a crossroads in this work, involved two distinct, opposed, albeit entangled dimensions of analogous nature.

Freud gave a complex response to the contradictory exigences of clinical evidence and theoretical constraints regarding the notion of sexuality. However, despite current opinions, psychoanalytic theory seems to be pervaded by an invincible silence about sexuality. The vast number of commentaries provoked by Freud's so called pansexuality or by the hypersexualized core of psychoanalytic theory seems perhaps to contest this assertion. Yet, Freud himself rejected the accusations. He reacted against the "conventional" notion of sexuality. Not only he did object to this vision of his work by offering a definite "positivistic" depiction of sexuality according to clinical testimonies, but "expanding" the notion of sexuality itself, broadening its frontiers and enhancing his conception with a crowd of metaphorical images and allegorical explanations. This broadened conception involved the image of a generalized sexuality rooted in a mere bedimmed, intangible anatomy and a fictional physiology which suggests an allegorical reading of the splitting of genders. In the Preface to the Fourth Edition of his *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (1905) we read:

Was aber die "Ausdehnung" des Begriffes der Sexualität betrifft, die durch die Analyse von Kindern und von sogenannten Perversen notwendig wird, so mögen alle, die von ihrem höheren Standpunkt verächtlich auf die Psychoanalyse herabschauen, sich erinnern lassen, wie nahe die erweiterte Sexualität der Psychoanalyse mit dem *Eros* des göttlichen Plato zusammentrifft. (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 46)*

The outcome of this unfolding [*Ausdehnung*] of the concept of sexuality was not a firm, structured theory, but rather a desegregated theoretical framework. Moreover, this "extended" [*erweiterte*] sexuality obliterated the boundaries of the current understanding of sex and sexual behaviour. It not only exhibited the limitations of an encompassing, integrated theory of sexuality, but exhibited the extreme fragility of its understanding of the vast collection of singularities of sexual and gender-determined behaviour.

However, Freud's encounter with sexuality seems to have had a deep impact in his own writing. Freud's only work devoted exclusively to sexuality was also the only one made up of a numbered series of essays. The genre of the essay, intrinsically fragmented, unfinished, precarious, seems to have not been inadvertently chosen: certain fissures and silences in his writing were not only visible but acceptable, even desirable; the essay permitted the exploration of theoretically intricate and extremely demanding topics with oblique, narrative procedures. Freud alludes to these virtues of the imperfection and inconsistency of the genre in an ambiguous assertion in his *Preface to the Third Edition to the Essays*:

Die drei *Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* können nichts anderes enthalten, als was die Psychoanalyse anzunehmen nötigt oder zu bestätigen gestattet. *Es ist darum ausgeschlossen, daß sie sich jemals zu einer "Sexualtheorie" erweitern ließen, daß sie zu manchen wichtigen Problemen des Sexuallebens überhaupt nicht Stellung nehmen.* Man wolle aber darum nicht glauben, daß diese übergangenen Kapitel des großen Themas dem Autor unbekannt geblieben sind oder von ihm als nebensächlich

*And as for the "stretching" of the concept of sexuality which has been necessitated by the analysis of children and what are called perverts, anyone who looks down with contempt upon psychoanalysis from a superior vantage-point should remember how closely the enlarged sexuality of psychoanalysis coincides with the *Eros* of the divine Plato. (FP, 7: 43)

vernachlässigt wurden. (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 43)*

There were silenced, albeit "great" topics [*großen Themas*] which were excluded from the text, which did not find any place [*nicht Stellung nehmen*] in his writing. Despite their importance, they were not even mentioned. Thus, the reader obtained from Freud only the dubious relief of the assurance of his own awareness, of the acknowledged relevance of those "unnamed" topics to the elucidation of the enigma of sexuality, and the actual exclusion of these theoretical items. Possibly, their awkward nature determined their uprooting from the actual written text. This incapacity to develop a consistent theory, was to reveal itself as an intrinsic condition of his discourse on sexuality: sexuality was to remain a crucial, yet insoluble enigma throughout Freud's life.

It is possible to read Freud's avowal of the impossibility of such a comprehensive theoretical approach in his exceptional remark, in *Preface to the Essays*:

Überall wird ein gewisser Instanzenzug eingehalten, werden *die akzidentellen Momente vorangestellt*, die dispositionellen im Hintergrunde gelassen und wird die ontogenetische Entwicklung vor der phylogenetischen berücksichtigt. *Das Akzidentelle spielt nämlich die Hauptrolle in der Analyse*, es wird durch sie fast restlos bewältigt; das Dispositionelle kommt erst hinter ihm zum Vorschein als etwas, was durch das Erleben geweckt wird, dessen Würdigung aber weit über das Arbeitsgebiet der Psychoanalyse hinausführt. (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 44)**

Throughout the nineteenth century, psychology inherited from evolutionism the cardinal, yet puzzling notion of "predisposition", conceived as a specific biological,

*It is impossible that these *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* should contain anything but what psychoanalysis makes it necessary to assume or possible to establish. It is, therefore, out of the question that they could ever be extended into a complete 'theory of sexuality', and it is natural that there should be a number of important problems of sexual life with which they do not deal at all. But the reader should not conclude from this that the branches of this large subject which have been thus passed over are unknown to the author or have been neglected by him as of small importance. (FP, 7: 39-40)

**Throughout the entire work the various factors given to the accidental factors, while disposition is left in the background, and more weight is attached to ontogenesis than to philogenesis. For it is the accidental factors that play the principal part in analysis: they are almost entirely subject to its influence. The dispositional ones only come to light after them, as something stirred into activity by experience: adequate considerations of them would lead far beyond the sphere of psychoanalysis. (FP, 7: 40)

transmissible imprint which defined the peculiar, intimate physiognomy of species or even of a just specific, natural group of beings. Beings embody their own history and preserved it beyond the reach of remembrance, construable only by an outside gaze from the features of the physiognomy, from their patterns of behaviour or from the decipherable residues of their demographic decay or expansion. Biology claimed to be able to decipher both the past and the destiny of a species in kinship, in morphology, and, later, in cellular and molecular matter. It pretended to reveal identity by exploring the accidental series of engendered physiognomies.

"Predisposition" accounted for the supremacy of inertia as ruling principle, as a transcendental, unyielding stillness of the profiles of beings. The history of the species was seen both to foretell and constrain the growth and the development of the individual. Moreover, the biological history of the individual was conceived as a mirror, on a reduced temporal scale, of the whole history of the species. The individual conveys, in its flesh, the narration of its own destiny. The speculative dual constraints imposed on the subject both by his accidental intimate history and the history of the species calls for an allegorical narration, the epics of survival in which phylogenesis prevails over the diverse and various patterns by which the individual responds to the exigencies of the environment. Predisposition, as a capability, as a potential force of survival appears also as an unuttered yet discernible promise impressed on the expressions, the movements, the emotions and the effusion of affection; it is a mute, physiological prophesy, a cipher of the future. It accounts for the virtual metamorphosis of identities and it names the whole range of the potential variation of beings. Predisposition also foretells the disappearance, the finiteness of the individual. The body bears the inscription of the future decay and collapse of its own identity. Yet, evolutionism allows the vicissitudes brought about by uncertainty; it conceives of the biological constraints as a loose grid which suggests blurred and undetermined boundaries imposed on living bodies. Thus, predisposition also implies unforeseeable mutation; it confronts the notion of history conceived as the outcome of the inexorable constraints of inertia, and as the sequence of abrupt events, of life itself, intruding and informing the evolution of species. "Predisposition" was conceived as the entanglement of agonic forces of inertial identity, mutation and chance, which although confounded,

depicted the struggle between the *History* of the species and the *history* of individuals.

In the nineteenth century the belief in a rigorous parallelism between the history of the species and the history of the individual, between ontogenesis and phylogenesis ruled biological and medical enquiry; it echoed the mirror images of microcosmos and macrocosmos which prevailed over the philosophical thought of the Classical Age. However, in the psychological and medical reflection of nineteenth century, "predisposition" hinted at the notion of psychical malady and the deviations of perversion. Stuart Mill writes in a passage that foreshadows the Freudian conception:

It is certain that the natural differences which really exist in the mental predispositions or susceptibilities of different persons are often not unconnected with diversities in their organic constitution. But it does not therefore follow that these organic differences must in all cases influence the mental phenomena directly and immediately. They often affect them through the medium of their psychological causes.³

The conception of sexuality seeks to expound those bodily and symbolic experiences which abide on the fringes of divergent and irreconcilable experiences of time: it implied both phylogenesis and ontogenesis, identity and destruction, stability and change.

The preference accorded to the event of trauma, "unexpected episodes" and the privileged significance of the "incident" (the contingent "perturbance" which "advents" the image of identity created by disposition [*Disposition*]) redefined the notion of "sexuality" as conceived by psychoanalysis. Sexuality ceased to be conceived only as a biological function, a physiological condition; Freud conceives it as lacking any unyielding urgent, invariable aim; rather sexuality appears as a physical impulse detached from the mere biological identity of its object; this detachment is foreign to the subject's instinctual imprinting and depends only upon the symbolic nature of desire; it completely rejects the vague determinism of biology. On the contrary, human sexuality seems to be attached to singular, irreplaceable symbolic objects, the absolute singularity of which seems irreducible to physical identity. Yet, paradoxically, the *singularity* of sexual reponse seems to exhibit a conjecturable, yet inapprehensible *regularity*, submitted to implacable laws for which, nevertheless, there is no clear, undeniable evidence.⁴

Moreover, there is an evident paradoxical relation between a singular sexual object the sense of which is entirely forged by the subject itself and the variety and obstinacy of his sexual response; the laws of this obstinacy and the nature of the object of desire are essentially unthinkable. Consequently, the paradox of bisexuality both as origin and intrinsic feature of sexuality introduces in Freud's theory a disquieting turn.

Bisexuality was a fundamental topic of anatomical and physiological conceptions which preceded and governed the sources of psychoanalysis; it was alluded to in medical treatises, speculative essays of incipient embryology, and the moral discourse of European society; it became the conceptual, yet veiled centre of psychoanalytic theory. It abides at the crossroads of the conceptual tension between the symbolic dimension of *repression* and its physical basis.

Seitdem ich mit dem Gesichtspunkte der Bisexualität bekannt geworden bin, halte ich dieses Moment für das hier maßgebende und meine, ohne der Bisexualität Rechnung zu tragen, wird man kaum zum Verständnis der tatsächlich zu beobachtenden Sexualäußerungen von Mann und Weib gelangen können. (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 124)*

This remark on the importance of bisexuality intrudes unexpectedly: it comes just after a footnote that either obliterates or blurs the conception of sexuality itself, while trying to elucidate it in terms of the opposition between masculine and feminine.

Es ist unerlässlich, sich klarzumachen, daß die Begriffe "männliche" und "weibliche", deren Inhalt der gewöhnlichen Meinung so unzweideutig erscheint, in der Wissenschaft zu den verworrensten gehören und nach mindestens drei Richtungen zu zerlegen sind. (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 123, n.1)**

This paradox is the expression of an implicit uncertainty: the beclouded sense of the meaning of the terms masculinity and femininity. This uncomfortable intrusion of a lexical opacity in Freud's convictions adumbrated the difficulties of clearly defining sexual difference which was to remain unsolved throughout his work. In 1933, twenty

*Since I have become acquainted with the notion of bisexuality I have regarded it as the decisive factor, and without taking bisexuality into account I think it would scarcely be possible to arrive at an understanding of the sexual manifestations that are actually to be observed in men and women. (FP, 7: 142)

**It is essential to understand clearly that the concepts of 'masculine' and 'feminine', whose meaning seems so unambiguous to ordinary people, are among the most confused that occur in science. It is possible to distinguish at least *three* uses. (FP, 7: 141, n.1)

eight years later, in the *Neue Folge der Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Psychoanalyse* the same crucial uncertainty reappeared, in virtually the same terms of *Drei Abhandlungen*. In its original version, the different genders were characterized by a conflict between abstract qualities:

Man gebrauch männlich un weiblich bald im Sinne von *Aktivität* und *Passivität*, bald in *biologischen* und dann im *soziologischen* Sinn. Die erste dieser drei Bedeutungen ist die wesentliche un die in der Psychoanalyse zumeist verwertbare. Ihr entspricht es, wenn die Libido oben im Text als männlich bezeichnet wird, denn der Trieb ist immer aktiv, auch wo er sich ein passive Ziel gesetzt hat. (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 123, n.1)*

Freud's definition of sexual difference resorts to a synecdoche which defines by a single feature an ancient, inherited belief, an "ontological" commonplace for the definition of gender—the opposition between active and passive—of the undepictable, sexual identity.⁵ But the significance of this synecdoche—a single feature represents the whole—is that it swerves from the trends imposed on the psychological inquiry by certain biological model; Freud turns to elements of popular myth, to conventional images—passive and active—to define the essential nature of gender. However, both terms are, in turn, transformed into a metaphor which depicts the abstract qualities of energy—libido as masculine—. This dense articulation of metaphors gives to Freud's conception a fictional density which will elude any positivistic conception of body and sexuality. Thus, Freud's notion of sexuality is, from his early works, foreign to the tangible experience of flesh. This exacerbated metaphorical reference to sexuality abruptly displays a profound "sublimation", inherent in Freud's theory. The nature of sexuality is, consequently, the outcome of energy displacements and its associated, psychical images. Freud has taken a definitive step in the de-sexualizing of sexuality after the first abstract metaphorical image of it as a regime of pure charge and discharge of energy: *activity* refers to the abstract quality of the driving energy. But the nature of this "abstractive" synecdoque is not just a simple displacement of sense. Not

*'Masculine' and 'feminine' are used sometimes in the sense of *activity* and *passivity*, sometimes in a *biological*, and sometimes, again in a *sociological* sense. The first of these three meanings is the essential one and the most serviceable in psychoanalysis. When, for instance, libido was described in the text above as being 'masculine', the word was being used in this sense, for an instinct is always active even when it has a passive aim in view. (FP, 7: 141, n.1)

only does masculine nature seem to be completely defined by its being active and energetic, also what is energetic and active is masculine: "Libido was described in the text above as masculine, because Instinct [*Trieb*] is always active even when it has a passive aim at view". The metonymic series unfolds and acquires an unrestrained suggestive meaningful capacity.⁶ Sexuality thus appears, in Freud's work, not as a concept, but as metaphorical series, capable both of expounding gender as an incarnation of abstract tensions between flows of energy, and of attributing to the energy response an "ontological" feature of gender.

The metaphor of sexuality, as a means to comprehend the identity of self and subjectivity, enables Freud to redefine his picture of perversion. Moreover, it allows him to disregard the conventional conceptions of the psychological malady and to envisage an intimate presence of madness in the core of self. Normality, as Freud suggests, is only the presence of the restrained discernible signs of derangement inherent in the psychological apparatus, which contrast with the exorbitant signs of perversion. Hence, normality can only be defined as the recession of symptoms, as the silence which contrasts with the blatant signs of aberrations and opacities of behaviour displayed on the fringes of social convention. The metaphor of sexuality abstracted from the imposing figure of perversion, appears to be the only means of tracing the conjectural profile of normality. Psychoanalysis undermines the significance of the biological description of gender; only the opposition between *active* and *passive* seems relevant to an understanding of the changing attributes of gender. This conceptual polarity brings about a new comprehension of *action* derived from dynamic models; it not only defines the notion of gender difference, but casts a new light on the symbolic constraints of human behaviour, and the nature of the dominant patterns and the silent compelling force of conventional values; it proposes implicitly an unprecedented ontological sense of being. Nevertheless, the dense metaphors of sexuality seem to have aroused in Freud an intense disquiet, a feeling of failure. Almost at the final stage of his work, Freud confesses, not without visible discouragement:

Die Lehre von der Bisexualität liegt noch sehr im dunkeln, und daß sie noch keine Verknüpfung mit der Trieblehre gefunden hat, müssen wir in der Psychoanalyse als schwere Störung verspüren. Wie dem auch sein mag, wenn wir als tatsächlich annehmen, daß der Einzelne in seinem Sèxualleben männliche wie weibliche

Wünsche befriedigen will, sind wir für die Möglichkeit vorbereitet, daß diese Ansprüche nicht durch das nämliche Objekt erfüllt werden und daß sie einander stören, wenn es nicht gelingt, sie auseinanderzuhalten und jede Regung in eine besondere, ihr angemessene Bahn zu leiten. Eine andere Schwierigkeit ergibt sich daraus, daß der erotischen Beziehung außer der ihr eigenen sadistischen Komponente so häufig ein Betrag von direkter Aggressionsneigung beigelegt ist. (*Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, SA, 1920, IX: 235, n.2)*

The obscurities of bisexuality enhanced the unsettling fragility and precariousness of the notion of sexuality. The disquiet aroused by the conceptual indetermination of sexuality had repercussions upon the form and meaning of other essential concepts of Freudian theory: not only upon *repression*, which was explicitly determined in its scope and significance by the notion of bisexuality ever since its first appearances, but also upon the doctrine of instincts (drives) and the notions which aimed at the definition of the psychical and symbolic identity of the subject.

II. The allegories of sexuality: deciphering the history of the flesh

Bisexuality not only described a primal condition of biological beings, but also its obstinate nature, preserved by the force deriving from an ontological, essential tension, an inherent "perseverance of being" (Spinoza). Bisexuality is conceived chiefly as an ancient and lasting characteristic of living beings, as a vestige from past eras and primordial species. In the context of Freud's fictional anthropology, the myths of humankind, chiefly the Platonic myth of the plenitude of being achievable only by the suppression of sexual duality, accounted for the relevance of bisexuality as a primordial condition of humanity. As a poetic topic and a mythical motive, as a scientific doctrine

*The theory of bisexuality is still surrounded by many obscurities and we cannot but feel it as a serious impediment in psychoanalysis, that it has not yet bound any link with the theory of instincts. However this may be, if we assume it as a fact that each individual seek to satisfy both male and female wishes in his sexual life, we are prepared for the possibility that those [two sets of] demands are not fulfilled by the same object, and that they interfere with each other unless they can be kept apart and each impulse guided into a particular channel that is suited to it. Another difficulty arises from the circumstances that there is so often associated a quota of plain inclination to aggression. (FP, 12: 295-296).

and as a indelible feature of beings demonstrated by biological evidence, bisexuality seemed to expose, in the ciphered unfolding of certain patterns of behaviour, both the unconscious truth conveyed by myth and scientific evidence of a buried, secret force which continues to act in the core of subjectivity.

However, the sombre eloquence of this ancient belief readable in the silence of myth cannot be reduced to a purely allegorical image of biological existence. The analogy between ontogenesis and phylogenesis allows the projection of this mythical metaphor of the history of species, of the evolution of humankind upon the subject's own history. Bisexuality was seen not only as a feature of primordial beings at the dawn of biological species. It was seen to beget and rule both the development and the ends of the sexual behaviour of the subject. The mythical density of bisexuality strengthens the complex synecdoche of Freud's own notion of sexuality.

Freud's synecdoche of sexuality is also discernible in the formal structure of the *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*. The implicit thematic link between each of the three essays in the *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* is *not* sexuality itself. The subject's history, the notions of action and body are envisioned as inherent in the conception of sexuality. Primitive bisexuality was seen to illuminate the relation between perversion and childhood, it evinces its concealed common root, its undeveloped, governing heritage. The metaphysical vision which enclosed in a single category primitive cultures, infancy, and perversion -homosexual relations were conceived as a common practice in primitive cultural patterns- inherited from the Enlightenment reappears *as* an implicit foundation of the *Drei Abhandlungen*, yet almost completely transfigured by Freud's metaphor of sexuality.

Man muß Wert darauf legen, daß die Inversion eine häufige Erscheinung, fast eine mit wichtigen Funktionen betraute Institution bei den alten Völkern auf der Höhe ihrer Kultur war.
(*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 51)

The metaphor of sexuality is thought of following the model of the threefold structure of action: act, aim and object. Freud referred this analytical structure to the specific sexual character in a peculiar way: presupposing a *dense* sexuality, to which he refers only *in negative terms* at the opening of his first essay. After depicting in broad terms the "popular" conception of sexuality, he comments:

Wir haben aber allen Grund, in diesen Angaben ein sehr ungetreues Abbild der Wirklichkeit zu erblicken; faßt man sie schärfer ins Auge, so erweisen sie sich überreich an Irrtümern, Ungenauigkeiten und Voreiligkeiten. (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 47).⁷

Freud finds in the popular conception nothing but errors, inaccuracies, precipitation: nevertheless, Freud's contempt for the "popular" conception of sexuality did not give rise to a positive definition, but to a pseudo-analytical development of this notion which eludes any description of its specific characteristics. Thus sexuality remains unanalyzed, but enhanced with supplementary features:

Führen wir zwei Termini ein: heißen wir *die Person*, von welcher die geschlechtliche Anziehung ausgeht, das *Sexualobjekt*, die *Handlung*, nach welcher der Trieb drängt, das *Sexualziel*, so weist uns die wissenschaftlich gesichtete Erfahrung zahlreiche Abweichungen in bezug auf beide, Sexualobjekt und Sexualziel, nach, deren Verhältnis zur *angenommenen Norm* eingehenden Untersuchung fordert. (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 47. Emphasis added.)⁸

Freud will resort to this enhancement of a notion by negative definition, specifically by the analytical unfolding of the structure of the action⁷ at critical moments, especially when he puts forward his theoretical conception of drive [*Trieb*].⁸ This analytical structure, as in the case of sexuality, engenders a fictional topography and an intrinsic teleology: the subject faces its own object with a specific aim. The characteristic of sexual action is that it demands a primordial identification: the object must be an *object of love*. The object involved in the structure of sexual action is endowed here with an ambiguous quality: the physiognomy and nature of the specific loved object confuses itself with the subject's own representation of it. The object and its representation no longer preserve their own identities. The object is completely encompassed within the subject's own imaginary sphere and the limits that define the inner realm of subjectivity

⁷We have every reason to believe, however, that these views give a very false picture of the true situation. If we look into them more closely we shall find that they contain a number of errors, inaccuracies and hasty conclusions. (FP, 7: 45)

⁸I shall at this point introduce two technical terms. Let us call the person from whom sexual attraction proceeds the *sexual object* and the act towards which the instinct tends the *sexual aim*. Scientifically sifted observation, then shows that numerous deviations occur in respect of both of these — the sexual object and the sexual aim. The relation between these deviations and what is assumed to be normal requires thorough investigations. (FP, 7: 46)

and the outer world vanish. The object at which the subject aims, does not lie beyond the limits of the body; rather, it seems to abide within it, in an uncertain inwardness of the "outer" space forged by the identification between the subject and the specific object of the love bond. Not only are the tokens of time effaced from the perceived object, but also the specific signals of space and substance: the object of love becomes timeless, its space is that of the subject's interiority, it confounds itself with its own image forged by the subject's psychical impulses.

At the culminating point of a crucial exposure of the *Three Essays*, James Strachey seems to feel a compelling impulse to incorporate in Freud's text a strange and apparently unhelpful remark. While Freud describes the difference between ego-libido and object-libido, and depicts this latter as aroused by the cathecting of a sexual object, Strachey comments in a footnote:

It is scarcely necessary to explain that here *as elsewhere*, in speaking of the libido concentrating on 'objects', withdrawing from 'objects', etc., Freud has in mind mental presentations [*Vorstellungen*] of objects and not, of course, objects in the external world. [originally published in the *Standard Edition*. Added lately to the German *Studentausgabe*.] (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V : 121, n.2. Bolds are added)

The insinuation of obviousness and the seeming worthlessness of the warning acknowledged by Strachey himself, is by itself noteworthy. It signals, while claiming a superfluous character, a constitutional, unresolved ambiguity of Freud's conception of object and space. Strachey's note does not expound, but indicates by a significant gesture an essential condition of the metaphor of sexuality and its structure.

Bisexuality, as Freud himself admits, refers to physiological and anatomical characteristics of beings. Nevertheless, on the grounds of clinical experience, Freud strips the notion of bisexuality from any reference to flesh; it became a pure allusion to virtual patterns of the relation between acts and objects. But the objects thus metaphorically construed led to a rarefied conception of the act itself—conceived as an action plus its specific aim—. The sense of an "internal", a sheer psychical, unaccountable *action* turns out to be a distortion of its meaning in language. 'Action', 'active' and 'masculinity' appear as allegorical images of psychical processes. If

'action' can name any psychological impulse and movement, then either the mere displacement of cathexis from one representing agency to another or the sole intrusion of instinct (drive) in the reflexive sphere of consciousness and perception, almost any non-signified inner impulses, can also be embodied in this encompassing category and thus acquire the 'masculine' character. The metaphorical series dissipated the boundaries of sexuality and, indeed, its very sense.

Moreover, there seemed to be an additional allegorical turn: sexuality, thought of as a kind of act lacked, for all that, a proper end, a specific finality. Its own teleology either confounded itself with the mythic finality of the species —reproduction—, or with the inevitable aim of Nature —the absolute abatement of energy. Yet, clinical work offered puzzling evidence: perversion revealed that the search for pleasure —the supreme aim of Nature— excluded the 'instinct' of reproduction —the mythical aim of species. Freud sought to preserve in his conception, by allegorical means, the significance of the contradictory aims and acts of sexuality. The singular conjectural traits of sexuality were once again embodied in the allegorically conceived "will of nature"; the motif of the ends of sexuality became a contextual variation of the suggestive imagery of biological models. In the allegory the secret roots of action, the unfathomable source of active, bodily forces, the powerful restlessness of masculinity fused into the narrative enactment of the finalities of nature. Freud merged the enigmatic, unaccountable myth of the finalities of nature as forged by the Enlightenment with a positivistic conviction and clinical observations.

Bisexuality was not upheld by *experience, as a depictable, meaningful, apprehensible structure of behaviour which involved corporeal and symbolic means and sensations*; rather, it turned out to be a mere condition of the subject's discharge of energy manifested in inner actions, as well as an anatomical and physiological state; it became an ontological condition of energy itself. Still, Freud's notion of bisexuality remained a silent, unaccountable presence at the centre of the theory of sexuality; it was preserved within psychoanalytic theory as a latent but inexpressible truth.

Freud's thesis of the perennial memory of the primal affective stages, implies that bisexuality cannot be "forgotten"; it is not effaced from the soul with the unfolding of sexuality. Bisexuality, as envisaged by Freud, appears as a cardinal, primal

condition of the form and the impulse of sexual behaviour. It prevails as an unsignified, moulding tension, informing the evolution of the subject's sexuality, whatever its destiny might be. Consequently, the ensuing stages of the subject's development are only deferred and ciphered expressions of its concealed presence. Hence, bisexuality belongs to a sort of primary, speechless memory of the flesh.

The evolution of the subject's sexuality has a paradoxical outcome. Each stage of development is evinced by a series of corporeal tokens the memory of which remains changeless; each stage preserves its own accumulated vestiges, its memories of needs and objects, of fusion and loss, which remain active in the psychical apparatus. The culminating stage of sexuality preserves the previous stages and its vigorous, yet veiled patterns. Freud's thesis on the specific processes of *repression* and *regression* implies that sexuality is, indeed, a *simultaneous*, multiple sexuality. Its later stages must coexist with the submerged, archaic ones, with the uninhibited albeit silent presence of bisexuality and memories of passed loved objects, and with traces of partially evolved actions driven by the sexual impulse within the psychical apparatus. The evolutionary convictions of Freud—both moral and biological—introduced in his thesis an unresolved tension, which he exhibits in unexpected yet unavoidably wavering theoretical positions. He either praises reproductive sexuality, or deplures fixed, genital sexuality; he either admits perversion as a specific outcome of sexuality, or expresses a notorious contempt for the unfinished sexual development of the perverse. His claim that psychical life is shaped in a particular succession of stages drove him to accept a specific final and culminating point in the evolution of sexuality: monosexuality, genitality, appeared as the congruent outcome, as the desirable, complete evolution of sexuality. Yet, the normal, harmonic regime of object election in the love bond, which should lead to reproduction and genitality, was frequently subverted by the crude effusion of perversion, by sexual actions marked by teleological indifference, foreign to evolution and the intrinsic finalities of species.

The notions of *fixation* and *regression* emerged, with their final and controversial meanings, from the implications of Freud's "evolutionist" thesis on the development of psychical apparatus. Each of them presuppose the partial negation of the other: on the one hand, the destruction of the early stages of development would

render *regression* impossible; on the other hand, *fixation* implies an arrest, or even the end of development, or at least its suspension; development stops or revolves about a certain fixed point, determining the intensity of the energy conveyed by the psychical processes, as well as their patterns and forms. The landscape of the psychoanalytic reflexion on these concepts exhibited an odd profile: a collection of theoretical parcels, a constellation of fragmentary and divergent, allegorical explanations.

Nevertheless, the conception of psychical life as the result of an unyielding, pure, non-decaying memory, and the assumption of a timeless, enduring totality of memory traces, imposes on Freud's conception the image of the multiple dimensions of sexuality. Sexuality does not only evolve as a linear process. It implies also multiple series of objects whose nature may contrast; it involves diverse qualities of desire, not an exclusive one; no single compelling force emanates from a centre of gravity about which the whole sexual identity is condemned to turn in erratic circles. The psychical processes are not stirred by the pressure of a unique desire but by an aggregate of many. In the celebrated Chapter VII of *Die Traumdeutung*, Freud emphatically rejects the image of a single desire:

Ich weiß nämlich aus den im Laufe dieser Abhandlung oftmals angedeuteten Untersuchungen, daß zur Bildung eines hysterischen Symptoms *beide Strömungen unseres Seelenlebens zusammentreffen müssen*. Das Symptom ist nicht bloß der Ausdruck eines realisierten unbewußten Wunsches; es muß noch ein Wunsch aus dem Vorbewußten dazukommen, der sich durch das nämliche Symptom erfüllt, so daß *das Symptom mindestens zweifach determiniert wird*, je einmal von einem der im Konflikt befindlichen Systeme her. (*Die Traumdeutung*, SA, 1900, I: 542)*

The often emphasized notion of *over-determination* is a clear allusion not only to symptom, but to desire itself—and implicitly to its manifold objects: it states *at least two determining forces* related to desires which derive from different psychical

I have learnt from the researches which I have mentioned so often in the course of this work that in order to bring about the formation of a hysterical symptom *both* currents of our mind must converge. A symptom is not merely the expression of a realized unconscious wish; a wish from the preconscious which is fulfilled by the same symptom must also be present. So that the symptom will have *at least* two determinants, one arising from each of the systems involved in the conflict. (FP, 4: 723-724)

instances.* Freud's rejection of the destructibility of memory exacerbates the ambiguity of the metaphor of sexuality: regarding sexuality there is neither progress, nor overcoming, nor dissipation of the early stages of the sexual development.

III. The corporeal ubiquity of perversion

1. Abstract perversions

Perversion, in Freud's view, illuminates non-pathological sexuality. It appears as a denial of any clear boundaries between masculine and feminine or as a transgression of the factual limits between active and passive in the reciprocal relation between sadism and masochism. But this obliteration of limits is not only a fundamental feature of perversion; it is its ontological condition; envisaged as a psychological disease, it turns into a malady of desire which involves the experiences of space and time:

Die Perversionen sind entweder a) anatomische *Überschreitung* der für die geschlechtliche Vereinigung bestimmten Körpergebiete oder b) *Verweilungen* bei den intermediären Relationen zum Sexualobjekt, die normalerweise auf dem Wege zum endgültigen Sexualziel rasch durchschritten werden sollen. (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 60)**

Perversion disregards the sexual topography of the body, just as it perturbs the sequence of moments, the temporal rhythms which signalled the paths of satisfaction. Freud creates an allegorical image of the sexual body as an abstract apparatus, a "sexual apparatus" [*Geschlechtsapparat*] taking as a model the "language apparatus"; this allegorical vision conveys in itself the archeological topography of the imaginary layers of the web of language associations and temporal settlements of memory. The topography of sexuality is allegorized by unusual shapes of energy flows which

*In the article about 'over-determination' included in *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, J.Laplanche and J.-B.Pontalis disregard this explicit reference of Freud to desire's multiplicity. Their emphasis falls upon the determining convergence of different psychological factors. This neglect of the plurality of desire might be due to the theoretical tension this duality might introduce in the Lacanian conception of unconscious, and the Oedipic model.

**Perversions are sexual activities which either (a) *extend*, in an anatomical sense, beyond the regions of the body that are designed for sexual union, or (b) *linger* over the intermediate relations to the sexual object which should normally be traversed rapidly on the path towards the final sexual aim. (FP, 7: 62)

resemble the imaginary topography of language. This topography set distinct, yet precarious limits to identity: in sexuality, as in language apparatus, there are clearly discernible regions, sharp distinctions between the inner and the outer, between constant and discrete stimuli. Freud envisions a sexual "apparatus" constituted by erotogenic centres scattered over the anatomical surface; organs and corporeal territories are unambiguously defined as focus of constant internal energy production.

The image of erotogenic organs or centres implicit in the Freudian landscape is a heritage of Charcot's medical approach to the hysteric's body. Freud conceives them also as territories shaped and delimited in the course of the development of the subject, as corporeal zones which govern the subject's equilibrium of energies, but also as privileged points likely to evince the fixation of the subject's evolution. But the topographical taxonomy of sexual development betokened by the disposition of sexual organs, stresses implicitly, in the Freudian text, the primordial structure of the experience of satisfaction. The sexual topography of the body is also the diagram and the chronology of the singular, successive physiognomies and manifestations of this experience. Freud exhibits a proclivity to define sexuality crudely, only to enliven a meagre image of sexuality reduced to its sheer dynamic essence. However, if sexuality is thought of essentially as a non-sexual phenomenon, as a conjunction of intense energies and their dynamic displacement, energies the discharge of which becomes an absolute aim, then it is bound to remain a non-reproductive sexuality. Sexuality abstracts itself from its "natural", biological teleology. Concerned *only* with discharge of energy, with the avoidance of any increase in the intensity of internal energy, the actions involved in sexual satisfaction and its end—which implied the creation of the representation of an object adequate to a foreign, extrinsic reproductive finality—, lose their singular corporeal quality. Any object might potentially fulfil the conditions imposed on the subject's sexual attachment. However, the election of the object of love is foreign to the exigencies of the compelling laws of energy discharge. It is only the unfolding of the pleasure principle into the principle of reality—the obscure metamorphosis of the dynamic material response into a symbol-ruled behaviour of the discharge—that transforms the nature, the aim and the sense of sexuality itself. Sexuality becomes the uncertain region where the material dynamics of energy, the

symbolic creation of objects and significance meet. The power of sexuality to create its own objects cancels out the preeminence of natural finality. The indifference of the subject regarding the actual, real object, its mere symbolic consistency rejects the reasons of natural teleology. The biological machine yields to the blind mechanisms of a dynamic machine and capricious symbol-shaped objects. The "principle of reality" dissociates itself from the ends of nature and surrenders to the ruling logic of autonomous symbolic devices:

Der Psychoanalyse erscheint vielmehr die Unabhängigkeit der Objektwahl vom Geschlechte des Objekts, die gleich freie Verfügung über männliche und weibliche Objekte, wie sie im Kindesalter, in primitiven Zuständen und frühhistorischen Zeiten zu beobachten ist, als das Ursprüngliche, aus dem sich durch Einschränkung nach der einen oder der anderen Seite der normale wie der Inversionstypus entwickeln. (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 56, n.1)*

Once again, Freud encounters here a seeming tautology: sexuality reveals itself in the signs of its immanent teleology. Throughout history, Freud suggests, sexuality has been the object of scatological beliefs: it appears as origin and as epilogue, as a primordial condition of being and as its fate, as the source of life and as the privileged experience which foreshadows death. An uncontested current conviction which aroused from the discourse of nineteenth century natural history seems to comply with the Spinozian notion of ontological finality: the species perseveres, its life is governed by the search for identity and the striving for its preservation. The biological endeavour of any species is to reproduce itself, to endure timelessly; common belief stresses that this essential condition drives biological beings to exhibit a sexual impulse to achieve this finality. But this teleology is eternal; its origins lie outside Freud's theoretical scope: nevertheless, Freud seeks to apprehend a delusive machine; sexuality appears as an accident, a material apparatus the finality of which is but a meaningless event: discharge of energy.

The primacy accorded to satisfaction, conceived as the psychological, significant

*Psychoanalysis considers that a choice of an object independent of its sex —freedom to range equally over male and female objects— as it is found in childhood, in primitive states of society and early periods of history, is the original basis from which, as a result of a restriction in one direction or the other, both the normal and the inverted types develop. (FP, 7: 57)

resonance of discharge, contributes to the recognition of the obsolescence of the body. The indetermination of the object of love, its indifference, its physiognomy which is simultaneously a representation and a tangible, foreign expression, a delusive simile of the lost primordial object and a contingent being, reflects the enigmatic nature of the experience of satisfaction itself. Even symptom, thought of as an emblem of a tortuous route to satisfaction, displays an unaccountable, yet perceivable relief. Symptom is the symbolic, precarious facade which exhibits the pure economic ends of energy discharge.

The flesh disappears from the Freudian horizon. Satisfaction itself dims as a conscious perceptible experience when it joins the secret, obscure pleasures of the symptom; it is an aftermath of renunciation, the triumph of the veiled but compelling pleasures of dissatisfaction. Freud recognized them. He named these pleasures suggestively: primary and secondary gain from illness [*Krankheitsgewinn*].

Ten years after his 1905 definitive contribution to the study of perversion, Freud introduces, in 1915, an unsettling remark in his discussion of the relation between the similarities between hysterogenic and erotogenic zones, ("*ihr*) zeigen die nämlich Charaktere"). He adds in a note to his original text:

Weitere Überlegungen und die Verwertung anderer Beobachtungen führen dazu, die Eigenschaft der *Erogenität* allen Körperstellen und inner Organen zuzusprechen. (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 90, n.l. Emphasize added)

Freud disregards the formerly expressed belief in the erotogenic centres; he puts forward the idea of the dissolution of the territories of sexual arousal; sexuality, he suggests, spreads over an indifferent, homogeneous surface; he adumbrates the extinction of the meaningful boundaries of the flesh. From the beginning of the psychoanalytical enterprise, sexual energy —as psychical energy— was seen as something torn from its privileged corporeal source; later, sexuality was to become a magnitude, the sum of the pure, converging, inner intensities of energy which pass through indifferentiated bodily territories. Having lost their boundaries, the erotogenic

*After further reflection and after taking further observation into account, I have been led to ascribe the quality of *erectogenicity* to all parts of the body and to all internal organs. (FP, 7: 100)

territories dissipate; the body is left as indifferent soil, the mere ground for the displacement of intensified energies. Freud seems to have renounced the temptations of anatomical metaphors taken from the localizationist view of psychical processes. He does with hysteria what he has also done with aphasia. He abstracts sexuality from the image of a bodily structure, of an image of congruent corporeal territories, of a harmonic, functional whole; not only has material identity been abruptly discarded, but also the cohesion of the body itself. The sexual allegory goes beyond the limits of fictional corporeal identity; it ignores its inherited inclinations, its biological imprint. The sexual aim and its object have become an abstract, dispersed constellation of attributes; it lacks the physiognomy and the consistency of a tangible, definite nature. In the representations of the loved object forged by the subject, there is only a collection of attributes which mirrors the corporeal dispersion of the sources of sexual excitation. Freud explicitly describes this power of the subject to dismember the representation of its own loved object, to obliterate the perception of the physical shape of the object, and to impose on it the psychical attributes exacted by desire:

Die psychische Wertschätzung, deren das Sexualobjekt als Wunschziel des Sexualtriebes teilhaftig wird, beschränkt sich in den seltensten Fällen auf dessen Genitalien, *sondern greift auf den ganzen Körper desselben über und hat die Tendenz, alle vom Sexualobjekt ausgehenden Sensationen mit einzubeziehen.* Die gleiche Überschätzung strahlt auf das psychische Gebiet aus und zeigt sich als logische Verblendung (Urteilsschwäche) angesichts der seelischen Leistungen und Vollkommenheiten des Sexualobjektes sowie als gläubige Gefügigkeit gegen die von letzterem ausgehenden Urteile. (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 61. Emphasis added)

From the study on aphasia onwards, Freud envisioned —following Stuart Mill's semantics— the mental image of the object as an open web of represented attributes.⁹ The consequences of this image were never explicitly and fully acknowledged by psychoanalytic theory. A marginal consequence of this denial of the implicit notion of

⁹It is only in the rarest instances that the psychical valuation that is set on the sexual object, as being the goal of the sexual instinct, stops short at its genitals. *The appreciation extends to the whole body of the sexual object and tends to involve every sensation derived from it.* The same overvaluation spreads over into the psychological sphere: the subject becomes, as it were, intellectually infatuated (that is, his powers of judgement are weakened) by the mental achievements and perfection of the sexual object and he submits to the latter's judgement with credulity. (FP, 7: 62)

meaning and reference which pervaded psychoanalytic concepts was the restoration of an ancient conviction in an intrinsic teleology of sexuality —reproduction. A peculiar interpretation of the evolutionist theory of sexual development led to the paradoxical conception of genitality as its culminating stage. The nature of sexuality remained obscurely, yet definitively tied to the implicit conceptions of word and meaning, of the exhaustion of expression and the limits of sense.

2. Intrinsic perversion

Nevertheless, Freud's allegory of sexuality assumes a contradictory, challenging task: to prove that perversion is a necessary and primordial condition of sexuality itself, that it has its origin at the primordial stages of sexuality, at the bottom of its evolution and remains as an intrinsic feature of its development. Freud's notion was to exhibit the inescapability of sexual aberration, the regularities of the accidental, contingent election of object, the legitimacy of transgression. However, this assumptions were to introduce an insurmountable contradiction in Freud's theoretical framework. Detached from reproduction and bound to it, the sexual body should respond to the unavoidable pressure that confines it to the memory of its own undefinable primordial experience; at that primordial stage, pleasure overflowed the limits imposed on it by the perceptual constraints of satisfaction; pleasure lacked a single object, or a privileged, definite, erogenic zone. The image of a 'scattered' sexuality aroused by multiple stimuli, emerging from indifferent sources, conflicts with the notion of a single, primal, irreplaceable object of love and source of satisfaction. However, the perverse patterns of sexuality, like the other stages of primal experience, would endure and prevail —according to Freud's assumption of the indestructibility of memory— in the deep layers of the psychical apparatus. Freud reveals the intrinsic cleavage of the notion of pleasure and its contradictory symbolic and perceptual constraints. Primal, perverse sexuality ought to be guided by a purely dynamic, natural principle, by the search for equilibrium determined by the precarious presence of energy, both fixed and errant, yet intrinsic to the flesh, always on the verge of irreversible dissipation. Freud's image

of sexuality conjoins these conflicting images in the thread of an undecipherable, yet illuminating allegory.

Indeed, Freud conceives perversion as an intrinsic, primordial stage of human sexuality. However, its symptoms are construed, identified and condemned according to the dominant patterns of current social criteria of what is normal behaviour. Modernity strove against signs of sexual perversion in the light of the aim of congruence between the finalities of nature —reproduction— and the mirage of a supreme stage of sexual evolution —genitality— which led to the enthronement of monogamy as the dominant structure of kinship in European society.

The social images of perversion flourished in the interstices of tolerated sexuality and its incongruous patterns. Its physiognomy and identity emerge from the social regimes which decipher sexuality in the visible signs of bodies and actions.

The perceptible signs of perversion display themselves as contradictory and unsettling pictures: the variety of perverse acts and their love objects —homosexuality, sadism, masochism, fetishism, etc— incite the violence of different patterns of social control and political dominance. However, this muddled, bewildering landscape of perversion gave rise, in turn, to certain taxonomy ruled by the social belief in the identifiable profile of souls —personality—, the social belief in the existence of the identity of the soul, construable from the visible traits and movements of the body, of the face, of the grimaces and gestures. Thus, the emergence of the modern conception of perversion may be thought of as a chapter in the history of the gaze;¹⁰ a gaze which *imagined* material bodies as transient morphologies able to exhibit the intimate physiognomies of souls. Bodies appeared as mere surfaces capable of giving ciphered clues to the identity of the subject. The *truth of the souls* came to light, offered itself to public recognition and to bureaucratic policies and controls.

The body turned into an eloquent parable of the identity of the self; it revealed itself as the public theatrical character of its own intimacy. The obscurity of the body was denied, disregarded and outweighed by the will to comprehend the nature of consciousness and the truth of the self; the body appeared as a pliable fabric which exposed the unuttered deviations and the inner features of personality.¹¹ The slightest

anomaly of the soul, any distortion of the aims and responses of love, any broken image of the self's own history, was expected to display itself as a peculiar gesture, as a grimace, as a visible distortion or stigma in facial expression and corporeal disposition; the contours of the body exhibited the signs both of a manifold history -anatomical, medical, moral, familiar, theological, social- and of the necessary nature -predisposition, inheritance, race- of every human being.

3. Malleable, inert bodies: rationalities of perversion

The writings of Sade were a brutal and disquieting announcement, on the fringes of the Enlightenment, of the new patterns of social identity, supported by the alliance between sexuality and the visible nature of the identity of the self, between the theatrical, fixed composition of bodies displayed as an inert incarnation of the crude and devastating imagination of reason, and the ephemeral objects of sexuality. It is the Sadian "demonstrative faculty" (Deleuze) that integrated in a common universe the visible, descripherable bodies, and their own debasement; perversion, in the Sadian scene, anticipated the radical historical mutation of both gaze and sexuality, as well as their mutual dependence. Sade's images of devastated, shattered, debased bodies enacted the scandal of the flourishing of a primordial pleasure, enlivened by perversions which responded to the unconditional law of the imperative of pleasure created by the sovereignty of reason. Lockean understanding was taken to delusive extremes. The pure, rational law, put forward by Sade, incited the subject to seek pleasure, indifferent to pain and crime: the domineering, meditated, reasonable principle of pleasure, explores, in Sade, the limits of the pleasure inherent in pain and destruction. It is possible to read in his texts the praise for the *jouissance*, which stems from the experience of the abstract connection of bodies, from the primacy of corporeal syntax in the violent suffocation of sexual avidity.¹² Acts and sexual objects were pictured by Sade as mere forms, density and strain; indifferent bodies turned into mere expression of the delusive congruence of the absolute morality of murder, governed by the exaltation of reason. Sade exposed the morphology of humiliation as the outcome of the imperative of pleasure derived from the unlimited power of reason.

4. Ethics of perversion: experience and action

The reflection on perversion in the nineteenth century showed the impact of the profound mutations of the conception of the subject that occurred during the Enlightenment. Freud's conception of perversion undoubtedly, if only vaguely, exhibits this metamorphosis of the sense of the gaze within the social boundaries which defined the nature, the expression and the cause of deviated sexual behavior. On the occasion of the Second Edition of the *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, Freud added, in 1910, this "incidental" note:

Die eingreifendste Unterschied zwischen den Liebesleben der Alten Welt und dem unsrigen liegt wohl darin, daß die Antike den Akzent auf den Trieb selbst, wir aber auf dessen Objekt verlegen. Die Alten feierten den Trieb und waren bereit, auch ein minderwertiges Objekt durch ihn zu adeln, während wir die Triebbetätigung an sich geringschätzen und sie nur durch die Vorzüge des Objekts entschuldigen lassen. (*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*, SA, 1905, V: 60, n.1)*

The awareness of the relevance of the object to the structure of the sexual development lead theoretical reflection to explore a vast series of resonances which involved sensation and feeling, consciousness and memory.¹³ Sensation appeared as the immediate relation of the object with the subjective conditions of cognition. In the sequel of the Enlightenment, as a resonance of Kantian Criticism, the conception of understanding, subdued by the compelling authority of sensibility, deprived experience of the essential, enlivening contribution of freedom, of the potency of reason likely to create conceptual and fictional realities. Ethical judgement, upheld by the sovereignty of conceptual imagination, was to remain sharply distinct from cognition. It was this subtle confinement of the ethical sphere to an autonomous realm, the logic of which was founded on a psychical basis clearly separated from cognition —ethics as free and non-intuitive, likely to build non-empirical, general rules of action—, that gave rise to

*The most striking difference between the erotic life of the antiquity and our own no doubt lies in the fact that the ancients laid the stress upon the instinct itself, whereas we emphasize its object. The ancients glorified the instinct and were prepared on its account to honour even an inferior object; while we despise the instinctual life in itself, and find excuses for it only in the merits of the object. (FP, 7: 61)

what Benjamin called the "bare, primitive, and self-evident experience" [*nackten primitiven und selbstverständlichen Erfahrung*] forged during the Enlightenment.¹⁴ This narrow conception of experience, also lacked a relevant comprehension of the sense of duration and meaningfulness, conceived as the outcome of convergent subjective and social processes, as well as of historical constraints; the ensuing emergence of new policies which rule ethical imagination gave rise to a notion of *effective action* which acquired a privileged position in the strategies of social control, and defined the frontiers of tolerable action. The notion of *efficient action* derived from a specific, prevailing notion of self and of the new rationality of social morals.

The notion of *effective action* represents the enthrone-ment of the alliance of a vigilant and controlled observation with institutional policies which confirmed, on a non-dogmatic basis (in Kant's sense), the boundaries of any possible conception of experience.¹⁵ Insight, self-control and self-discipline, the austere patterns of the subject's reflexive observation, the therapeutics of the soul, the utopias of the self-moulding of personality, of the self-knowledge and self-enquiry into an intimate transcendental truth, were all envisioned as intrinsic capacities of the subject. However, self-observation, freed from theological thought, showed the effect of the profound revolution in the modern conception of the gaze which merged the moral resonances of both religious devotion and positivist belief in the inexorable principles of efficient action as an essential feature of experience. The image of perversion incorporated the dictates of inner visibility and the profound subversion of the notion of object by the new epistemological foundation of the gaze.

Freud's conception of *experience* was neither made explicit nor expounded in his writings; it was neither an object of analysis nor of dedicated reflexion. Yet, he seems to have assumed a transcendental *capacity for experience* as a condition of the psychical process, a capacity which enabled the subject to acknowledge, signify and acquire a lasting memory of objects, actions, sensations, and the perceptions inherent in satisfaction [*Befriedigungserlebnis*] and pain [*Schmerzserlebnis*], which, in turn, informed the specific action.¹⁶

Reizaufhebung ist hier nur möglich durch einen Eingriff, welcher im Körperinnern die Q η '-Entbindung für eine Weile beseitigt, und dieser Eingriff erfordert eine Veränderung in der Außenwelt

(Nahrungszufuhr, Nähe des Sexual objektes), welche als *spezifische Aktion* nur auf bestimmten Wegen erfolgen kann. Der menschliche Organismus ist zunächst unfähig, die spezifische Aktion herbeizuführen. Sie erfolgt durch fremde Hilfe, indem durch die Abfuhr auf dem Wege der inneren Veränderung ein erfahrenes Individuum auf den Zustand des Kindes aufmerksam gemacht [wird]. Diese Abfuhrbahn gewinnt so die höchst wichtige Sekundärfunktion der Verständigung, und die anfängliche Hilflosigkeit des Menschen ist die Urquelle aller moralischen Motive. (*Entwurf einer Psychologie*, GW, 1895, Nachtragsband: 410)*

The notion of *experience*, implied in Freud's theoretical developments, led him to distinguish in it two significant phases: a *motionless phase* dominated by the reflexive perception of feelings and sensations, which may unleash mechanical reflex action or aimless enegeitical discharges —i.e. the scream in the early experience of pain—, in which the subject is immersed in its own sensations and resorts to the undifferentiated relief of its inner tension; the other is a reflexive phase, which involves the subject's awareness of specific objects and the sensations they arouse, the enlivening —conscious or unconscious— of memories, of habits, of compulsive actions, of associated representations and thoughts which trigger the search for satisfaction and a specific impulse to discharge, oriented and symbolically governed. The notion of experience thus implies the emergence of a complex two-phase structure of memory: a first moment of solipsistic memory, dominated by the force of sensations and the sheer presence of pain, hampered by the failed effort to remove excitation; a moment of isolated memory of pain closed upon itself and transformed into a mere tension, a barren, objectless expectation likely to unfetter an aimless reaction against pain, a void, sheer discharge of energy which achieves an unsatisfying, yet relieving dissipation of pressure, the ephemeral extinction of the pain, which merges in memory with the looming, harmful and relieving object into a single web of memories. This is the

*The removal of the stimulus is only made possible here by an intervention which for the time being gets rid of the release of Q η ' in the interior of the body; and this intervention calls for an attention in the external world (supply of nourishment, proximity of the sexual object) which, as a *specific action*, can only be brought about in definite ways. At first the human organism is incapable of bringing about the specific action. It takes place by *extraneous help*, when the attention of an experienced person is drawn to the child's state by discharge along the path of internal change. In this way this path of discharge acquires a secondary function of the highest importance, that of *communication*, and the initial helplessness of human beings is the *primal source* of the *moral motives*. (SE, 1895, I: 318)

moment at which the primordial shadow of the object emerges, related to the suspension and the arousal of pain. The second moment of experience is properly informed by the appearance of this primal sensation of relief, the germ of the experience of satisfaction. Experience of pain and experience of satisfaction reveal not only the presence of a non-symbolic, non-figurative, mute dimension of experience related to pain, dominated by the inner rhythms of the intensities of the body, but also another facet of experience, dominated by the expansion of space and time, by a rhythmic symbolic movement defined by perceived objects and the self-perception of definite actions. This double nature of experience seems to underlie the primordial memory of the object and inhabit the origin of desire. Consequently, the manifold structure of experience also shapes the primal memory of satisfaction.

Wenn das hilfreiche Individuum die Arbeit der spezifischen Aktion in der Außenwelt für das hilflose geleistet hat, so ist dieses durch reflektorische Einrichtungen imstande, die zur endogenen Reizaufhebung nötige Leistung in seinem Körperinnen ohne weiteres zu vollziehen. Das Ganze stellt dann ein Befriedigungserlebnis dar. (*Entwurf eines Psychologie*, GW, 1895, Nachtragsband: 411)*

However, sexuality —thought of as the allegory of a complex specific charge and discharge of energy caused by the symbolic constraints it itself has informed—, appears as an effect of this duality of the experience founded on the primal appearance of pain. The psychical dimension of sexuality can be seen as the tacit sense of the fictional relation of the subject to the primal object, together with the quality of this relation —activity and passivity— and the memory of the outcome of the specific action. It suggests a immanent potential core of the sense of subjectivity. Sexuality appears as the allegory of an experience which has the paradoxical aim of achieving a sudden intensifying of sensation to ensure its obliteration; the longing for a transient inertness which involves a frenzied agitation; sexuality enacts the paradoxical sense of the achievement of the extinction of inner stimuli, of the craving for absolute death, and of the creation of the subject's symbolic identity. Sexuality names the veiled, singular

*When the helpful person has performed the work of the specific action in the external world for the helpless one, the latter is in the position, by means of reflex contrivances, immediately to carry out in the interior of his body the activity necessary for removing the endogenous stimulus. The total event then constitutes an *experience of satisfaction* (SE, 1895, I: 318)

paradox, which links the subject's death with the emergence of its own identity. Thus, what is involved in Freud's conception of sexuality, and what we name its allegory, involves the fictions, metaphors and conjectures of paradoxical aims aroused by the experience of pain, the ambivalent memory of the harmful but satisfying object, the eclipse of the body, the dismemberment and isolation of the bodily sources of excitations, also the intricate and expanded web of flows of energy, the exacerbation of reflexive thought in experience, the discordant temporality of psychical and physical process, as well as the lavishness of memories and representations of objects and desire aroused by manifold though convergent bodily and psychical processes.

Perversion, in Freud's text, exhibits this vast and conflicting heterogeneity of representations, the restless mutation and its exasperated manifestations —the symptomatology—, the obscure displacement and disappearance of the inner frontiers of subjectivity. Thus, perversion is not only defined, as Freud seems to have done in his early writings, by its "deviated" election of non-sexual objects likely to provide the sought sexual satisfaction; it is not only a kind of sexuality dominated by primitive patterns of object election, nor a fixation of the subject's desire at early stages of the development of the corporeal and symbolic schemes; it is not only a deferred evolution of the symbolic construction of the aims and objects of desire nor the dissipation of corporeal frontiers and a regressive restoration of a infantile undifferentiated neutral surface of bodily excitation. Perversions allow the convergence of all these features and processes; in addition, perversion might be thought of as the metaphorical dissipation of the physiognomy of the object and the rarefying of the aims of the subject, of corporeal and psychical temporalities. Perversion reveals itself to be the palimpsest of the corporeal and symbolic schemes of the subject's identity. Freud's notion of perversion implies the radical, discordant coexistence of diverging teleologies in the allegory of sexuality.

The notion of *inversion*, which appears at the beginning the first of the *Drei Abhandlungen* (1908), alludes to the convergence of these *agonistic* teleologies: perversion appears as absolutely determined by the nature, and shape of its object, and is, simultaneously, indifferent to it. Not only the *object* of the perverse act, but the *act* itself is informed by this agonistic tension: the search for satisfaction compels sexuality

to encroach upon the corporeal and symbolic limits of the subject's identity.

Moreover, the disquieting, crude features of perversion reveal themselves in the contrast between sadism and masochism. These manifestations of perverse action are not only foreign to the teleology of nature. Paradoxically enough, sexuality seems to turn away from satisfaction only to find it in pain: and yet, what impulses the perverse act does not seem to be the compulsion to forsake the wish for satisfaction and the achievement of pleasure, but the pressure to find satisfaction at the edge of dissatisfaction itself. In one of his most puzzling contributions to his late theory, his unsettling text about masochism, *Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus* (1924), Freud develops an unprecedented taxonomy which expounds the three distinct kinds and structures of masochism. He recognizes erotogenic —biological—, feminine and moral masochism. However, biological, feminine and moral masochism, as described in Freud's text, are not mutually exclusive expressions of deviated sexuality. Masochism involves complex entangled trends of distinct processes of sexuality, every one of which involves an inherent, yet distinct experience of pain. In his search for pleasure, the subject is driven to explore the inner dimension of its own experience of pleasure. In erotogenic masochism the dominating resource of pleasure is the uncertain experience of the *Schmerzlust*, the "pain of pleasure". This intricate paradox of the experience of pleasure reveals another obscure relation between the physical and psychical forces:

Der erstere, der erogene Masochismus, die Schmerzlust, liegt auch den beiden anderen Formen zugrunde, er ist *biologisch und konstitutionell zu begründen*, bleibt unverständlich, wenn man sich nicht zu einigen Annahmen über ganz dunkle Verhältnisse entschließt. (*Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus*, SA, 1924, III: 345)*

The three forms of masochism coexist; indeed, biological masochism, Freud posits, is intrinsic in the biological dimension of subjectivity itself. The manifold manifestations of masochism involve the concurrence of primordial experience, which manifests itself in different conditions, memories and feelings of pain, different images of the source

*The first, the erotogenic masochism —pleasure in pain— lies at the bottom of the other two forms as well. Its basis must be sought along biological and constitutional lines and it remains incomprehensible unless one decides to make certain assumptions about matters that are extremely obscure. (FP, 11: 416)

of suffering and different means of achieving pleasure. Yet, after having remarked the manifold nature of masochism and the unresolved, enigmatic condition of the pain which aroused the distinct experiences of pleasure, Freud stressed the necessary parallelism, the simultaneity of the different kind of experiences of pain.

In spite of the fact that the nature of masochism is rooted, Freud suggests, in biological ground, its resonances remain obscure. Not only does the specific dynamics of its sources, but also its changing and mimetic manifestations are unaccountable: erotogenic masochism, the deep constitutional experience is this inextricable ambiguity of the "pleasure of pain" [*Schmerzlust*], involves a paradoxical, dynamic outcome of sexuality: the mounting of the inner tension, the increase in inner energy, the intensification of pain inherent in the discharge of energy —and the achievement of satisfaction.

Pontalis has remarked the exceptional condition of this complex notion of the "pleasure of pain" [*Schmerzlust*]. Even its unusual and ambiguous linguistic expression reveals the intricate alliance, the enigmatic entanglement of temporalities inherent in both contrasting, apparently antagonistic processes, at the opposing edges of the range of sensations.¹⁷ Pleasure takes hold of the primal experience of pain [*Schmerz*]. This turning back of pleasure does not imply necessarily the simultaneity of both processes and the coexistence of incomparable objects and experiences; rather, it can also allude to an unfolding of a series of contrasting sensations, an overlaying of the rhythms, of the mounting and decay of simultaneous psychical processes which constitute the subject's experience. A settling of distinct representations, a depth of memories and tokens associated with the different process, the fusion of temporalities and the corporeal dispersion of sexuality, determine the spectrum of the psychical characteristics of perversion.

Moreover, sadism *and* masochism¹⁸ appear as particularly inconsistent with Freud's general classification of perversions. Indeed, sadism and masochism form a specific class formally comprised within the disturbance showing a "fixation of preliminary sexual aims" [*fixierung von vorläufigen Sexualzielen*] (emphasis added), not explicitly expounded in Freud's text. In fact, these perversions are not to be confounded with the disturbance provoked only by an abnormal development of the

subjective agencies, or with diseases provoked by the subject's arrest at a non-terminal stage along the path towards the achievement of the sexual end. Sadism and masochism both seem to reach satisfaction by condensing in a partial experience the whole essential and constitutive dimension of the allegory of sexuality itself. Furthermore, Freud's conception of biological —erotogenic— masochism, which involves a "natural" pain essentially ingrained in the subject's flesh, stresses masochism's endless metamorphosis, its obstinate masquerade, the allegorization of sexuality:

Der erogene Masochismus macht alle Entwicklungsphasen der Libido mit und entnimmt ihnen seine wechselnden psychischen Umkleidungen. (*Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus*, SA, 1924, III: 348)*

IV. Freud's allegories of pain: intensity and secrecy

1. Freud's hesitations at the conception of pain

a. The transformation of the ethical principle in Freud's economic explanation

In a letter to his friend Silberstein, written on 23 October 1874, Freud gives an account of his attendance at a course given by Brentano: ¹⁹

Brentano liest zwei Kollegien, Mittwoch und Samstag abends ausgewählte metaphysische Fragen und Freitag abends eine Schrift von Mill über das Nützlichkeitsprinzip, die wir regelmäßiger besuchen. Bei Brentano erinnere ich mich, daß Du die Absicht hattest, den Fechner zu hören, und ersuche Dich, mir zu schreiben, was und wie er vorträgt."

Brentano's lessons on Mill's philosophy, and especially his reflections on the *utility principle*, left perhaps a deeper impression on the young Freud than is currently

*Erotogetic masochism accompanies the libido through all its developmental phases and derives from them its changing psychical coatings. (FP, 11: 419)

¹⁹Brentano gives two seminars, Wednesday and Saturday afternoons on selected metaphysical problems; Friday afternoon the seminar deals with Mill's paper on the principle of utility, and this we attend regularly. Thinking about Brentano, I remember you had the intention to go to hear Fechner and I beg you to write me about what he deals with and how he teaches. (My translation).

admitted. Mill himself had written in the brief and outstanding book, *Utilitarianism*, probably well known to Freud:

Those who know anything about the matter are aware that every writer, from Epicurus to Bentham, who maintained the theory of utility, meant by it, not something to be contradistinguished from pleasure, but pleasure itself, together with the exemption of pain.²⁰

Mill's idea that the strong relation between the *utility principle* and the *pleasure principle* must rule moral behaviour, translated by Freud into psychological and physiological metaphors of energy, adumbrated and perhaps even engendered, one of the lasting, meaningful contributions of Freud's *metapsychology*. A year and a half after the lessons, Freud began to work, at the request of Brentano, on the German translation of the twelfth volume of Mill's *Complete Works* and, in particular, on Mill's essay on Plato. Meanwhile he simultaneously read some of Fechner's articles and essays.²¹ The empiricist heritage of Freud was a strange fusion of the strong speculative views of physiology and the positivist ethical conjectures of English philosophy. Freud might be counted among those thinkers, in the Western philosophical tradition, who inherited and developed Locke's exploration of a consciousness governed by the "pleasure principle".²²

Freud's conception of pleasure seeks to condense in a single notion two facets of the forces which inform the subject's structure: the capacity of energy to become fixed in a definite object, and the specific though enigmatic representational nature of psychological energy. The resonance of Mill's ethical conception of pleasure is perceptible in Freud's scheme of the energy discharge, reformulated in the light of Fechner's thermodynamic-based images of psychological behavior, and of a particular notion of the nervous reflex.²³ Physiological laws engender in the subject a silent history, that of the transformation of the biological foundations of pain into the origins of morality. However, the realm of ethics and the compelling regularities of desire go beyond the direct determination of biological process, yet they largely transform the primordial structures of experience; the experience of pain abides in the core of the unfolding and compulsive search for satisfaction. The radical transformation of a biological predisposition into a moral experience has been condensed by Freud in a brief

statement: "Everything that we know of pain fits in with this. The nervous system has the most decided inclination to a flight from pain". [Alles was wir vom Schmerz wissen, stimmt hiezu. Das Nervensystem hat die entschiedenste Neigung zur *Schmerzflucht*. (*Entwurf einer Psychologie*, GW, 1895, Nachtragsband : 399)]. Thus, Freud's conception of ethics emerges from the conflict between two metaphors: on the one hand, the conception of pleasure as a moral, purely symbolical issue, and on the other, the metaphor of pleasure as the outcome of a self-perception of an homeostatic physiological structure, which regulates the subject's bodily structures and preserves the individual.

A singular conception of the subject's perception of pleasure and unpleasure has its source in this peculiar amalgam of ethics and physiology; in a subtle contortion of the doctrine of utilitarianism and the allegorical resonances of a thermodynamic model of self-regulated systems. Freud's concept of pleasure and unpleasure became the unformulated, yet real foundation of a conflicting hermeneutic of subjectivity. Freud's elusive but nonetheless uncompromising concern with ethics should become evident in several outstanding although episodic theoretical proposals and reflections: ethics appears either as a social aspect of repression, or as a subjective condition of the symbolic interchange; it appears either as the outcome of a psychical conflict, or as the result of a precarious resonance of a primal, potential dialogue discontinuously sustained between the subject and object in its various relations. Ethics seems to emerge either from the violence of the ideal engendered in the relation to the loved figures and subtly incorporated as an inner boundary of action, or as a fateful outcome of the conditions imposed on the subject by the experience of satisfaction; ethics also seems to have an origin either in the unavoidable restraint of satisfaction, imposed by the silent, threatening absence of the primal satisfying object, or in the unfathomable logic of the presence and the demands of the loved object.

When Freud strives to explain the singular nature of *repression*, to define the features of the particular representations which yield to it, two factors appear to be the most relevant: the unavoidable pain aroused in the subject by the ruses of hallucinatory satisfaction, and the subject's acknowledgement of the defeat of the specific action which should have led to satisfaction by "the bitter experience of life" [*eigne bittere*

Lebenserfahrung].

At a certain moment, late in his work, Freud envisages ethics as the visible sequel of super-ego, which is envisaged, in turn, as the consequence of a mnemonic association of the acoustic matter of the words pronounced by those loved, domineering figures; also, ethics arises from the remains of the wreck of the Œdipic phase. The Humean puzzle of the foundations of ethical truth reappears between the lines of the Freudian text, when he traces the origins and seeks to expound the nature of super-ego. Freud then conceives the foundation of ethics to be the lasting inscription of the residues of spoken words the force of which is strengthened by the intense, conflicting affections which concurred to produce the decline of the Œdipus complex.

In Freud's early theoretical formulation of the hierarchy of psychical principles, his notion of the experience of pain precedes and informs his image of the experience of satisfaction; this seeming transposition of what will become in later works the uncontested primacy of the Pleasure Principle, maintains, however, the image of pain as the definite and essential trace which will determine the sequel of the primal experience of satisfaction. However, the experience of pain does not only reduce itself to the memory of a sensation and of the foreign object associated with it; it embodies also the trace of the motor reactions unleashed by the perception of the potential appearance of the painful agent. The implicit conception of the relation between memory and pain anticipates the later appearance of the notion of repression. Pain embodies thus a complex, condensed universe of memories —of sensations, of agents and of actions— which appear as the primary model [*Vorbild*] and also the first example [*erste Beispiel*] of psychical repression. Nevertheless, as if by negative metamorphosis, the system appears as exclusively bound to the satisfaction of desire.

Freud's early work reveals two stages of development regarding the specific relevance of pain in his theoretical scheme. In the first, the essential principle which governs the psychical life is the Unpleasure Principle. In *Die Traumdeutung* he still sustains the primacy of this Unpleasure Principle as the chief condition which determines the psychical system, and he makes of the avoidance of unpleasure the aim which defines repression:

Es ergibt sich nun eine interessante Gedankenfolge, wenn man die Beziehungen dieser Abflußhemmung durch das zweite System zur Regulierung durch das Unlustprinzip ins Auge faßt. [...] wird im primären Apparat die Neigung bestehen, dies peinliche Erinnerungsbild sofort, wenn es irgendwie geweckt wird, wieder zu verlassen, weil ja das Überfließen seiner Erregung auf die Wahrnehmung Unlust hervorrufen würde (genauer: hervorzurufen beginnt). Die Abwendung von der Erinnerung, die nur eine Wiederholung der einstigen Flucht vor der Wahrnehmung ist, wird auch dadurch erleichtert, daß die Erinnerung nicht wie die Wahrnehmung genug Qualität besitzt, um das Bewußtsein zu erregen und hierdurch neue Besetzung an sich zu ziehen. Diese mühelos und regelmäßig erfolgende Abwendung des psychischen Vorgangs von der Erinnerung des einst Peinlichen gibt uns das Vorbild und das erste Beispiel der psychischen Verdrängung. (*Die Traumdeutung*, SA, 1900, I: 569)*

Almost immediately after the crucial theoretical construction of the *Traumdeutung*, Freud's works clearly exhibit hesitations, significant terminological shiftings, a decay of the original emphasis given to the unpleasure principle as a means of explanation. In the *Formulierungen über der zwei Prinzipien des Psychischen Geschehens*, Freud postulates an ambiguous *Pleasure-Unpleasure Principle*. The final election of the term *Pleasure Principle* seems a natural evolution, a mere semantic progression, a conceptual contingency engendered by the simple shift of terms. The notion of the *unpleasure principle* was uprooted from his work without further commentary. Freud's theoretical framework seemed untouched by this apparently innocuous, terminological choice.

Against the conventional view which considers this "terminological" change a purely stylistic or conventional decision,²⁴ it is necessary to recall that for this shifting to be meaningless, it should have satisfied at least a necessary condition: both categories must stand as fairly well defined synonyms; they must be defined as distinct names of identical processes. Nevertheless, Freud insistently stressed their subtle

*Some interesting reflections follow if we consider the relations between this inhibition upon discharge exercised by the second system and the regulation effected by the unpleasure principle. [...] there will be an inclination in the primitive apparatus to drop the distressing mnemonic image immediately, if anything happens to revive it, for the very reason that if its excitation were to overflow into perception it would provoke unpleasure (or, more precisely would begin to provoke it). The avoidance of the memory, which is no more than a repetition of the previous flight from the perception, is also facilitated by the fact that the memory, unlike the perception, does not possess enough quality to excite consciousness and thus to attract fresh cathexis to itself. This effortless and regular avoidance by the psychological process of the memory of anything that had once been distressing affords us the prototype and first example of psychical repression. (FP, 4: 759)

contrariety, the singularity of each of them, and their intricate, obscure relationship. A few years after the almost stealthy shift between the two "terms", in *Trieb und Tribschicksale*, Freud risks a noteworthy remark:

die Unlustempfindung mit Steigerung, die Lustempfindung mit Herabsetzung des Reizes zu tun hat. Die weitgehende Unbestimmtheit dieser Annahme wollen wir aber sorgfältig festhalten, bis es uns etwa gelingt, die Art der Beziehung zwischen Lust-Unlust und den Schwankungen der auf das Seelenleben wirkenden Reizgrößen zu erraten. Es sind gewiß sehr mannigfache und nicht sehr einfache solcher Beziehungen möglich. (*Trieb und Tribschicksale*, SA, 1915, III: 85)*

Freud did not only contemplate this "positive" definition of pleasure and unpleasure as indeterminate; he admitted the existence of a deeper condition of the comprehension of this "quantitative" conception of the opposition between pleasure and unpleasure: the elucidation of a *qualitative* factor involved in the fluctuations of intensity. Freud was to show a hesitant attitude towards his primordial quantitative definition of pleasure. In the well known Chapter VII of the *Traumdeutung*, Freud comments, in a seemingly ironic—even rhetorical—rapture of self-criticism:

Wir hatten uns in die Fiktion eines primitiven psychischen Apparats vertieft, dessen Arbeit durch das Bestreben geregelt wird, Anhäufung von Erregung zu vermeiden und sich möglichst erregungslos zu erhalten. Er war darum nach dem Schema eines Reflexapparats gebaut; die Motilität, zunächst der Weg zur inneren Veränderung des Körpers, war die ihm zu Gebote stehende Abfuhrbahn. (*Die Traumdeutung*, SA, 1900, III: 568)**

However, this "fiction of a primitive apparatus" proved to be the spinal cord of psychoanalytic thought. Freud, in fact, was never able to give it up.

Furthermore, this fictional, "undetermined" definition became, in a simple but compelling form, the crucial reference for the economic conception of desire, as well

*unpleasurable feelings are connected with an increase and pleasurable feelings with a decrease of stimulus. We will however, carefully preserve this assumption in its present highly indefinite form, until we succeed, if that is possible, in discovering what sort of relation exists between pleasure and unpleasure, on the one hand, and fluctuations in the amounts of stimulus affecting mental life, on the other. It is certain that many various relations of this kind, and not very simple ones, are possible. (FP, 11: 117)

**We have already explored the fiction of a primitive psychical apparatus whose activities are regulated by an effort to avoid an accumulation of excitation and to maintain itself so far as possible without excitation. For that reason it is built upon the plan of a reflex apparatus. The power of movement, which is in the first instance a means of bringing about internal alterations in its body, is at its disposal as the path to discharge. (FP, 4: 756)

as for the complex, late reflections on the *death instinct* and its relation to the second theory of subjectivity with its ponderous, epistemological consequences.

Yet the foresaking of the *unpleasure principle* uncovers Freud's ambivalent approach to pain. Pain reveals itself, from the psychoanalytical point of view—from the pre-psychoanalytic works of Freud until the last ones—, as one of the fundamental and yet unattainable concepts of the whole thematic constellation of psychoanalysis. At several crucial moments in his reflection, Freud's endeavour to build the theoretical framework of his thought was confronted with the need to recognize the limits of psychoanalytic thought regarding pain. In one of his his last meaningful contributions to psychoanalytic theory—as Freud himself confessed in his 1935 addendum to his *An Autobiographical Study* (1925)²⁵— Freud declares again his perplexity when confronted with the obscure nature of pain:

Wann macht die Trennung vom Objekt Angst, wann Trauer und wann vielleicht nur Schmerz?
Sagen wir es gleich, es ist keine Aussicht vorhanden, Antworten auf diese Frage zu geben. Wir werden uns dabei bescheiden, einige Abgrenzungen und einige Andeutungen zu finden. (*Hemmung, Symptom und Angst*, SA, VI, 1926: 306. Stress added).²⁶

Only paragraphs after he had written this meaningful confession, when confronting again the need to elucidate the nature of pain, Freud openly confesses: "we know very little about pain either" [*Auch von Schmerz wissen wir sehr wenig*]. And without further hesitation, Freud continues to expose the main elements of his original attempt to explain the mechanisms which lie in the core of painful sensations. However, a deeply rooted, albeit frail vision of the nature of pain was an early acquisition, thoroughly developed in the unpublished papers of the *Entwurf*, back in 1895. And yet, in 1926, date of the publication of *Hemmung, Symptom und Angst*—nearly thirty years had already passed since the first consistent attempt to explain the experience of pain—, Freud still cannot overcome this enigmatic, theoretical barrier. He was compelled to insist on it as unaccountable, as an impregnable shelter of the potencies of the soul. In

²⁶When does separating from an object produce mourning and when does it produce, it may be, only pain? Let me say at once that *there is no prospect of insight of answering these questions*. We must content ourselves with drawing certain distinctions and adumbrating certain possibilities. (FP, 10: 330)

a fundamental passage in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920), after an exacting effort to clarify the nature of pain, he finally surrenders. Once more, he resorts to his reiterated, invariant explanation: pain results from the piercing stimulus which burst on the subject's protecting barriers, shattering them. Pain is only the experience of this shattering. Every time he encountered the presence of pain, he was compelled to repeat almost word by word the same original explanation.

From this obstinate, invariant vision emerges Freud's conception of the violence of pain. Pain appeared always as the unbearable experience of brutal amount of energy that penetrates the membranes of the organism and provoke this staggering, oppressive excitation. However, the main feature of the painful eruption of energy —as conceived by Freud— was not its extreme intensity: but the crucial psychological transformation brought about by pain. Pain turns the perception of a foreign agent into a sensation which springs from inner sources, and incorporates the image of an exterior agent which can be removed or evaded, turning it into an inescapable inner, overwhelming sensation. This inversion dissolves the subject's boundaries: pain dissipates the sharp limits between the inner and the outer spheres of the subject's identity. This incipient conception of pain was to remain undeveloped. Freud's failure to construct a consistent theoretical approach to pain persist as a significant feature of psychoanalysis.

Nevertheless, pain acquired, at different stages of Freud's writings, an uneven relevance to the explanation of psychological processes. Despite its central role as a theoretical enigma in the psychoanalytic conception, the notion of pain always remained extraneous to the Freudian corpus. Pain appeared as a paradoxical decisive yet disregarded theoretical axiom, a crucial yet unfathomable core of the theory. This fundamental but displaced topic adumbrates the limits of Freud's conception. The marginal position of pain in Freud's writings seems to mirror the significance of pain in the subject's experience and perhaps even in Freud's own history.²⁶

Pain, Freud suggests, exerts an immense, paralyzing power over the psychological processes. A Baroque constellation of allegorical spaces and allegorical images of energy appears ceaselessly in Freud's writing. He seems to make no progress in the theoretical approach to pain. His reiterative explanation faces a challenge. In a crucial moment of his theoretical work, Freud cannot avoid a moving and meaningful

confession:

Die Unbestimmtheit all unser Erörterungen, die wir metapsychologische heißen, rührt natürlich daher, daß wir nichts über die Natur des Erregungsvorganges in den Elementen der psychischen Systeme wissen und uns zu keiner Annahme darüber berechtigt fühlen. So operiert wir also stets mit einem großen X, welches wir in jede neue Formel mit hinübernehmen. (*Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, SA, 1920, III: 240. Emphasis added)

Yet the open recognition of a hollowness at the core of psychoanalytic theory, this "large X" as the only explanation of the excitatory process—a fundamental factor in the causal scheme of psychoanalysis—is neither isolated nor exceptional. When Freud confronts the theme of pain, he modifies his rhythm of writing, his text branches and other related—or even unrelated—passages and references, even veiled self-quotations, intrude upon Freud's theoretical exposition. His narration frequently leads to a unfulfillable promise of a future elucidation, which *suspends* the text's own impulse. In *Trauer und Melancholie* (1917), when the reflection approached a crucial point at which the comprehension of pain seems to be essential to the understanding of the coming discussion about mourning, the text abruptly swerves from the main stream of arguments. He did not only defer the discussion of pain, but also *slighted* the urgency of the explanation of mourning. However, Freud openly acknowledged that mourning remains unaccountable without a clear comprehension of pain.

Wir werden auch den Vergleich gutheißen, der die Stimmung der Trauer eigne 'schmerzliche' nennt. Seine Berechtigung wird uns wahrscheinlich einleuchten, wenn wir imstande sind, den Schmerz ökonomische zu charakterisieren. (*Trauer und Melancholie*, SA, 1917, III: 198)

This promised, thorough explanation of pain, never came. The text comes to an unexpected end, a definitive fogging of the argumentation closed by the reiterated,

The indefiniteness of all our discussions on what we describe as metapsychology is of course due to the fact that we know nothing of the nature of the excitatory process that takes place in the elements of the psychological systems, and that we do not feel justified in framing any hypothesis on the subject. We are consequently operating all the time with a large unknown factor [großen X], which we are obliged to carry over into every new formula. (FP, 11: 302)

We should regard it as an appropriate comparison, too, to call the mood of mourning a 'painful' one. We shall probably see the justification for this when we are in a position to give a characterization of the economics of pain. (FP, 11: 252)

uncertain promise of a future illumination.²⁷ Freud's theoretical thought is haunted by the image of future elucidation: sudden, unexpected silences, stresses, shiftings of sense, a sort of textual punctuation informs his text, disturbing it, exhibiting its failures, its unresolved ends, the insurmountable silence that pervades his own whole discourse and obscures it.

The textual development of Freud's reflection in *Die Verdrängung* (1915) exhibits this critical punctuation, signaling the limits imposed by pain on the psychoanalytic comprehension of the unconscious. If the understanding of repression stands as a capital aim of psychoanalytic thought, then the abrupt extinction of sense brought about by pain illuminates one of its unnoticed facets. Freud, in *Die Verdrängung*, adds to his vision of pain as the breaking of the subject's allegorical, inner boundaries, a disquieting remark: pain not only informs subjectivity; it also foreshadows the extinction of being; the eclipse and dissipation of sense provoked by the overwhelming invasion of a flood of energy shatters the symbolic forms that brace the subject's own identity; pain not only links the primal experience of the origins of desire with the unutterable experience of the radical destruction of sense; it also adumbrates absolute death.

Pain, Freud suggests, has also the features of a transitional, inner force, at the boundaries of psychical and physical processes; paradoxically, it corresponds to an experience of the disappearance of sense, and yet has the dual structure of representation. It relates a physical quantity with the universe of consciousness, with a constellation of associated psychical images, perceptions and motor responses; pain thus resembles instinct; Freud conceives pain, like instinct (drive) as an intrinsic physical force which informs the symbolic response of the subject, which cannot be eluded and, in turn, yields to symbolic patterns. Freud risks a unsettling simile: pain as a pseudoinstinct [*Pseudotrieb*].

Wir können zur besseren Abgrenzung der Verdrängung einige andere Trieb-situationen in Erörterung ziehen. Es kann vorkommen, daß sich ein äußerer Reiz, z.B. dadurch, daß er ein Organ anrührt und zerstört, verinnerlicht, und so eine neue Quelle beständiger Erregung und Spannungsvermehrung ergibt. Er erwirbt damit eine weitgehende Ähnlichkeit mit einem Trieb. Wir wissen, daß wir diesen Fall als Schmerz empfinden. Das Ziel dieses Pseudotriebes ist aber nur das Aufhören der Organveränderung und

der mit ihr verbunden Unlust. Andere, direkte Lust kann aus dem Aufhören des Schmerz nicht gewonnen werden. Der Schmerz ist imperativ; er unterliegt nur noch der Einwirkung einer toxischen Aufhebung und der Beeinflussung durch psychische Ablenkung. Der Fall des Schmerz ist zu wenig durchsichtig, um etwas für unsere Absicht zu leisten. (*Die Verdrängung*, SA, 1914, III: 108. Emphasis added).⁷

His symptomatic hesitation at the very opening of the reflection suggests not only a reticence regarding the presence of pain, but an open exhibition of its negative presence in his theoretical universe. The notion of pain is sharply distinguished by Freud from that of unpleasure; however, both its "intermediate" character which brings it close to the drive [*Trieb*], and its paradoxical destruction of the symbolic resources of consciousness, assigns to it an indefinite place in psychoanalytic reflexion: thus, pain remains in an uncertain, extraterritorial position; it does not even acquire the mythical condition of drive [*Trieb*]. Moreover, the "opacity" [*wenig durchsichtig*] of pain (Freud) forced Freudian reflexion, to an unforeseeable acknowledgement of the fragility of the notion of drive [*Trieb*]. The theoretical hesitations about pain threatened the crucial notion of drive.

The analogy between drive [*Trieb*] and pain [*Schmerz*], also illuminates the features which separate them in Freud's text. While he openly asserts the opacity of pain, the inaccessibility of drive remained an elusive topic, seldom mentioned, only partially unveiled by the equivocal and ephemeral prefix, by the meaningful token [*Pseudo*], which will never reappear, in Freud's work, in relation to drive [*Trieb*]. This perturbing particle suggests simulation, displacement, distortion of identity; perhaps, even a partial convergence, but it also hints at the metaphoric relation between the two terms that confers a strange eloquence on the allegory of pain.

Paradoxically, the prefix, far from casting some light upon the notion of pain, extends over the meaning of drive the shadows of the enigma of pain. Despite the

⁷In order to better delimit repression, let us discuss some other instinctual situations. It may happen that an external stimulus becomes internalized—for example, by eating into and destroying some bodily organ—so that a new source of constant excitation and increase of tension arises. The stimulus thereby acquires a far-reaching similarity to an instinct. We know that a case of this sort is experienced by us as pain. The aim of this pseudo-instinct, however, is simply the cessation of the change in the organ and of the unpleasure accompanying it. There is no other direct pleasure to be attained by cessation of pain. Further, pain is imperative; the only thing to which it can yield are removal by some toxic agent or the influence of mental distraction. The case of pain is too obscure to give us any help in our purpose. (FP, 11: 145-146)

ambiguity of the undetermined simile, of the elusive allegorical relation between pain and instinct, the prefix brings to light some fundamental features of the notion of pain. This morphological token —*pseudo*— both evinces and conceals the relevance of pain to the structure of subjectivity.

As we have previously remarked,²⁸ Freud's conviction of the obscure, mythical, yet illuminating condition of the drive, seems to have impregnated also his conception of pain.

The elusiveness of *Trieb*, but also its illuminating power, evidences the relevance of Freud's conception of pain and of its fictional expression to the psychoanalytical enterprise. Moreover, his acknowledgement of the fictional, mythical nature of the notion of drive, which upholds the entire framework of psychoanalysis, reveals the poignancy and opaqueness of Freud's theory of representation. It also exhibits the deep silence which underlies psychoanalytic theory, and its compelling, challenging sense built by the proliferating unfolding of allegorical insights.

The resonance of the concept of "myth" not only signals the cardinal concept of [*Trieb*], it also pervades Freud's own writing impulse: he seems to be aware of the mythical nature of the discourse of psychoanalysis. The mythology of drive progressively rarefies itself as Freud incorporates in his theoretical view the violent, hollow allegorical treatment of pain. Pain joins this atmosphere of myth, yet it disturbs the theoretical effort of psychoanalysis: the dynamic model of Freudian thought seems to yield to the mythopoeic impulse which stems from the primordial psychoanalytic allegories of pain. This allegorical proximity of drive and pain exhibit the reticent, mystic inclination of psychoanalytic thought. Pontalis, in a remarkable meditation on Freud's unwillingness to expound the nature of psychical pain, formulates explicitly the limits of psychoanalytic reflection. The mere appearance of pain on the horizon of reflection arouses in Freud a peculiar anxiety:

une vague crainte qu'une plaine reconnaissance de la douleur ne tourne à la apologétique de celle-ci, à una valorisation excessive d'un pur éprouvé, impensable et indicible, à quelque religion salvatrice par l'agonie. Il est vrai que cette tentation d'une sorte de mysticisme du négatif existe.²⁹

The psychoanalytic conception of pain suggests this proximity to religion, and,

simultaneously, reveals their absolute estrangement; the relevance of pain brings the psychoanalytic dialogue close to prayer; the word in the *psychoanalytic dialogue* merges the exaltation brought about by consolation and love, the anxiety of a non-transcendental, non-redeeming revelation, and the experienced fractures of identity. Thus, in psychoanalysis the revelation borne by prayer turned into self-revelation and the eloquence of the ritual language which surrounds and penetrates prayer, was radically overturned; it is the eloquence and misery of silence which remains the illuminating force of psychoanalytic dialogue. At this point, the obscure nature of pain, its secret creative force is fully exposed.

b. Pain and the infidelities of perception

Freud clearly discerns the dynamic process and the perception of pleasure. There is the "becoming perceptible" of pleasure and unpleasure. Thus, pleasure and unpleasure can both exist without any conscious unveiling.

Freud names this appearance of pleasure-unpleasure in consciousness, a **quantitative-qualitative "other"** [*ein quantitative-qualitative Anderes*].

Nennen wir das, was als Lust und Unlust bewußt wird, ein quantitativ-qualitativ *Anderes* im seelischen Ablauf, so ist die Frage, ob ein solches *Anderes* an Ort und Stelle bewußt werden kann oder bis zum System W fortgeleitet werden muß. Die klinische Erfahrung entscheidet für das letztere. Sie zeigt, daß dies *Andere* sich verhält wie eigne verdrängte Regung. Es kann treibende Kräfte entfalten, ohne daß das Ich den Zwang bemerkt. Erst Widerstand gegen den Zwang, Aufhalten der Abfuhrreaktion macht dieses *Andere* sofort als Unlust bewußt. (*Das Ich und das Es*, SA, 1923, III: 291)*

The consciousness of pain thus appears to be an element of the series of "neutral" theoretical objects in Freud's fictional train of thought [*Denkweg*]. It acquires the same

*Let us call what becomes conscious as pleasure and unpleasure a quantitative and qualitative 'something' in the course of mental events; the question then is whether this 'something' can become conscious in the place where it is, or whether it must first be transmitted to the system *Pcpt*. Clinical experience decides for the latter. It shows us that this 'something' behaves like a repressed impulse. It can exert driving force without the ego noticing the compulsion. Not until there is resistance to the compulsion, a hold-up in the discharge-reaction, does the 'something' at once become conscious as unpleasure. (FP, 11: 360-361)

marginal, transitional condition of both language and consciousness. Like them, it appears as an intermediate thing [*Mitterding*] which recalls the strangeness of the threatening interior, yet foreign object, which incites in the subject the impulse to expel it, to reject it. The Freudian use of "other" [*Andere*] in this context is a singular one: it suggests a peculiar relation between pleasure and unpleasure [*lust und unlust*] in the light of the perception of an extraneous presence. Freud's reference to painful experience underwent a further displacement: pain was not to be described as a sensation, but as a deeply-rooted, buried dynamic process, which could be confined beneath the threshold of the subject's perception. Freud does not hesitate to admit the theoretical inconsistency, the scandal of conceiving an actual, albeit unperceived unpleasure or a similarly unapprehensible pleasure. Moreover, like pleasure and unpleasure, pain also is thought of as emerging from an inner disturbance of the flows of energy which lacks a definite identity; a psychical otherness, which can stir up violent psychological processes, and still remain unnoticed:

Ebenso wie Bedürfnisspannungen, kann auch der Schmerz unbewußt bleiben, dies Mittelding zwischen äußerer und innerer Wahrnehmung, der sich wie eigne innere Wahrnehmung verhält, auch woer aus der Außenwelt stammt. Es bleibt also richtig, daß auch Empfindungen und Gefühle nur durch Anlangen an das System W bewußt werden; ist die Fortleitung gesperrt, so kommen sie nicht als Empfindungen zustande, obwohl das ihnen entsprechende Andere im Erregungsablauf dasselbe ist. (*Das Ich und das Es*, SA, 1923, III: 291)*

Consequently, pain, like pleasure and unpleasure, exhibits a double nature: it is bonded both to perception and silence, to a bold appearance and to a secret presence. But pain acquires an enigmatic quality: the "otherness" which defines the specific nature of pain, eludes reflexive power of consciousness; it is in itself a piercing intensity destined to shatter consciousness itself. Pain appears as a brutal, yet unapprehensible, non-fathomable force likely to obliterate consciousness without being reached by the reflexive thought. Pain can appear as a silent destruction both of consciousness and of

*In the same way that tensions arising from physical needs can remain unconscious, so also can the pain—a thing intermediate between internal and external perception, which behaves like an internal perception even when its source is in the external world. It remains true, therefore, that sensations and feelings, too, only become conscious through reaching the system *Pcpt*; if the way forward is barred, they do not come into being as sensations, although the 'something' that corresponds to them in the course of excitation is the same as if they did. (FP, 11: 361).

the symbolic, inner barriers which shape the subject's identity. It becomes in itself an foreign inner, active matter, a sensation which is signified as a token of an underlying presence, an inner otherness [*Mittelding*]. Pain, an intermediate thing [*Mittelding*], obliterates the distinction between the inner sources and objects of perception and the outer one. Thus, the experience of pain brings about a paradoxical perception of space. Pain produces the mirage of the indefinite locus of its source. It perceives the outer harmful presence as an overwhelming inner destruction. It is perhaps the memory of this dissipation of the external object and the concomitant compelling intensity of the painful inner perception which defines the violence of the experience of pain, its primordial position in the constitution of subjectivity. Even if engendered within the boundaries of the subject's own body, pain is perceived as an extraneous presence which intrudes from "another scene", from a foreign territory. Not only does pain create an experience of time; it also displays its own scenery, engenders its own experience of space. Moreover, the shattering quantity of energy arouses manifold memories of pain: it does not only leave traces of its outburst upon the protecting boundaries of the subject's identity, but it bears witness to the emergence of a singular, condensed primordial experience of space and time. The subjective spaces become uncertain, and so become the material attributes of the object and the boundaries of the subject's identity. Pain turns perception into a discernible, though inescapable mirage.

c. Freud's first attempt to define pain. The metaphor of intensity as a substance

The notion of pain, as sketched by the ambivalent, wavering Freudian writing, is not simply that of a plain, intense sensation. Rather, it implies the image of *a sensation* beyond itself, a sensation which has exceeded its own boundaries, which has no recognizable nature.

Wir haben das Nervensystem so eingerichtet gefunden, daß die großen äußeren Q von ϕ und noch mehr von ψ abgehalten werden: die Nervenendschirme, die *bloß indirekte Verbindung* von ψ mit der Außenwelt. Gibt es eigne Erscheinung, die sich zur Deckung bringen läßt mit dem Versagen dieser Einrichtungen?

Ich glaube, es ist der Schmerz. (*Entwurf einer Psychologie*, GW, 1895, Nachtragsband: 399)*

The ancient, empiricist, ethical imperative of escaping pain and seeking pleasure is transformed into a thermodynamic fable of the transcendental end of the avoidance of unpleasure, of self-destruction.

In Freud's early "empiricist" scheme, the flight from pain implies a transformation, definable in purely quantitative terms, of the inner dynamic conditions of the system:

Die Schmerzanlässe sind einerseits quantitative Steigerung; jede sensible Erregung neigt zum Schmerz mit Zunahme des Reizes, selbst der höchsten Sinnesorgane. Dies ist ohne weiteres als Versagen zu verstehen. Andererseits gibt es Schmerz bei geringen Außenquantitäten, und dieser ist dann regelmäßig an Kontinuitätstrennung gebunden, d.h. äußere Q die auf die Enden der ϕ Neurone direkt wirkt, nicht durch die Nervenendapparate ergibt Schmerz. Der Schmerz ist hiedurch charakterisiert als hereinbrechen übergroßer Q nach ϕ und ψ , d. h. solcher Q, die von noch höherer Ordnung sind als die ψ Reize. (*Entwurf einer Psychologie*, GW, 1895, Nachtragsband: 400)**

Even this "merely quantitative" approach to pain implies a dense representational, psychical activity. Pain and motor discharge inform the psychical, imaginary body, the psychical representation of the material nature of the flesh. The suffering body is a pure sequence of transient intensities; it is, nevertheless, a "neutral", meaningless body. It even lacks a specific topography: "every sensory excitation, even of the highest sense organs, tends towards pain with an increase of the stimulus" [*jede sensible Erregung neigt zum Schmerz mit Zunahme des Reizes, selbst der höchsten Sinnesorgane.*]

We have found that the nervous system is contrived in such a way that the major external Qs are kept off from ϕ and still more from ψ : [by] the nerve-ending screens, [and by] the merely indirect connection between ψ and the external world. Is there a phenomenon which can be brought to coincide with the failure of these contrivances? Such, I think, is pain. (SE, 1895, I: 307)

The precipitating causes of pain are on the one hand, increase of quantity: every sensory excitation, even of the highest sense organs, tends towards pain with an increase of the stimulus. This is to be understood unhesitatingly as a failure [of the contrivance]. On the other hand, there is pain where the external quantity is small, and in such cases this is regularly linked with a breach in continuity: that is, an external Q which acts directly on the ends of the ϕ neurones and not through the nerve-ending apparatuses produces pain. Pain is thus - characterized as an irruption of excessively large Qs into ϕ and ψ : that is, of Qs which are of a still higher order than the ϕ stimuli. (SE, 1895, I: 307)

Freud had once acknowledged the absolute, compelling power of the unpleasure experience. In 1923, in the exposure of his second theory of the psychical apparatus, Freud remarked that, unlike the sensation of pleasure, unpleasure exerted an unescapable compelling force which constrains the whole system to discharge.

Die Empfindungen mit Lustcharakter haben nichts Drängendes an sich, dagegen im höchsten Grad die Unlustempfindungen. Diese drängen auf Veränderung, auf Abfuhr, und darum deuten wir die Unlust auf eigne Erhöhung, die Lust auf eigne Erniedrigung der Energiebesetzung. (*Das Ich und das Es*, SA, 1923, III: 291)*

The experience of pain constitutes a violent, intense yet primary, compelling force, a brutal subduing of the precarious, incipient patterns of perception, memory and action; it becomes the unutterable, secret memory of the primal deleterious moment that unleashes the construction of the experience of satisfaction, of memory itself.

2. The mythical origins of pain: the hostile [feindliche] object

The subject's experience of limits, which ought to lead to the settling of an ethical threshold, is founded upon the force of absence. Freud thus conceives the mounting tension aroused by the delay of the satisfaction, by the disappearance of the sole object likely to suppress the early suffering, as source both of the moral content of dialogue, and of the comprehension [*Verständigung*] of the other. Both morality and comprehension have a common origin, Freud suggests, in the subject's primal suffering aroused by the other's absence and the related experience of helplessness, which leave a silent trace; it is an experience achieved beyond the margins of language. The unutterable experience of absence, the non-signified experience of unpleasure and the failure of motor response to exorcise pain, appear nevertheless as memories in the core of comprehension and of mutual concern; they give rise to, as well, a primal insight into the intimate strangeness of the self, and can be conceived as the origin of the self's non-depictable limits, of the strangeness of the self's most intimate yet illusory identity: that which attaches the subject to a singular, ineffaceable trace of a dissipated, harmful

*The sensations of a pleasurable nature have not anything inherently impelling about them, whereas unpleasurable ones have it in the highest degree. The later impel towards change, towards discharge, and that is why we interpret unpleasure as implying the heightening and pleasure the lowering of energetic cathexis. (FP, 11: 360)

object.

Wird das Erinnerungsbild des Objektes (*feindlichen*) irgendwie neu besetzt, z. B. durch neue W[ahrnehmung], so stellt sich ein Zustand her, welcher nicht Schmerz ist, aber doch Ähnlichkeit mit ihm hat. Er enthält Unlust und die Abfuhrneigung, die dem Schmerzerlebnis entspricht. Da Unlust Niveausteigerung bedeutet, fragt es sich nach der Herkunft dieser $Q\eta'$. Im eigentlichen Schmerzerlebnis war es die hereinbrechende äußere Q , welche das ψ Niveau steigerte. In dessen Reproduktion - dem Affekt ist nur die Q hinzugekommen, die Erinnerung besetzt, und es ist klar, daß diese, von der Natur einer jeden Wahrnehmung, nicht eigne allgemeine $Q\eta'$ Steigerung zur Folge haben kann. (*Entwurf einer Psychologie*, GW, 1895, Nachtragsband: 413)*

The central enigmatic role of the hostile, malignant object is a central one in the subject's constitution. It would take Freud almost 30 years, up to the publication of *Hemmung, Symptom und Angst*, to consistently develop his early insight into the primal experience that fuses absence and pain, and to acknowledge the relevance of this early insight.³⁰ It was only with the decisive vision of the sensation of danger as a resonance of the primal experience of the experienced absence that the temporal complexity of the primal experience of pain was fully acknowledged:

die Situation der Unbefriedigung, in der Reizgrößen eigne unlustvolle Höhe erreichen, ohne Bewältigung durch psychische Verwendung und Abfuhr zu finden, muß für den Säugling die Analogie mit dem Geburtserlebnis, die Wiederholung der Gefahrensituation sein (*Hemmung, Symptom und Angst*, SA, 1926, VI: 278)**

The outburst of fear, the sensation of danger, is envisioned as a reversed manifestation of an absent, yet impending appearance of the hostile agent.

Freud's late but obstinate assertion about the primacy of fear as an experience rooted in an early painful memory, seems to confirm an ancient insight, put forward

*If the mnemonic image of the (hostile) object is freshly cathected in some way—for instance, by a fresh perception—a state arises which is not pain but which nevertheless has a resemblance to it. It includes unpleasure and the inclination to discharge which corresponds to the experience of pain. Since unpleasure signifies a rise in level, it must be asked where this $Q\eta'$ comes from. In the actual experience of pain it was the interrupting external Q , that raised the ψ level. In the reproduction of the experience—in the affect—the only additional Q is that which cathects the memory, and it is clear that this is in the nature of any other perception and cannot have as a result a general raising of $Q\eta'$. (SE, I: 319-320)

**The situation of non-satisfaction in which the amounts of stimulation rise to an unpleasurable height without its being possible for them to be mastered psychically or discharged must for the infant be analogous to the experience of being born, must be a repetition of the situation of danger. (FP, 10: 294)

by Kant as a formal thesis on the unprecedented, primal role of pain in the shaping of the subject. He asserted the temporal and logical precedence of pain, in the orbit of experience: "pain must precede any delight. Pain is always first." [*muß vor jedem Vergnügen der Schmerz vorhergehen. Der Schmerz ist immer das erste*]³¹

Pain appears as the "archeological foundation" of the sensation of danger and its psychological response, anxiety, which also involves the tension inherent in desire: the cathexis [*Besetzung*] of the memory traces of the absence of the desired primordial object. In his reflexion on the nature of anxiety and its sources, Freud recalls, almost without exception, his fixed images of pain. Anxiety is only an aftermath of the restoration of old affective states which reside as sediments [*Niederschläge*] of actions and perceptions, on the bottom of the life of the soul [*Seelenleben*]. Freud's only work dealing explicitly with the nature of pain —*Hemmung, Symptom und Angst*—, despite its manifest failure, sheds a late yet suggestive retrospective light upon his early conviction regarding the singular suffering of hysterics: hysteric reminiscences not only enliven painful memories; they restore the primal, silent fear without language, the omen of a shattered object, the shadow of which pervaded the space and time of the subject; hysterics suffer the violence exerted on them by the present assumption of a future dominated by the sovereign, mute absence of the primal object. Thus, only in the last phase of Freud's theoretical work, with the drastic redefinition of the notion of anxiety, the bold, enigmatic profile of memory will emerge: primordial and unspeakable memory of pain. This conception of anxiety will evince Freud's sudden contempt for the scope of his own economic explanation.

Aus dem Gesagten leitet sich die neue Frage ab, wie es ökonomisch möglich ist, daß ein bloßer Abziehungs- und Abfuhrvorgang wie beim Rückzug der vorbewußten Ichbesetzung Unlust oder Angst erzeugen könne, die nach unseren Voraussetzungen nur Folge gesteigerter Besetzung sein kann. Ich antworte, diese Verursachung soll nicht ökonomisch erklärt werden, die Angst wird bei der Verdrängung nicht neu erzeugt, sondern als Affektzustand nach einem vorhandenen Erinnerungsbild reproduziert. Mit der weiteren Frage nach der Herkunft dieser Angst - wie der Affekte überhaupt - verlassen wir aber den unbestritten psychologischen Boden und betreten das Grenzgebiet der Physiologie. *Die Affektzustände sind dem Seelenleben als Niederschläge uralter traumatischer Erlebnisse einverleibt und werden in ähnlichen Situationen wie*

*Erinnerungssymbole wachgerufen. (Hemmung, Symptom und Angst, SA, 1926, VI: 239).**

Anxiety is thus envisaged as engendered *in the margins of physiological processes* and bound up with *the memory of the primal absence of the object*. However, the affection which unleashes the images of the primordial non-existence of the object even eludes in itself metaphorical expression; it rejects any symbolic reference.³² There is no symbolic expression of anxiety; it is a pure tension brought about by the loss of the loved object; yet, anxiety itself arouses the unconscious images of absence as allegorical means of governing the specific action of the subject. It is this essential allegory of absence that, in turn, informs paradoxically the conscious images of danger; anxiety emerges thus in consciousness as the final allegory of primal absence, as its unfolding into visions and images of fear and danger:

Das Erinnerungsbild der ersehnten Person wird gewiß intensiv, wahrscheinlich zunächst halluzinatorisch besetzt. Aber das hat keinen Erfolg, und nun hat es den Anschein, als ob diese Sehnsucht in Angst umschlüge. Es macht geradezu den Eindruck, als wäre diese Angst ein Ausdruck der Ratlosigkeit, als wüßte das noch sehr unentwickelte Wesen mit dieser sehnsüchtigen Besetzung nichts Besseres anzufangen. Die Angst erscheint so als Reaktion auf das Vermissen des Objekts, und es drängen sich uns die Analogien auf, daß auch die Kastrationsangst die Trennung von einem hochgeschätzten Objekt zum Inhalt hat und daß die ursprünglichste Angst (die "Urangst" der Geburt) bei der Trennung von der Mutter entstand. (*Hemmung, Symptom und Angst, SA, 1926, VI: 277-278. Emphasis added*)"

"how is it possible, from the economic point of view, for a mere process of withdrawal and discharge, like the withdrawing of a preconscious ego-cathexis, to produce unpleasure and anxiety, seeing that, according to our assumptions, unpleasure and anxiety can only arise as a result of an *increase* in cathexis? The reply is that this causal sequence should not be explained from an economic point of view. Anxiety is not newly created in repression; it is reproduced as an affective state in accordance with an already existing mnemonic image. If we go further and enquire into the origin of that anxiety —and of affects in general— we shall be leaving the realm of pure psychology and entering the borderland of physiology. *Affective states have become incorporated in the mind as precipitates of primaeval traumatic experiences, and when a similar situation occurs they are revived like mnemonic symbols.* (FP, 10: 244)

"The child's mnemonic image of the person longed for is no doubt intensely cathected, probably in a hallucinatory way at first. But this has no effect; and now it seems as though the longing turns into anxiety. This anxiety has all the appearance of being an expression of the child's feeling at its wits end, as though in its still very undeveloped state it did not know how better to cope with its cathexis of longing. Here anxiety appears as a reaction to the felt loss of the object; and we are at once reminded of the fact that castration anxiety, too, is a fear of being separated from a highly valued object, and that the earliest anxiety of all —the 'primal anxiety' of birth— is brought about on the occasion of a separation from the mother. (FP, 10: 293)

a. The cleavage between unpleasure and pain

Despite his uncertain approach to pain, Freud exhibited only slight reticence when facing the nature and relevance of unpleasure. It would seem that unpleasure set the psychoanalytic boundaries of comprehension beyond which pain loomed as a speculative, obscure threat. Unpleasure seemed to be fully illuminated by the negative glare of pleasure. Thus, pleasure appeared early in Freud's theory as the uncertain yet irrenounceable ground upon which his metapsychological enterprise ought to be built.

Mais dans le *Projet*, Freud oppose bien —et c'est le point qui nous intéresse— expérience de douleur et expérience de satisfaction. Le couple d'opposés ainsi mis en place n'est donc pas, comme on pourrait s'y attendre, plaisir-déplaisir [*Lust-Unlust*], mais, d'une part, plaisir-déplaisir (ou mieux, déplaisir-plaisir, processus qui règle le cours de l'expérience de satisfaction), et douleur, d'autre part.³³

The destiny of the notion of pleasure is definitively linked to the dim presence of the conjectures on pain. Pain may resemble, at first sight, only an exorbitant unpleasure.

Yet, pain and pleasure remain irreducible notions, which refer to two unique, unrelated experiences; it is this unfathomable tension between pain and pleasure which lies in the bottom of the psychoanalytical enterprise. However, their opposition seems to derive more from a phenomenological than from a metapsychological approach. The complex coexistence and convergence of these founding experiences seem to define the scope of psychoanalytic theoretical notions.

Despite the disappearance of the notion of *experience of pain*, from Freud's conceptual universe, after the first, failed attempt to give a complete account of their relation in the *Entwurf*, an implicit fundamental, almost secret relation, an obscure link between the experience of satisfaction and the experience of pain, persisted throughout Freud's work. Indeed, Freud posits the existence of a tension, of a conflictive parallelism, as well as of an insurmountable difference between pain and unpleasure:

Der Schmerz erzeugt in ψ : 1. große Niveausteigerung, die von ω als Unlust empfunden wird, 2. eigne Abfuhrneigung, die nach gewissen Richtungen modifiziert sein kann, 3. eigne Bahnung zwischen dieser und einem Erinnerungsbild des schmerzerregenden Objektes. Es ist überdies keine Frage, daß der Schmerz eigne besondere Qualität hat, die sich neben der

*Unlust geltend macht. (Entwurf einer Psychologie, GW, 1895, Nachtragsband: 413-14)**

As an inner, silent, paradoxical tension inherent in the experience of satisfaction, the experience of pain preserves its coercive power; however, Freud's reflection, uncovers the compelling, repetitive impulse of pain, its aim towards the extinction of sensations: the shattering of the subject's identity brought about by pain serves the longing for an absolute dissipation of energy, for the achievement of an irreversible extinction of the inner intensity, for the radical exhaustion of excitement, for absolute death. Repetition and evocation both seem to be driven by the obscure core of the experience of satisfaction. Both have a contrasting fate regarding pain. Repetition seeks to restore immutably the original experience charging it with identical intensity, while evocation is the tireless metamorphosis of the deluding image of the painful episode which rather involves an attenuated shade of a surrogate of the original emotion. The fading figures of evocation thus elude repetition; they evince the dominating principle of *similarity* [*Ähnlichkeit*] —not of identity—; they do not restore the primal, silenced core of representation, but only a transmuted, weakened cathexis of the mnemonic image of the object: "a state arises which is not pain but which nevertheless has a resemblance to it" [*so stellt sich ein Zustand her, welcher nicht Schmerz ist, aber doch Ähnlichkeit mit ihm hat*].³⁴ However, the notion of experience implicit in Freud's conception of pain, reveals the creative tension, the engendering force of the difference between the weakening energy of the fading images of memory, and the compelling, strengthening force of pain in psychical life. The tension between the *repetition* and *analogy* (evocation) also reveals the precarious dynamics of the subjective agencies which govern both.

The sensation of unpleasure and the experience of pain are incomparable. Each pertains to a different order of the psychical and physical processes. However, unpleasure appears as a momentary, transient stage of the emergence of pain. Pain appears as an unfolding of unpleasure, which has become, paradoxically, an isolated,

*Pain gives rise in ψ (1) to a large rise in level, which is felt as unpleasure by ω , (2) to an inclination to discharge, which can be modified in certain directions, and (3) to a facilitation between the latter [the inclination to discharge] and a mnemonic image of the object which excites the pain. Moreover, there is no question but that pain has a peculiar *quality*, which makes itself felt along with the unpleasure. (SE, 1895, I: 320).

autonomous process, foreign to the experiences which preceded it.

The limitations of the economic model of psychical processes evinced by the elusiveness of the experience of pain, as well as its poignant presence in the psychical life and the vicissitudes of repetition, are clearly revealed in Freud's curious, biological fable of the "key neuron". He seeks to expound by the means of a fictional anatomy, an allegorical description of the physiological process, dimensions of sexual behaviour which mirror the development of painful experiences.

Es bleibt also nur übrig anzunehmen, daß durch die Besetzung von Erinnerungen Unlust aus dem Körperinneren entbunden, neu hinauf befördert wird. Den Mechanismus dieser Entbindung kann man sich nur in folgender Weise vorstellen: Wie es motorische Neurone gibt, die bei einer gewissen Erfüllung $Q\eta'$ in die Muskeln leiten und somit abführen, muß es "sekretorische" Neurone geben, die, wenn sie erregt sind, im Körperinneren entstehen lassen, was auf die endogenen Leitungen nach ψ als Reiz wirkt, die also die Produktion endogener $Q\eta'$ beeinflussen, somit nicht $Q\eta'$ abführen, sondern auf Umwegen zuführen. Diese sekretorischen Neurone wollen wir "Schlüsselneurone"s heißen. Sie werden offenbar erst bei gewissem Niveau in ψ erregt. Durch das Schmerzerlebnis hat das Er[innerungsbild] des feindlichen Objektes eigne vortreffliche Bahnung zu diesen Schlüsselneuronen erhalten, kraft deren sich nun im Affekt Unlust entbindet.

Anlehnung für diese befremdende, aber unentbehrliche Annahme gibt das Verhalten der Sexualentbindung. Gleichzeitig drängt sich die Vermutung auf, die endogenen Reize beständen hier wie dort in chemischen Produkten, deren Anzahl eigne erhebliche sein mag. Da die Unlustentbindung bei ganz geringfügiger Besetzung des feindlichen Er[innerungsbildes] eigne außerordentliche sein kann, man schließen, daß der Schmerz ganz besonders ausgiebige Bahnungen hinterläßt. (Entwurf einer Psychologie, GW, 1895, Nachtragsband: 414)

It only remains to assume, therefore, that owing to the cathexis of memories unpleasure is released from the interior of the body and freshly conveyed up. The mechanism of this release can only be pictured as follows. Just as there are motor neurones which, when they are filled to a certain amount, conduct $Q\eta'$ into the muscles and accordingly discharge it, so there must be 'secretory' neurones which, when they are excited, cause the generation in the interior of the body of something which operates as a stimulus upon the endogenous paths of conduction to ψ -neurones which thus influence the production of endogenous $Q\eta'$, and accordingly do not discharge $Q\eta'$ but supply it in roundabout ways. We will call these [secretory] neurones 'key neurones'. Evidently they are only excited when a certain level in ψ has been reached. As a result of the experience of pain the mnemonic image of the hostile object has acquired an excellent facilitation to these key neurones, in virtue of which [facilitation] unpleasure is now released in the affect.

Support is lent to this puzzling but indispensable hypothesis by what happens in the case of sexual release. At the same time a suspicion forces itself on us that in both instances the endogenous stimuli consist of chemical products, of which there may be a considerable number. Since the release of unpleasure can be an extremely big one when there is quite a trivial cathexis of the hostile memory, we may conclude that pain leaves behind specially abundant facilitations. (SE, 1895, I: 320)

Evocation does not extinguish the intensity of the original painful experience; rather it fashions an allegorical image which vaguely resembles the painful object, conferring on it the attributes composed by desire; a subtle attenuation of the original violence of pain blends in evocation with the slight excitation of desire. Thus, the evocated emotion can be seen as an uncertain, intermediate object which has acquired the qualities of the fictional subject's ideal, of his own moral identity; it exhibits a deceitful coherence which the original expression of pain lacks; the primordial loss acquires an ephemeral name and a captivating figure, the pain dissipates in the form of words or in the lure of images. But the memory of pain does not enliven the primal painful experience. Evocation does not extinguish pain, yet it dispels its distressing force; it creates a net of traces of words and images which veils the original memory and dissipates the original violence. Indeed, evocation creates a derived sense, a transposition of meanings; it rarefies the original experience; it recreates atmospheres and emotions, brightens or obscures events and actions and charges them with the energy aroused by the ideal. However, traces of primal pain linger in memory, indifferent to the figurative *sprouts* of its own universe of associated, symbolical images. Yet, both *evocation* and *repetition* of the painful experience, expose different and essential facets of the enigma of the psychical invention of the self. The "spontaneous" extinction of the emotions provoked by evocation leaves in its place an empty and uninterpretable mask of chimerical expressions in which the delusions of ideal and desire mix with the force of the abiding pain to mould the images of identity.

Unlike evocation, repetition enacts the exacting restoration of pain; it rejects the mask of the reconciled identity, of the stillness of the deciphered sense; it emerges as an obscure, allegorical matter the appearance of which unveils a shadow line that marks the obscure territory of the self where death is indistinguishable from the shattering, intense impulse of lost love. Allegory is never so clear and violent as in compulsive repetition, in the fixed incarnation of the anxiety of absence in theatrical images of the past, in meaningless or wasteful imagery which both veils and exposes the silent expression of primal pain. Repetition resists the impoverishment brought about by interpretation and disguise. The irruption upon perception of the painful experience restores the exact episode of the crumbling of identity which renders the familiar

senses, the habits and the apparent obstinacy of the subject's identity meaningless. Repetition brings to light a timeless, opaque sign of the destruction of the subject's experience, which both foretells the subject's fate and signifies the absence which informs the physiognomy of the subject's psychical identity.

3. Rhythm and the pleasure principle

Freud built upon Fechner's discoveries a substantialist, non-relational conception of pleasure. In the opening pages of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920), Freud quotes a key passage of a "small work" [*kleinen Schrift*] from Fechner which preceded by forty seven years the appearance of *Jenseits*. Unpleasure, Freud will sustain—in accordance with Fechner's view, albeit not without reluctance—that unpleasure arises from an increasing amount of energy within the system; pleasure, on the contrary, appears whenever a decrease of such energy is experienced. However, he faces an essential weakness of his explanation: the undeniable evidence of non-unpleasurable excitation and the complementary testimony of the unpleasurable discharge of excessive energy.

At crucial moments, Freud's reflection focused on the odd nature of pleasure, remarking upon the paradoxes of the subject's perception of it: pleasure and unpleasure seemed to be simultaneously a perception and an non-perceivable energy state of the psychical apparatus, a driving tension which could manifest itself unnoticed as a stirring of the soul well beyond the reach of reflexive consciousness. Yet, the twofaced nature of pleasure and unpleasure—both perceivable and unperceivable—the paradoxical conception—in terms of Freud's own theory—of a specific state of the system of energy response—which corresponded to pleasure, unpleasure, pain—that could be momentarily isolated from perception, the thesis of capriciously unperceived, autonomous paths of physical energy within the body, remained an disturbing, unaccountable theoretical issue in Freud's enterprise. Freud needed the idea of unconscious pain and pleasure, which might account for his intuitions regarding the nature of inherent biological pain (erotogenic masochism), the exigencies of the thesis

of the death instinct and the theoretical consistency of a will to "secret" punishment derived from the dynamic tension between the agencies of subjectivity.

Freud preserved unchanged his original, substantialist conception of pain, despite his acknowledgment of its obscure and unfathomable nature and the introduction of a speculative assumption regarding the dependence of perception upon the rhythm and sequence of energy transformations. Yet, almost 30 years after his first and definitive conception of pain and pleasure of 1895, at the very beginning of his suggestive, yet unsettling and perplexing essay on masochism, *Die ökonomische Problem des Masochismus* (1924), Freud states a crucial objection to his own former theory of masochismus; the relevance of this objection to his comprehension of perversion and pain is that it weakens one of the cardinal elements of psychoanalytic theory: the "principle of constancy", and its leads to a thorough revision of the sense of the exacerbated allegorical image of death instinct, the *Nirvana principle*:

Aber wir haben das Lust-Unlustprinzip unbedenklich mit diesem Nirwanaprinzip identifiziert. Jede Unlust müßte also mit einer Erhöhung, jede Lust mit einer Erniedrigung der im Seelischen vorhandenen Reizspannung zusammenfallen, das Nirwana-(und das mit ihm angeblich identische Lust-)prinzip würde ganz im Dienst der Todestribe stehen, deren Ziel die Überführung des unstillen Leben in die Stabilität des anorganischen Zustandes ist, und würde die Funktion haben, vor den Ansprüchen der Lebenstribe, der Libido, zu warnen, welche den angestrebten Ablauf des Lebens zu stören versuchen. *Allein diese Auffassung kann nicht richtig sein.* Es scheint, daß wir Zunahme und Abnahme der Reizgrößen direkt in der Reihe der Spannungsgefühle empfinden, und es ist nicht zu bezweifeln, daß es lustvolle Spannungen und unlustige Entspannungen einer solcher lustvollen Reizvergrößerung, aber gewiß nicht das einzige. *Lust und Unlust können also nicht auf Zunahme oder Abnahme einer Quantität, die wir Reizspannung heißen, bezogen werden, wenngleich sie offenbar mit diesem Moment viel zu tun haben.* (*Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus*, SA, 1924, III: 344)*

*But we have unhesitatingly identified the pleasure-unpleasure principle with this Nirvana principle. Every unpleasure ought thus to coincide with the heightening, and every pleasure with a lowering, of mental tension due to stimulus; the Nirvana principle (and the pleasure principle which is supposedly identical with it) would be entirely in the service of the death instincts, whose aim is to conduct the restlessness of life into the stability of the inorganic state, and it would have the function of giving warnings against the demands of the life instincts—the libido—which try to disturb the intended course of life. But such a view cannot be correct. It seems that in the series of feelings or tension we have a direct sense of the increase and decrease of amounts of stimulus, and it cannot be doubted that there are pleasurable tensions and unpleasurable relaxations of tension. The state of sexual excitation is the most striking example of pleasurable increase of stimulus of this sort, but it is certainly not the only one. Pleasure and unpleasure, therefore, cannot be referred to an increase or decrease of a quantity (which we describe as 'tension due

After the radical thesis of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920), the *pleasure principle* could be thought of as a mere extension, as a weakened, pale expression of the implacable death instinct. The conception of the death instinct pictures an essential exacerbated impulse to discharge the inner psychical and physical energy; it forces the physiological process towards a state of absolute death, to its own destruction. It is an hyperbolic expression of Freud's former principle of pleasure. However, the pleasure principle does not disappear from Freud's universe. Rather, these two principles seem to coexist; the death instinct simultaneously encompasses and upholds the efficient action of the pleasure principle; and, paradoxically, the death instinct drives to a paroxysmic end the pleasure principle.

In psychoanalytic theory, the complex entanglement of both principles still exhibited the undisputed authority of pure quantitative concepts. Freud recalled, at a decisive moment in *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, a notion of pleasure to which he himself had alluded as a fleeting image: this conception echoed the early chimerical conceptions of the periodicity of the organic processes, put forward earlier by Fliess. Thus, many years later, Freud's partial, dubious answer to the insufficiencies of the substantial notion of pleasure, resorted to a relational conception which reproduced Fliess fundamental image of fluctuation and rhythm as essential structures of psychical processes. Pleasure was envisioned as *the effect of the serial arrangement* of the increase and abatement of energy tensions:

Wir haben uns entschlossen, Lust und Unlust mit der Quantität der im Seelenleben vorhandenen - und nicht irgendwie gebundenen - Erregung in Beziehung zu bringen, solcherart, daß Unlust einer Steigerung, Lust einer Verringerung dieser Quantität entspricht. Wir denken dabei nicht an ein einfaches Verhältnis zwischen der Stärke der Empfindungen und den Veränderungen, auf die sie bezogen werden; am wenigsten - nach allen Erfahrungen der Psychophysiologie - an direkte Proportionalität; wahrscheinlich ist *das Maß der Verringerung oder Vermehrung*

to stimulus'), although they could obviously have a great deal to do with the factor. (FP, 11: 414)

*in der Zeit das für die Empfindung entscheidende Moment.
(Jenseits des Lustprinzips, SA, 1920, III: 220)**

The sequence of contrasting states would provide, in Freud's view, some clues to the understanding of the open incongruity of the Nirvana principle regarding the experience of pleasure; while preserving untouched his explanation in terms of energy processes. The serial disposition of the intensities, understood as a punctuated, rhythmic chain of the succession of drain and retention of energy, was seen as likely to arouse the sensation of pleasure and unpleasure which governs the aims and the impulse of all action. The broad scope of his drastic reformulation of the former views on pleasure, and the unpredictable range of its consequences might not have escaped Freud. Abandoning the notions of pleasure and unpleasure as pure concrete, substantial sensations, and replacing them by a "syntactic", purely relational approach, conceiving them as effects of alternation and rhythm of the intensities of energy in a time series of stagnation and discharge, Freud submitted the significance of the pleasure principle to an unexpected, violent strain.

With this emphasis on rhythmical patterns, Freud's theoretical imagination exemplifies a Baroque metamorphosis: rhythm substitutes the mere increase in quantity; movement replaces the image of pure sensation. This shift in the theoretical axis offered a suggestive, albeit precarious and transient answer to the issue of the double paradox of pleasure: the pleasure aroused by mounting energy and the unpleasure provoked by discharge, but also to the paradox of its conscious *and* unconscious nature. However, rhythm in itself remained unexplained. It intruded in Freud's text in fundamental yet ephemeral passages regarding the limitations of the substantialist explanation of pleasure. Two definitive, speculative as well as obscure Freudian texts, *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* (1920) and *Das ökonomische Problem of Masochismus* (1924), briefly and vaguely expounded this rhythmical conception of pleasure, which became

*We have decided to relate pleasure and unpleasure to the quantity of excitation that is present in the mind but is not in any way 'bound'; and to relate them in such a manner that unpleasure corresponds to an *increase* in the quantity of excitation and pleasure to a *diminution*. What we are implying by this is not a simple relation between the strength of the feelings of pleasure and unpleasure and the corresponding modifications in the quantity of excitations; least of all — in view of all we have been taught by psycho-physiology — are we suggesting any directly proportional ratio: the factor that determines the feeling is probably the amount of increase or diminution in the quantity of excitation *in a given period of time*. (FP, 11: 276. Emphasis added)

an isolated insight without further conspicuous, theoretical resonances. This reluctance to explore the inherent significance of the notion of rhythm regarding pleasure and unpleasure would bear heavily on the future of the psychoanalytic theory.³⁵

Despite this episodic late, and seemingly contingent appearance of the ideas of periodicity with reference to the paradoxes of pleasure, indeed, the notions of discontinuity and rhythm had appeared very early in Freud's theoretical horizon. As we have already mentioned, since his friendship with Fliess —whose delusive medical explanations were supported by a extravagant theory of periodicity— and perhaps as an implicit tribute to it, Freud adopted not without ambivalence his friend's more lasting "contribution" to science. But Freud's work upon the concept itself required a strenuous effort, which gave to the notion of periodicity a latent, unforeseeable content. Rhythm, conceived as a psychical force is not reducible to simple series of ups and downs of the energy level. Rather, rhythm, as an informing force of subjective processes, seems to arise from the subject's acknowledgement of his own limits and its confrontation with the reflexive perception of fluctuating inner intensities.

Freud goes one step further. He makes of this intimate, unacknowledged experience of the rhythmic discontinuity of inner intensities the foundation of the subject's experience of time. In the light of the notion of rhythm, the experience of pleasure as a sensation which springs from the succession of tension and discharges becomes likely to engender, in turn, a singular subjective experience of succession, made up of series of presences and absences, of actions and regulated symbolic ends and of the duration of inner states. This capacity of rhythm is alluded to by images of expanding and encompassing membranes, of thriving outgrowths of elementary organisms, and by the biological allegory of pulsating extending and contracting tentacles —which in Freud's fiction stood alternatively for consciousness and unconsciousness, indeed, as a composed response of the conscious *and* the unconscious. Freud's obscure unraveling of his own allegory brought to light the encroachment of the unconscious upon the response of consciousness to the outer world: "It is as though the *unconscious* stretches out feelers, through the medium of the system *Perception-Consciousness* towards the external world and hastily withdraws them as soon as they have sampled the excitations coming from it" [*Es wäre so, als ob*

das Unbewußte mittels des Systems W-Bw der Außenwelt Fühler entgegenstrecken würde, die rasch zurückgezogen werden, nachdem sie deren Erregungen verkostet haben]. Freud finds this allegory illuminating: time can be neither a pure effect of perception, a purely conscious representation, nor an unconscious one; it cannot have the form of an intuition, a formal condition of the aesthetic relation between the subject and its object —as Kant had posited—,³⁶ but is the effect of a reflexive, discontinuous movement of consciousness turned back towards the inner, pulsating dynamic process aroused by perception. It is the folding back, the reflexiveness of perception, the self-perception [*einer Selbstwahrnehmung derselben*] of the rhythmical forms of the performance [*Arbeitsweise*] of the psychical apparatus that may account for the origins of subjective experience of time. As we have already remarked, Freud found this insight so illuminating that he envisaged it as the psychoanalytic alternative to Kant's notion of time.³⁷ At this point psychoanalytic reflection encounters an absolute limit. As with similar explanations, Freud abruptly abandons the discussion: "I know that these remarks must sound very obscure, but I must limit myself to these hints. (FP, 11: 300)" [*Ich weiß, daß diese Behauptungen sehr dunkel klingen, muß mich aber auf solche Andeutung beschränken.*] (*Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, SA, 1920, III: 238). However, five years later, the same biological allegory was to appear again in a similar context, with the same anti-Kantian argument about the origins of time:

Ich habe angenommen, daß Besetzungsinervationen in raschen periodischen Stößen aus dem Inneren in das völlig durchlässige System W-Bw geschickt und wieder zurückgezogen werden. Solange das System in solcher Weise besetzt ist, empfängt es die von Bewußtsein begleiteten Wahrnehmungen und leitet die Erregung weiter in die unbewußten Erinnerungssysteme; sobald die Besetzung zurückgezogen wird, erlischt das Bewußtsein, und die Leistung des Systems ist sistiert. Es wäre so, als ob das Unbewußte mittels des Systems W-Bw der Außenwelt Fühler entgegenstrecken würde, die rasch zurückgezogen werden, nachdem sie deren Erregungen verkostet haben. Ich ließ also die Unterbrechungen, die beim Wunderblock von außen her geschehen, durch die Diskontinuität der Innervationsströmung zustande kommen, und an Stelle einer wirklichen Kontaktaufhebung stand in meiner Annahme die periodisch eintretende Unerregbarkeit des Wahrnehmungssystems. Ich vermutete ferner, daß diese diskontinuierliche Arbeitsweise des

Systems W-Bw der Entstehung der Zeitvorstellung zugrunde liegt. (Notiz über den "Wunderblock", SA, 1925, III: 369)

Freud's notion of *duration* as engendered by the self-perception of the "forms of performance" [*Arbeitsweise*] of the psychical apparatus, goes well beyond the scope of the notion of an immediate perception and of the transcendental conditions of experience.³⁸ Freud's archeological metaphor of a psychical apparatus —integrated by successive sediments of indelible memory traces— hints at his complex image of temporality made up of fused, heterogeneous, rhythmical processes, discernible only in the regressive path of free association. Nevertheless, the fusion of temporalities, as evinced by regression, dissipates experience and dissolves its singular profiles. Freud's pervasive expressions of his concern about time might be compared with the prevalence in his writing of the metaphor of archeological ruins. It is almost impossible for any reader of Freud not to be deeply struck by the force of these metaphors and by their fertility, their capacity to produce unforeseeable conceptual insights. Both archeological fictions and metaphors of time remained not only inspiring models but challenging and demanding patterns of thought. Malcolm Bowie writes:

The psychoanalyst's victory in the contest with archeology is thus a spectacular one: he not only regularly discovers in his daily practice relics that can vie in their completeness and coherence with those of Pompeii, but recognizes these relics as belonging to a superior order of durability. Within the all-too-destructible human organism, within the endlessly mobile world of desire and phantasy that it houses, something permanent is to be found: a fixed psychical structure which, in its fixity, *explains*.³⁹

In *Das Unbehagen des Kultur*, Freud exposed, in a thorough and in a sense dramatic fragment of his writing, his astounding, haunting image of Rome: the narration depicts the various stages of the archeological excavation, the encounter with the preserved

My theory was that cathectic innervations are sent out and withdrawn in rapid periodic impulses from within into the completely pervious system *Pcpt.-Cs.* So long as that system is cathected in this manner, it receives perceptions (which are accompanied by consciousness) and passes the excitation on to the unconscious mnemonic systems; but as soon as the cathexis is withdrawn, consciousness is extinguished and the functioning of the system comes to a standstill. It is as though the unconscious stretches out feelers, through the medium of the system *Pcpt.-Cs.* towards the external world and hastily withdraws them as soon as they have sampled the excitations coming from it. Thus the interruptions, which in the case of the Mystic Pad have an external origin, were attributed by my hypothesis to the discontinuity in the current innervation; and the actual breaking of contact which occurs in the Mystic Pad was replaced in my theory by the periodic non-excitability of the perceptual system. *I further had a suspicion that this discontinuous method of functioning of the system Pcpt.-Cs. lies at the bottom of the origin of the concept of time.* (FP, 11: 433-434)

relics, with this looming past, the exhumation of intact residues of a city, the fictive preservation of the *complete* Roman history in the spectral scenery made out of the remnants of architectural structures. However, he could not fail to acknowledge at the same time the recognizable irreversible destruction of the archaic buildings, the impossible coexistence of the material presence of evidence from incomparable chronologies, the discordant testimonies of extinguished universes, the irreparable oblivion called to mind by the obliterated fragments of the city. However, Freud suddenly recoils at the unacceptable sight of the incongruous memory, and the destruction of the remains implied by these allegories of the Eternal: the residues of Rome revealed themselves not as emblems, meaningful in themselves, but as enigmatic, obscure landscapes forged by a transient, restless gaze. At one moment in the text, Freud sought to emphatically deny the evident destruction of a world, which seemed to obliquely contradict his ardent rejection of the destruction of memory. Memory, like the archeological sites of Rome, appeared unexpectedly to Freud as an unbearable, simultaneous display of chronologically entangled traces and embedded, yet mutually exclusive relics of scenes; each ruin emerged as an isolated, inaccessible deposit of signs, demanding from the observer, to be fully understood, an impossible omnipresent gaze. This is a critical moment in *Das Unbehagen der Kultur*: here Freud confronted one of his cardinal convictions—the absolute indelible nature of the memory traces—with the spectres of his own allegorical imagination.

However, Freud condemns to oblivion this abrupt threat to the thesis of the absolute conservation of memory. The preservation of "the essential" memories of the subject's experience had haunted the psychoanalytical scene from the very beginning of the theoretical enterprise and it might be said that Freud never gave it up. From his early founding thesis on repression till the final reflections of *Konstruktionen in der Analyse* (1937), Freud obstinately maintained the fragile thesis of the absolute indelible nature of the memory traces of experience:

Man darf ja bekanntlich bezweifeln, ob irgendeine psychische Bildung wirklich voller Zerstörung anheimfällt. Es ist nur eigne Frage der analytischen Technik, ob es gelingen wird, *das Verborgene vollständig zum Vorschein zu bringen.*

(*Konstruktions in der Analyse*, SA, 1937, Ergänzungsband: 398. Emphasis added.)*

Freud obstinately avoided any shadow which might have evinced the destruction of psychological traces or irreversible dispelling of memory. To him, the *presence* of past images was undeniably *ingrained* in the present and defined the future, conceived as a set of spectral images enlivened by the vicissitudes of the subject's desire. Present images embody, even in their final shape [*endgültigen Gestaltung*], the significant remains of the early stages of the history of the subject's love attachments. Each structure, every trait of the subject's identity bears the impregnations of fragmented testimonies of its own past. The present is the delusive experience of a sediment of the subject's history both projected upon and informing it:

jederzeit Stücke der früheren Organisation neben der neueren fortbestehen, und daß selbst bei normaler Entwicklung die Umwandlung nie vollständig geschieht, so daß noch in der *endgültigen* Gestaltung Reste der *früheren* Libidofixierungen erhalten bleiben können. (*Die endliche un die unendliche Analyse*, SA, 1937, Ergänzungsband: 376. Emphasis added)**

The essential concepts of *residue* and *remnant*, present throughout Freud's work, acquire, in the light of this late reflection, a meaningful yet ambiguous sense. Consequently, the *remnant* of the fixations of the libido should be understood either as a fragment, as debris, as an uncertain trace of the wreck of desire, as a cast aside yet preserved, shred of the history of libido, or as the thriving, active, psychical manifestation of an encrypted memory. Freud's conception implies not an election of one of two senses, but the acceptance of the challenge to expound the conceptual tension of these divergent constructions, to build a complex interpretation of the significance of the remains preserved from psychical destruction.

Psychical finiteness and destruction are only, in Freud's terms, representable through a complex, articulated, accumulative and settled series of analogies, of

*Indeed it may, as we know, be doubted whether any psychical structure can really be the victim of total destruction. It depends only upon the analytic technique whether we shall succeed in bringing what is concealed completely to light. (SE, 1937, 23: 260)

**portions of the earlier organizations always persist alongside the more recent one, and even in normal development the transformation is never complete and residues of early libidinal fixations may still be retained in the final configurations. (SE, 1937, 23: 229)

allusions, which emerge in the dense weave of his allegorical writing. After a lifelong tireless struggle to prove the impossibility of the unconscious to represent the subject's own death — "But the unconscious seems to contain nothing that could give any content to our concept of the annihilation of life" [*Im Unbewußten ist aber nichts vorhanden, was unserem Begriff der Lebensvernichtung Inhalt geben kann*]—, Freud confronts the urgent need for a theoretical understanding of the complex anxiety brought about by the fear of death, a death of which no human being has any previous experience save the incomparable pain of mourning. The comprehension of this fear led to one possible explanation: the subject enacts again, in the allegorical picture of his own death, the primal loss of the object and the anxiety of castration.

Die Kastration wird sozusagen vorstellbar durch die tägliche Erfahrung der Trennung vom Darminhalt und durch den bei der Entwöhnung erlebten Verlust der mütterlichen Brust; etwas dem Tod Ähnliches ist aber nie erlebt worden oder hat wie die Ohnmacht keine nachweisbare Spur hinterlassen. Ich halte darum an der Vermutung fest, daß die Todesangst als Analogon der Kastrationsangst aufzufassen ist und daß die Situation, auf welche das Ich reagiert, das Verlassensein vom schützenden Über-Ich — den Schicksalsmächten ist, womit die Sicherung gegen alle Gefahren ein Ende hat. (Hemmung, Symptom und Angst, SA, 1926, III: 271-272)

The subject's own death, appears as a fictional construction which condenses the spectre of the future; it bears the marks of desire and exhibits the moulding action of the representation of loss; death is never envisioned through the veil of a previous experience or with the force of evocation. It is even foreign to the entangled structure of the temporal processes of consciousness. In Freud's thesis of the subject's incapacity to represent its own death, it is possible to perceive the Lockean echoes: it is impossible to know anything that has not previously constituted an experience. However, the effort to comprehend the sense of fear of death, in terms of a purely empiricist approach, leads to a meaningless outcome. Freud's reflections on the fear

*Castration can be pictured on the basis of the daily experience of the faeces being separated from the body or on the basis of losing the mother's breast at weaning. But nothing resembling death can ever have been experienced; or if it has, as in fainting, it has left no observable traces behind. I am therefore inclined to adhere to the view that the fear of death should be regarded as analogous to the fear of castration and that the situation to which the ego is reacting is one of being abandoned by the protecting super-ego — the powers of destiny— so that it has no longer any safeguard against all the dangers that surround it. (FP, 10: 285-286)

of death took him to a singular hermeneutic enquiry: to search for the truth of the indemonstrable fact, the truth of that which rejects truth. The pervading presence of death in psychoanalytic reflection was to strike it at its own silent, implicit foundations. The complex, uncertain yet definitive oppositions between free and the bound energy, between transience and fixation, between the ephemeral and the indelible, or between destruction and preservation, are only metaphorical resonances of a primordial Baroque conflict between life and death, between origin and end, between the energy response and the inert, the moving and the still, between active and passive, between lavishness and extinction.

Experience is intrinsically an expectation: the present tense —Freud has suggested— implies the actual, immediate emergence of the fictional truth of the future, and the delusive certainty of past. Experience, as well as desire and pain, reveal an irreducible tension between the mere disappearance of the loved object, the acknowledgement of its loss, its threatening presence which foreshadows the future arousal of an already endured suffering. The perception of the object not only apprises the subject of a pure presence, also it enacts its potential, future disappearance; the promise of satisfaction is in itself the presage of loss and death.⁴⁰

Freud's vision of transience as destiny involved the paradoxical belief in the obstinacy of memory and the image of the impulse to death. The Greek allegory of *Αναγκή*, as Freud recreated it, exposed the conceptual scandal of a determining, but *timeless* fate, which amalgamates, in a sudden suspension of oblivion, both anticipated and remembered events; also, the mythical fusion of contrasting conceptions —the failure of desire when it confronts the urgencies of life and the will to its own extinction, as well as the preeminence of decay and death which govern the profound impulses of psychical life— involved in *Αναγκή* resist any empiricist, analytical approach. It calls up images of sudden, extraneous, *lacerating* presences and visions, the subject's surrender to a demand that seems to emerge from the indifference of objects, from a bodiless structure made up of incidents, transient presences, ephemeral contacts, mechanical, infinite cycles of identical urgencies, which derives its own, singular impulse from the conditions of the subject's past experiences. The mythic struggle

against *Αναγκή* thus involves the complex dynamics of psychical response, the allegorical universe of sexuality. Gantheret has briefly summarized the place of these "necessities of life" [*Not des Lebens*] in the spectrum of Freudian concepts:

Ce sont les "exigencies de la vie", que Freud désignera dans d'autres textes par *Αναγκή*, en marquant ainsi le poids de destin et en nous laissant entrevoir ce qui serait peut-être au fondement de l'inalysable. Le reste -là où le modèle ne peut pas répondre-, c'est le champ de la sexualité humaine et son lien étroite au refoulement.⁴¹

The compelling action of *Αναγκή* is not to be apprehended without the silent presence of pain. Obliquely, Gantheret's remarks cast a new light upon the enigmatic, "unanalysable" relation between human sexuality and pain. The "necessity of life" implicitly names the presence of pain, the denial of satisfaction, the wreck of desire. This conviction burdened the Freudian conception of human fate as a perpetual deferral of satisfaction; this deferral mirrors the subject's indefinitely postponed apprehension of its loved object, the ceaseless defeat of the desire of fusion, of the extinction of need. The temporality of *Αναγκή* resembles that of pain; it also implies a subjective, complex "structure" of time: it involves memory and anticipation, the vision of future absence and an ever unfulfilled expectation, the defeat of sense, the enduring, dim pain aroused by the foreshadowed eclipse of desire and the certainty of repetition.

a. The duality of pain: psychical and physical

In 1917 Freud encounters again a crucial issue. He faces a puzzling, compromising, obscure topic. He must explain the nature of mania, its specific manifestations, its singular position among the elements of the vast and muddled taxonomy of the maladies of the soul. However, as had previously occurred, he postponed his explanation of mania and of the ego's inner conflict, until he had achieved a more profound comprehension of the nature of bodily and psychical pain.

Der Konflikt im Ich, den die Melancholie für den Kampf um das Objekt eintauscht, muß ähnlich wie eigne schmerzhaftes Wunde wirken, die eigne außerordentlich hohe Gegenbesetzung in Anspruch nimmt. Aber hier wird es wiederum zweckmäßig sein, haltzumachen und die weitere Aufklärung der Manie zu verschieben, bis wir Einsicht in die ökonomische Natur zunächst

des körperlichen und dann des ihm analogen seelischen Schmerzes gewonnen haben. (*Trauer und Melancholie*, SA, 1917, III: 212).*

Again, this illumination never came. The deferral of the comprehension of mania brings to light a meaningful issue: the limits of the economic model of pain and, furthermore, the obscurity of the relation which Freud has established between bodily [*körperlichen*] and psychical [*seelischen*] pain. The essential nature of mania seemed to come from the tension between these two dimensions of pain. But Freud's failure to apprehend the nature of mania also evinced the intractable facets of mourning, the enigma of its temporal inconsistencies, of its eventual decay and its informing force in psychical processes.

Mourning appears as the limit expression of the Baroque condition of Freud's theoretical imagination. Freud describes thoroughly the splitting of the ego [*Ichspaltung*] when it faces the disappearance of the love-object. The ego engages in a complex series of symbolic processes which involve the whole structure of the psychical apparatus: it experiences a complete metamorphosis and appears in the guise of a foreign physiognomy, likely to elude even the action of its critical agency, the super-ego. The ego carries on this masquerade as a response to the abrupt suppression of the object's presence. The masking is thus the outcome of the identification with the delusive, evoked image of the lost object. The called up representation, the deceiving restoration of the extinct figure, of the lost object stands for the actual presence of the object, as a sombre simulacrum. However, the ego identifies itself not with the absent object, but with its own inner spectral reminiscence. An inner mimicry, a silent mirroring of memories takes place in the silent, intimate landscape of the soul. The ego is compelled to resemble his own fantasized memory of the object. Yet, this mimicry is completely governed by the pervading sense of absence. In the dissolution of the link between the subject and its elected death object a complex structure of reflexive

*The conflict within the ego, which melancholia substitutes for the struggle over the object, must act like a painful wound which calls for an extraordinary high anticathexis. —But here once again, it will be well to call a halt and to postpone any further explanation of mania until we have gained some insight into the economic nature, first, of physical pain, and then of the mental pain which is analogous to it. (FP, 11: 267-268)

operations is built:

Die Objektbesetzung erwies sich als wenig resistent, sie wurde aufgehoben, aber die freie Libido nicht auf ein anderes Objekt verschoben, sondern ins Ich zurückgezogen. Dort fand sie aber nicht eigne beliebige Verwendung, sondern diente dazu, eigne Identifizierung des Ichs mit dem aufgegebenen Objekt herzustellen. Der Schatten des Objekts fiel so auf das Ich, welches nun von einer besonderen Instanz wie ein Objekt, wie das verlassene Objekt, beurteilt werden konnte. Auf diese Weise hatte sich der Objektverlust in einen Ichverlust verwandelt, der Konflikt zwischen dem Ich und der geliebten Person in einen Zwiespalt zwischen der Ichkritik und dem durch Identifizierung veränderten Ich. (*Trauer und Melancholie*, SA, 1917, III : 203)*

"Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego" [*Der Schatten of the Objekt fiel so auf das Ich*]: the ego surrenders to the violence of the mask, of the mirage; it disappears beneath the distorted image of its own primal loved object. It is not the memory of the full relief of the object what remained as an inner relic, as an interior image, but a vision tinted with the shades of absolute absence. It is absence that drives the subject to construe the shadow of the object as a pure, essential image; it is this spectral nature which stands as an efigy of an actual presence; as a perpetual yet intimate allegory of the once loved object. However, the absence of the object becomes an inherent feature of its own image which has, in turn, shaped the ego's identity. The ego turns then into a spectral allegory of its own lost object; the allegory of an allegory.

The enigma of mourning consists in the progressive dissipation of the violence conveyed by allegory, the weakening of the identification of the ego with disappearance itself, the dissipation of despair, and the engaging of the ego in a conflicting temporality of the replacement of the loved object, the complex process of the *Ersatz*.

This conflicting temporality of the *Ersatz* is briefly outlined by Freud in the

*The object-cathexis proved to have little power of resistance and was brought to an end. But the free libido was not displaced on to another subject; it was withdrawn into the ego. There, however, it was not employed in any unspecified way, but served to establish an *identification* of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, a forsaken object. In this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification. (FP, 11: 258)

description of the economic displacement of energy endured by the psychical contents of the experience of danger: the primordial token of danger is no longer perception of the threatening object; fear is aroused not by the object itself, but by the perceptions of the associated conditions and objects which surrounded the loss of the object. Fear responds to the sinecdoque of the experience of loss:

Mit der Erfahrung, daß ein äußeres, durch Wahrnehmung erfaßbares Objekt der an die Geburt mahnenden gefährlichen Situation ein Ende machen kann, verschiebt sich nun der Inhalt der Gefahr von der ökonomischen Situation auf seine Bedingung, den Objektverlust. (*Hemmung, Symptom und Angst*, SA, 1926, VI: 278)*

The object of satisfaction itself, as we have already remarked, is not only the agent of the suspension of the danger, the object which prevents the reappearance of pain; it is in itself a disquieting presence, a presence which evokes the dim pain of transience. It merges the memory of satisfaction with presages of absence, past and present, memory and allegory, a fragile excitement and an attenuated mourning. An affective ambivalence is the outcome of this disarrangement of the temporal frame of experience and of the displacement of the threatening sense of presence to the absence it evokes and to the conditions which surround it.

Consequently, the actual death and disappearance of the loved object is not only a mere extinction of a presence, but the settlement of contradictory memories and ambivalent evocations and profiles. The ego emerges from mourning as a mirage shaped by the reflexive allegories of absence. There is a first reflexive allegory: the images of the object as tokens of the abstract sense of absence. A second reflexive allegory: the images of the extinct object as the sign and the announcement of his own extinction. A third reflexive allegory: the sense of the images of the loved object as tokens of the senselessness of the object and the ego. This tension between the allegories of absence which mirror an empty ego, increases the intensity of the regressive impulse, the restoration of primordial pain. The symbolic imagery associated with this primordial pain, together with the contrasting and mirroring allegories of

*When the infant has found out by experience that an external, perceptible object can put an end to the dangerous situation which is reminiscent of birth, the content of the danger it fears is displaced from the economic situation on to the condition which determined that situation, viz., the loss of object. (FP, 10: 294)

mourning bring about the paradoxical symbolic syntax of the experience of death. Freud's unwillingness to admit the incorporation in the unconscious of the actual representation of the subject's own death led him to resort to allegories of death to represent the unconscious process of mourning. Again, the allegories of theory mirror the subject's allegoric imagination in the face of death. The challenge to provide a theoretical explanation of mourning and of the subject's experience of death puts the psychoanalytic theory under extreme tension: the explanation of the subject's apprehension of its own finiteness as a folding of an empty image, erected upon the death of the love-object. Anxiety emerges in face of the endless dissipation of one's own image, a dissipation inherent to the allegories of the definitive fading of the love-object. The subject regards, in the unsustainable mirroring of these images of absence, the extinction of his own life; the representation of the dark, asymmetric, radically excluded pole of an extremely painful experience: the death of the beloved as the absolute, inexorable rejection of the *Ersatz*, the radical insignificance of the replacement. Mourning becomes a synonym of memory, a remembrance of the love-object as hollowness and as the saturating image of one's own ego, an image which pervades with non-existence the dense presence of ego. But mourning preserves itself as an experience, as a manifestation of the affective and temporal attachments of the subject.

Wir werden auch den Vergleich gutheißen, der die Stimmung der Trauer eigne schmerzliche nennt. Seine Berechtigung wird uns wahrscheinlich einleuchten, wenn wir imstande sind, den Schmerz ökonomisch zu charakterisieren. (*Trauer und Melancholie*, SA, 1917, III: 198)*

The multiplicity of the subject's objects appear also as the distinct targets of the serial displacement of energy. The pulsating, rhythmic, temporal structure of the subjective experience still remains.

Nevertheless, Freud never succeeds in this characterization. The economic interpretation of pain was to remain an undeveloped, implicit, silent schematic persistence of the former convictions, dragged along in the course of Freud's

*We should regard it as an appropriate comparison, too, to call the mood of mourning a 'painful' one. We shall probably see the justification for this when we are in a position to give a characterization. (FP, 11: 252)

theoretical endeavor. On the surface of his texts, the strange, abrupt diversion is meaningful. The drastic abandonment of the narrative cohesion of the argumentation reveals a visible fracture. The economic characterization of pain is a mere exercise in resistance.

In Freud's conception, melancholia and mourning differ in their temporal structure. The intense tonalities of melancholia offer privileged insights into the nature of the temporal structure of both disturbances.

In noch anderen Fällen glaubt man an der Annahme eines solchen Verlustes festhalten zu sollen, aber man kann nicht deutlich erkennen, was verloren wurde, und darf um so eher annehmen, daß auch der Kranke nicht bewußt erfassen kann, was er verloren hat. Ja, dieser Fall könnte auch dann noch vorliegen, wenn der die Melancholie veranlassende Verlust dem Kranken bekannt ist, indem er zwar weiß, wen, aber nicht, was er an ihm verloren hat. So würde uns nahegelegt, die Melancholie irgendwie auf einen dem Bewußtsein entzogenen Objektverlust zu beziehen, zum Unterschied von der Trauer, bei welcher nichts an dem Verluste unbewußt ist. (*Trauer und Melancholie*, SA, 1917, III: 199)*

What governs the singular attachment of the melancholic to his own condition is his fixation to the impregnable secrecy of the lost presence. The melancholic has not only experienced the disappearance of the object but something else which remains absolutely unapproachable and secret. It is this fixation on the secret loss which determines the obstinacy, the reluctance of the melancholic to unfetter itself from the manifold tensions stemming from the primordial experience. The dialectic of loss has come in the melancholic to an absolute stillness. Melancholia hampers the displacement and dissipation of the charge involved in the experience of loss; it defers the reflexive representation of the conditions of the absence or the anticipation of a virtual suffering which stifle the poignant intensity of the extinction of the object. The experience of psychological annihilation stems from the clustering of all the facets of the experience into the monolithic figure of the extinguished object; the whole experience is condensed in

In yet other cases one feels justified in maintaining the belief that a loss of this kind has occurred, but one cannot see clearly what it is that has been lost, and it is all the more reasonable to suppose that the patient cannot consciously perceive what he has lost either. This, indeed, might be so even if the patient is aware of the loss which has given rise to his melancholia, but only in a sense that he knows *whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him. This would suggest that melancholia is in some ways related to an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness, in contradistinction to mourning, in which there is nothing about the loss that is unconscious. (FP, 11: 254)

the barren figure of the missing object, which also freezes the manifold temporal experience of the subject. The subject, captured and destroyed by its own mirror image, hurls itself into this all-embracing vacuous image. Secrecy approaches its most exasperating figure: the secret that there is no secrecy at all. The absolute evidence of a timeless, conditionless, pure, non-existent object.

V. Masochism: allegories of pain

1. Philosophical fables and multiplicity of pain

In 1920, the introduction of the speculative thesis of death instinct involved at once an immense transformation in psychoanalytic theory, an exacerbation of its fictional foundations, and a broadening of its hermeneutical scope. Not only did the "biological" fable of the antagonistic tendencies of the unicellular and pluricellular organisms endow the theoretical spectrum of the psychoanalytic notions with an unexpected significance, it also put forward an implicit ethical framework. The biological framework which had until then offered to Freud a "neutral", firm, though remote scientific warranty, and set a visible horizon for the fictional trends of his conception, appeared unexpectedly as an allegorical motive, an imagery which offered a means for the comprehension of subjectivity. Paradoxically, this radical turn of the biological model—from description to allegory—attenuated the force of the symbolic representation of death. This weakened vision of death turned into an abstract, theoretical intrinsic impulse of being; it involved the dissipation of the boundaries of the self and the extinguishing of its energy; energy itself incarnates a crucial character in a tragic landscape of the essential forces of universe. The notion of *disposition* and its evolutionist heritage acquired an intensified transcendental lustre. Freud resolutely invoked Empedocles's mythical conception of the essential duality of being as a firm philosophical support for his own fictional agonistic duality in the source of subjectivity.

As we have previously remarked, the theory of the instincts [*Trieblehre*] was

still, in 1920, an "obscure matter" —and it remained so. Freud did not hesitate to acknowledge the insufficiency of its own theoretical efforts to expound the nature of drive; he initiates one of his crucial arguments with the unexpected confession: "In the obscurity that reigns at present in the theory of instincts." (FP, 11: 326) [*Bei dem gegenwärtigen Dunkel der Triblehre (Jenseits des Lustprinzips, SA, 1920, III: 262)*], which introduced his reflections on the nature and the fate of love. Freud envisioned the object of love as the conjunction of two irreducible forces which ruled psychical life: love and hate. After struggling uselessly against a vague, obscure effort to explain in terms of a delusive biological model the origins of sexuality and destruction, Freud turned to Plato.

Plato's fable celebrated the primordial bisexual condition of being, making actual sexuality the aftermath of a first catastrophic cleavage of the original fulfilled being. Freud accomplished an astounding allegorical exposure of a philosophical and biological synthesis, putting forth a mythical image of the origins of multicellular life, incarnated in the efigies of Eros and Thanatos. The path followed by Freud's reflection dims and exhibits puzzling shades: he even confesses a relative lack of conviction in what he has already stated, while he prepares the reader for the unlikely explanation which he is about to encounter. He sketches a fiction assembled by "repeatedly combining factual material with what is purely speculative and thus diverging widely from empirical observation." (FP, 11: 333) [*nacheinander Tatsächliches mit bloß Erdachtem kombiniert und sich dabei weit von der Beobachtung entfernt (Jenseits des Lustprinzips, SA, 1920, III: 268)*]. Freud concludes this quite unusual reflection with a footnote which condenses, in a "terminological" remark, the progressive abstraction of sexuality from its biological ground and its metamorphosis into the mythical Eros, abandoning the biological finality of being which was only the reproduction of the species.

Eros turns out to be the emblem of the pure force of fusion. Freud maintained then the transcendental nature of death instinct, confounding its origins with those of being.⁴² The death instinct appears "by the coming to life of inorganic substance" [*durch die Belebung des Anorganischen entstanden ist*]. A later addition to this same footnote enhances significantly his earlier conception. It clearly distinguishes the

successive stages of the development of sadism and masochism; sadism emerges from the unfolding of the intrinsic, primary masochist component of the death instinct; in sadism, destruction aims at an outward object, later, destruction might turn in on the subject itself and aim at an inward subjective agency. This successive turn of the impulse of destruction does not obliterate the previous one, yet it accumulates powerful, contradictory impulses, diverging aims and objects of the destructive psychological force.

The positive unfolding of the drives —libido is either directed towards an outer object or towards the ego, the narcissistic drives showing a libidinal character— made it necessary to introduce an analogous, yet negative component: "a fresh opposition appeared between the libidinal (ego- and object-)instincts and *others*." (Emphasis added) [*ein neuer Gegensatz zwischen libidinösen (Ich- und Objekt-)Trieben und andere*]. This *otherness* of the negative psychological forces was evinced by the psychological enactment of destruction. Freud's propensity to speculative schemes, forged an allegorical figure: abstracting the drives from their biological domain, and building them as pure energies oriented towards an object and governed by a transcendental aim: either destruction or fusion. The theoretical endeavour of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips* led Freud to the construction of a transcendental, axiologically neutral conception of the psychological apparatus. The outcome of his reflection was a condensed vision of the senseless impulse to shatter and merge impulses, to entangle and disentangle inextricable flows of energy and motor discharges, inherent in psychological life. Freud culminated his exposure with the astounding vision of destruction without pain, and fusion without rapture. Destruction as neutral obliteration, a sort of "induced disappearance", as an indifferent shattering of psychological and material objects.

Despite the *seeming congruence* between both sadism and masochism and the absolute transcendental finality of death instinct —destruction—, both of them differ from it in a determinant feature: they embody pain as a definite condition of their own structure. In turn, their irreducible difference is the *role* they attribute to pain. As Deleuze has convincingly pointed out, the relevance of pain in both sadism and masochism does not evince either complementary or congruent patterns, but asymmetrical developments and incomparable senses.

Au niveau des perversions, on a le tort de confondre les formations, les expressions concrètes et spécifiques, avec une "grille" abstraite, comme une matière libidineuse commune qui ferait passer d'une expression à l'autre [...] On abstrait le lien plaisir-douleur des conditions formelles concrètes dans lesquelles il s'établit. On considère le mélange plaisir-douleur comme une sorte de matière neutre, commune au sadisme et au masochisme.⁴³

However, Freud acknowledges the specific paradox of the dynamic conception of perversion. Pushing to its limits an allegorically construed reading of Weissman's contemporary research on biological reproduction, Freud puts forth a transcendental scheme of the dual cosmic forces. In this light, for life to appear and develop it requires an accumulation of energy, an increasing quantity of bonding energy, it implies the predominant force of Eros; Eros involves the increase in the level of energy which arouses the perception of pain. This process gives rise to the appearance of what Freud names a "a fresh *vital difference*" [*neue Vitaldifferenzen*], which springs from living being's proclivity to dissemination: a fracture, a breach, an unforeseeable tension which involves the disappearance and the cleavage of the primordial structures. However, the action of the death instinct seems to parallel this restless cleavage and severing of the being; it seeks dispersion, the dismembering of living, the destruction of object, the abatement of the inner energy even beyond the frontiers of life. As we have already stressed, death instinct appears as the exacerbation of the pleasure principle, that take the subject itself beyond the limits of the preservation of his own life. Both processes are far from being mirror images. They are not even comparable. For the arrangement of their inadmissible coexistence Freud resorts to an unexpected and elusive expression: the *vital difference* provoked by the outburst of Eros must be "lived off" [*abgelebt*]⁴⁴ through the domain of the death instinct. The odd attribute of the death instinct, to *live off* the vital difference accounts for the paradoxical

⁴⁴Strachey's translation ("to live off") holds the main sense of the use of this surprising expression. Indeed, the term resists any literal, simple translation. The German word merges in a single term manifold senses which stem from the extraordinary productivity of the morphological resources of the German language. The composite form merges a sense of deviation and swerving from, yet also of detachment and undoing, as well as the allusion to tracing back, the obvious sense of negation; the use of the *ab-* prefix might even evoke a particularly intense stress, a conclusive accent put on the action. All of these nuances confer on the verb *leben* (to live), an enigmatic sense, which seems to allude to a *differentiating pressure* endured by a living being. Several paragraphs later, Strachey yields to the inertia of reading. He translates then the term *Ableben*, which repeats almost literally the previous term, into the "natural" expression *cease to live*, which clearly avoids the previous difficulties but strips the text from one of its most opaque and symptomatic expressions.

entanglement of these notions.

Thus pain involved in sadism *as well as* in masochism, involving an outburst of an overwhelming flow of energy, must serve sexual excitation. Life and death fuse in the realm of the conditions on the energy flows regarding sexuality. Pain appears as a condition of life; pain seems to confront, in this image of life, its own negative figure: the living being's aim towards pure destruction. However, pure destruction, as the transcendental end aimed at by the death instinct is foreign to the experience of pain. Freud envisions life as embodying the creative force of an allegorical, senseless destruction; thus, the living being inherently strives for its own annihilation only to regain the plenitude brought about by the dispelling of its substance. Freud adds: the libido preserves itself, the subject's integrity, only by deviating outwards, towards an external object, the energy aimed at destruction; moreover, it seeks not only destruction, but a perception of destruction, the signs of pain. Consequently, both destruction and pleasure endure a drastic, absolute metamorphosis in this unfolding of masochism into sadism; the energy seems to reject the confined inner space of the living being; it ceases to linger as a pure, silent, untraceable process, and becomes an expressive, conspicuous, acting force. While the intrinsic pleasure of erotogenic—biological—masochism is kept beyond the reach of reflexive consciousness, both destruction and pleasure, become attached, in sadism, to the potency of perception and consciousness. In emerging as an actual, visible force exerted upon the other, destruction foresakes its aim to self-destruction and becomes an effective means of achieving the pleasure of motor discharge, as well as the pleasure of the escatological fulfilment of its transcendental finality.

Ein Anteil dieses Triebes wird direkt in den Dienst der Sexualfunktion gestellt, wo er Wichtiges zu leisten hat. Dies ist der eigentliche Sadismus. Ein anderer Anteil macht diese Verlegung nach außen nicht mit, er verbleibt im Organismus und wird dort mit Hilfe der erwähnten sexuellen Miterregung libidinös gebunden; in ihm haben wir den ursprünglichen, erogenen Masochismus zu erkennen. (*Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus*, SA, 1924, III: 346)*

*A portion of this instinct is placed directly in the service of the sexual function, where it has an important part to play. This is sadism proper. Another portion does not share in this transposition outwards; it remains inside the organism and, with the help of the accompanying sexual excitation described above, becomes libidinally bound here; it is in this portion that we have to recognize the original, erotogenic masochismus. (FP, 11: 418)

The impulse to destruction splits into an unfolding force which turns outwards and an impulse which turns inwards taking the self as the target of its destructive aim. This cleavage makes of each of the divergent impulses of the death instinct irreconcilable forces. According to Deleuze, we should distinguish a "pure death instinct" and a "destructive drive": the former refers to a silent force that aims for the dissipation of being, and which resides at the source of both, sadismus und masochismus, a force which secretly abides in the core of the subject's identity, yet driving the living being to the final quietude of the inorganic substance. While pure death instinct rules the psychical and bodily processes unrelentlessly and ceaselessly, the subject's life merges the action of the drives; sexuality appears as the fusion of the representations of inward or outward impulses, of the actual, visible destructive actions and of the impulses of self-preservation and reproduction which inform the dynamic and psychical performance of the subject.

Im psychoanalytischen Gedankenkreis können wir nur annehmen, daß eigne sehr ausgiebige, in ihren Verhältnissen variable Vermischung und Verquickung der beiden Triebarten zustande kommt, so daß wir überhaupt nicht mit reinen Todes- und Lebenstrieben, sondern nur mit verschiedenwertigen Vermengungen derselben rechnen sollten. (*Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus*, SA, 1924, III: 347)

The evidence of perversion, and especially of masochism, led Freud to recognize, not only the mutating nature of pain; but also the simultaneous existence of irreducible painful objects and processes. There is not pain alone but distinct pains, which differ in their inherent sources and aims, in their manifestations and in the perceptions they arouse, in the psychical images to which they hold. Pain is not a single experience.

2. The Baroque taxonomy of masochism

Freud seems to have acknowledged the complex nature of pain in his taxonomy of masochism. In it, he fully expounds his intimate Baroque vision of pain. The

*So far as the psychoanalytic field of ideas is concerned, we can only assume that a very extensive fusion and amalgamation, in various proportions, of the two classes of instincts take place, so that we never have to deal with pure life instincts or pure live instincts but only with mixtures of them in different amounts. (FP, 11: 419)

physiognomy of masochism is shaped by the vicissitudes of the folding and turning movement of a primordial, escatological impulse, which springs from the essence of life itself. Thus, the different kinds of masochism, which Freud sharply distinguishes: erotogenic, feminine, and moral, do not reveal themselves to be progressive stages, which contribute to the final shape of the psychical structure; rather, each different kind of masochism appears as a distinct, unfolding experience of pain built upon a previous one, as a settling fold which overlays others. The landscape of psychical processes resembles that of the creased surface of simultaneously enlivened processes, assembled from a constellation of silent traces of painful experiences. Erotogenic masochism appears as a process likely to breed the primordial structure of psychical experience. However, envisioned by Freud as an invariant painful dimension of psychical life, bound to the transcendental finality of live beings, erotogenic masochism remains a representation of the force of mechanical, secret destruction inherent in the fabric of life.

Masochism, in Freud's vision, acquires the structure of a disquieting phantasy; the notion of pain implicit in it involves a dense and lavish imagery which seek to expound the metamorphosis of dynamic, passive and active sexual expressions; it gives rise to an allegorical scenery of the corporeal display of abstract sexualities. However, erotogenic masochism is not the only disquieting dimension of Freud's taxonomy. Moral masochism, which involves the desire for suffering and punishment, acquire a peculiar opaqueness. Moral masochism does not revoke the presence of the other manifestations of masochism; their painful objects and representations intrude upon the dynamics of psychical processes, introducing a heightening tension in the intricate conflicts between the subjective agencies. Moral masochism imposes on the subject a suffering that calls up to the conscious condensed memories and images which present a spectre of the painful object, brought to light by the dynamics of regression.

Moreover, the folding movement of the drives was one of Freud's early discoveries. In the metapsychological papers, he was already aware of the the turning inwards of the force which originally aimed at an outward object, when he encountered the puzzle of identification. This early insight was to be taken almost literally, without significant changes, in his astounding vision of masochism:

Wir werden nicht erstaunt sein zu hören, daß unter bestimmten Verhältnissen der nach außen gewendete, projizierte Sadismus oder Destruktionstrieb wieder introjiziert, nach innen gewendet werden kann, solcherart in seine frühere Situation regrediert. Er ergibt dann den sekundären Masochismus, der sich zum ursprünglichen hinzuaddiert. Der erogene Masochismus macht alle Entwicklungsphasen der Libido mit und entnimmt ihnen seine wechselnden psychischen Umkleidungen. (*Das ökonomische Probleme des Masochismus*, SA, 1923, III: 348)*

Yet, this expounded insight into the folding movement of the instinct of destruction not only evinces the essential duality of the death instinct, it also illuminated a particular feature of regression itself. Regression reveals itself not as a definite return of psychical processes to an identical but already transcended stage; regression is not comparable to involution; rather, it engenders a mirror yet distorted image of past memories; sense and reminiscence are engendered by regression; regression creates unprecedented variations of the abiding relics of the subject's experience; yet, these parallel albeit irreducible images do not replace the primordial traces; rather, they accrue to the constellation of preserved remains of perceptions and actions. In fact, instead of a mere return to what was experienced once, regression may be conceived as the creation and the condensation of sediments, amalgamated in the successive foldings of the drives.

Freud did not hesitate to assert the impurity of the manifestations of the *destruction drive* —if it is to be distinguished, as Deleuze did, from death instinct— which appears always in an intricate manifestation with life instincts: "we never have to deal with pure life instincts or pure death instincts but only with mixtures of them in different amounts." (FP, 11: 418) [*wir überhaupt nicht mit reinen Todes- und Lebenstrieben, sondern nur mit verschiedenwertigen Vermengungen derselben rechnen sollten.*] (*Die ökonomische Probleme des Masochismus*, SA, 1923, III: 348)]. Freud depicted the metamorphosis, the disguises [*Umkleidungen*] adopted by this force in this regressive return of the force against its original agent.

Sie [die Libido] hat die Aufgabe, diesen destruirenden Trieb unschädlich zu machen, und entledigt sich ihrer, indem sie ihn

*We shall not be surprised to hear that in certain circumstances the sadism, or instinct of destruction, which has been directed outwards, projected, can be once more introjected, turned inwards, and in this way regress to its early situation. If this happens, a secondary masochism is produced, which is added to the original masochism. Erotogenic masochism accompanies the libido through all its developmental phases and derives from them its changing psychical coatings. (FP, 11: 419)

zum großen Teil und bald mit Hilfe eines besonderen Organsystems, der Muskulatur, nach außen ableitet, gegen die Objekte der Außenwelt richtet. Er heie dann Destruktionstrieb, Bemtigungstrieb, Wille zur Macht. (*Das konomische Problem des Masochismus*, SA, 1924, III: 346)*

In masochism, the destructive drive appears essentially as a compelling form of regression; as a force which, having been exerted upon an exterior object, then turns back against its own source, an uncertain subjective entity. The most enigmatic attribute of this kind of regression —subjectivity itself— is its encounter with an obscure identity. The target of the destructive drive is neither the subject as such, nor a particular subjective agency, but being itself. The destructive force is completely oriented towards the destruction of *being* [*Wesen*]. The destruction drive, wrote Freud, "has the self as its object" [*das eigene Wesen zum Objekt hat*].⁴⁴

The domineering force of the death instinct, despite its entanglement with the impulses to self preservation, manifests itself not only in the exertion of an active shattering force, actual or imaginary, upon foreign beings or upon inner subjective agencies, but as coercion which seeks the abasement of the other's self-image, the demolition of the symbolic support of his identity, of his incorporated values; the destruction —symbolical or physical— of the other appears as an exacerbated means of strengthening the will to control and the image of the self.

3. The allegories of inner gaze: vigilance and culpability

The fable of super-ego, put forward by Freud as a crucial element of his second theory of the psychological apparatus, involves his acknowledgement of the violent, lifelong action of the memory of primordial suffering. The traces of suffering do not remain as inert residues. They arouse painful new images. This memory of pain engenders a destructive tension which stems from the conflict between psychological agencies, namely, the super-ego and the ego. A violent, newly created, yet enduring perception emerges

*The libido has the task of making the destroying instincts innocuous, and it fulfils the task by diverting that instinct to great extent outwards — soon with the help of a special organic system, the muscular apparatus — towards objects in the external world. The instinct is then called the destructive instinct, the instinct for mastery, or the will of power. (FP, 11: 418)

as the outcome of this tension between inner, dynamic, psychological processes: the *sense of guilt*.

Freud was fully aware of the contradictions involved in the expression *sense of guilt* [*Shuldgefühl*]. He alluded to them emphatically on few but meaningful occasions. The "sense of guilt" clearly involved the representation, in terms of perceptions and images, of the struggle between repetition and the imagery of desire, the preeminence of pain as the aftermath of the memories of loss, and the failure of action; from the regressive impulses perceived as "sense of guilt" thus arises the experienced "need for punishment".

The main force of the argument for the existence of the 'sense of guilt' implies the relevance of inner *perception*, as a means not only to symbolically define the ego's self perception, to build its own symbolic identity, but also as a means to represent the failure of desire, the wreckage of identity, the distress brought about by repetition and the preeminence of suffering; thus, super-ego appears as a character likely to exert "moral authority". Inner perception builds an abstract, austere and relentless ruling code of the subject's action upon the allegorical portrait of the roles of efigies which bear the sense of the primordial, lost loved figures. This "inner perception" not only shapes the identity of the psychological agencies, but also the conscious outcome of their tension.

Wir haben dem Über-Ich die Funktion des Gewissens zugeschrieben und im Schuldbewußtsein den Ausdruck einer Spannung zwischen Ich und Über-Ich erkannt. (*Das ökonomische Problem des Masochismus*, SA, 1924, III : 350)

The experience of fear which stems from the perception of the irreducible breach between the agencies, reveals also the intrinsically perturbing experience of temporality. The super-ego condenses a disjointed accumulation of aged relics, of never experienced, but still active memories of past effective constraints, conveyed implicitly in the voice and experience of the others. The violence of the super-ego is a reflexive one; it is exerted, with all its destructive power, upon the ego itself. It is constituted by the accumulated memories not of the loved objects themselves, but of their symbolic

¹We have attributed the function of conscience to the super-ego and we have recognized the consciousness of guilt as an expression of a tension between the ego and the super-ego. (FP, 11: 421)

universes. Super-ego becomes the trace of the trace: the memories of the symbolic universe of the loved object, of its words, of the sense of its acts and functions, without the affective intensity which the object itself arouses, just as the ego acquired its singular traits, from the accumulation of the traces of the lost objects. The image of super-ego seems to emerge from endless mirrors which reflect and distort the original image of the ego made up of residues of love.

Vielleicht ist diese Identifizierung überhaupt die Bedingung, unter der das Es seine Objekte aufgibt [...] der Charakter des Ichs ein Niederschlag der aufgegebenen Objektbesetzungen ist, die Geschichte dieser Objektwahlen enthält. (*Das Ich und das Es*, SA, 1923, III: 297)*.

The ego and the super-ego undergo similar processes: they are also built from debris of past love bonds. Each of the loved objects and its own sphere of words, attributes and values, repeats and transforms the other; each of them impress enduring hieroglyphs which inform the figure of super-ego; not an inert receptacle of mere abandoned shreds of memories; rather, super-ego looms as a menacing and effective character, a fantastic, fictional identity likely to invoke the abstract schemes of symbolic universe of disappeared loved figures. It becomes the living, engraved memory of disappeared objects and their affective load, transformed into the actual phantasy of a violent agent, which emerges from the dynamics of the psychical apparatus.

das Über-Ich auch seine Herkunft aus Gehörtem unmöglich verleugnen kann, es ist ja ein Teil des Ichs und bleibt von diesen Wortvorstellungen (Begriffen, Abstraktionen) her dem Bewußtsein zugänglich, aber die Besetzungsenergie wird diesen Inhalten des Über-Ichs nicht von der Hörwahrnehmung, dem Unterricht, der Lektüre, sondern von den Quellen im Es zugeführt. (*Das Ich und das Es*, SA, 1923, III: 319)**

The image of law, incorporated in the psychical apparatus as the symbolic structure

*it may be that by this identification—which Freud tends to equal to introjection—is the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects.[...] the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-choices. (FP, 11:368)

**it is as impossible for the super-ego as for the ego to disclaim its origin from being heard; for it is a part of the ego and remains accessible to consciousness by way of these word-presentations (concepts, abstractions). But the *cathexis energy* does not reach these contents of the super-ego from auditory perception (instructions or reading) but from the sources of the id. (FP, 11:394)

which upholds super-ego, is the construed regularity and symbolic imperatives imposed by the loved-figures upon the subject. Super-ego, paradoxically, as a symbolic expressions abstracted from the memories of its objects, acquires an autonomous force and exerts upon the subject's ego an abstract violence. This autonomous sense of regularity becomes an invariant dimension of the subject's psychical expressions; it accompanies all symbolic behaviour of the subject. Thus, Freud maintains, it is transmitted from generation to generation; the symbolic invariant, which constitutes the intimate law of the subject is apprehended, embodied and reproduced from parents to children, in an uninterrupted series of links. Yet, it is not the parents' image that has been *introjected* by the subject. It is an abstract, symbolic scheme, made up of the amalgam of the construed symbolic actions of loved, authoritative figures, which inform the 'invariant' intimate law of the subject. Tradition, Freud suggests, might be seen as this serial transmission of the intimate imperatives of accumulated traces of the autonomous and relentless symbolic imperatives, detached from their object and displayed as impersonal dicta.

The serial assembly of these abstract, impersonal, merely symbolic assortments of rules and imperatives, gives an expressive view of the complex constitution of the super-ego. However, each new transmission of these inherited images involves the subject's own affective history, which distorts and redefines the symbolic aura of the parents' image and the love history of the subject, his relation to his own authority figures, the peculiar encounters which condense and shape the symbolic constraints imposed on the self by the super-ego. Freud's fable of the formation of the super-ego is the narration of the progressive embodiment, the accumulative density of timeless characters, stripped of their singular history, abstracted from their flesh. But these allegorical, timeless, symbolic rules, divested of the signs of their own historical singularity, endure, nevertheless, a severe subjective transformation: they appear as models of the self, they appear as virtual, desirable images of the ego.

Freud, at an early stage of his research, in *Zur Einführung des Narzißmus* (1914), had hastily outlined, alluding to the psychical creation of the Ideal, a crowd of allegories involved in the theoretical representation of what he envisaged as an inner 'observing' instance, the origin of moral consciousness. The allegory of the "gaze" of

an inner agency of subjectivity displayed a chimerical scenery.

This early allegory preceded and probably suggested the later image of super-ego. Ego watches the gaze of the super-ego, while the super-ego, in turn, watches the ego, and exerts upon him the intrinsic violence of the "inherited" abstract law, which "emanates" from the authoritative figures. Crossing gazes without gaze; discordant, antagonistic images of agencies with unfathomable identities, conflicts of grimaces of characters without a face, constitute a privileged moment of the allegorized portrait of subjectivity.

Freud's essential means to apprehend the emergence of the subject's symbolic identity is the Baroque stress put on the dominant place the transient memory of the *voice* of the loved parents take in the emergence of the singular psychical conflicts of the individual. Indeed, in *Zur Einführung des Narzißmus* we read:

Die Anregung zur Bildung des Ichideals, als dessen Wächter das Gewissen bestellt ist, war nämlich von dem *durch die Stimme kritischen* vermittelten kritischen Einfluß der Eltern ausgegangen (*Zur Einführung des Narzißmus*, SA, 1914, III: 62. Emphasis added)*

The super-ego emerges from these enigmatic sediments of voice; the spoken word, the stress on the syllables, the peculiar force of the acts of language which confer on them the subtle yet peremptory authority over consciousness, account for the preeminence of expressivity in the edification of an ethical framework over the logical construction of arguments. The super-ego emerges as an uncertain sediment of countless layers of the other's ancient, inherited memories, insinuated in the tensions of the spoken sounds. Benjamin remarked that this vanishing of the tangible, recognizable context which arouses images of bodies and actions, this timelessness of memories of violence, this loss of the historical signals of the constraints imposed on the subject, this abstraction and autonomy of the rule, informed by the exasperated memory of the voice of other are the roots of allegory. Freud's reflection on the super-ego reveals in vigorous yet broad strokes his own Baroque conception of subjectivity.

*What prompt the subject to form an ego ideal, on whose behalf his conscience acts as a watchman, arose from the critical influence of his parents (conveyed to him by the "medium of the voice") (FP, 11: 90)

NOTES

1. Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887-1904*, p.448.
2. Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex. Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp.169-170.
3. John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic*, p.594. In a previous paragraph, John Stuart Mill foreshadowed the psychoanalytic conception of object election in a language which closely resembles Freud's own terms: "The idea, for example, of a given desirable object will excite in different minds very different degrees of intensity of desire."
4. Roland Barthes stressed the paradoxical nature of this demand of modern rationalism, illuminated by psychoanalysis and phenomenological speculations: the logical scandal, already adumbrated by Kant, of the universalization of singularity and which Barthes does not hesitate to call "mathesis singularis", acknowledging its impossible condition. See Roland Barthes, *Camera lucida* (Paris: Seuil-Gallimard-Cahier du Cinéma, 1981).
5. The equivalence between man as active, and women as passive has an ancient and uncertain history. However, this "fundamental" difference seem to have accounted, in Freud's social environment, to deeply rooted "ethical" patterns. Freud stated it in crude terms: "the sociological meaning of these words describe actual behavior of empirical men and women", [*die soziologische Bedeutung [of this opposition] erhält ihren Inhalt durch die Beobachtung der wirkliche existierenden männlichen und weiblichen Individuen*]. The origins of the relation between active and passive, corresponded to the dominant image of the opposing, historical figures of men and women.
6. Tzvetan Todorov has stressed that metaphor can be seen as a dual metonymical structure linked by a common feature. Cfr. Tzvetan Todorov, 'Sinécdoques', *Communications*, 16, (1970) [Paris: Seuil].
7. Freud's conception approaches at this point Max Weber's conception of action.
8. An analytical approach to the notion of *instinct* in terms of the structure of action induced Freud to develop a crucial issue of his theoretical framework. In his *Triebe und Triebchicksale*, Freud writes: "Wir können nun einige Termini diskutieren, welche im Zusammenhang mit dem Begriffe Trieb gebrauch werden, wie: Drang, Ziel, Object, Quelle des Triebes." (*Triebe und Triebchicksale*, SA, 1915, III: 85) [We are now in the position to discuss certain terms which are used in reference to the concept of an instinct—for example—, its pressure, its aims, its objects and its source. (FP, 11: 118)]
9. One of the most remarkable properties of the mental representation of objects is the undefined and expanding web of its attributes. This quality acquired unforeseeable consequences when projected upon sexuality: the "perception" of the attributes of the object does not reveal a mere passive reception of stimuli, but a point of attraction the energy of which is capable of informing the vast web of representations associated to the object of satisfaction.
10. It is not by accident that Kant opened one of his pre-critical essays alluding to the aberrations of the perception of matter and its position in space as a clear reference to the indisputable certainties of Newtonian physics. The power of geometry seemed to confirm the infinite capacity of reason and observation. Space and image have enacted, since the appearance of Newtonian physics and the enthrone of empiricism, a silent struggle between opposing criteria of truth.
11. Claude Lefort has suggested that modern democracy, as a coherent, imaginary set of policies issued from the French Revolution, has its origin in the ritual destruction of the king's body, required also the symbolic destruction of a visible centre of power; from then on, the legitimate political force abides in an intangible,

shapeless collective body.

12. Roland Barthes put forward a dazzling description of sadian *syntax* and its relation to the transgressive rationalism it enacted. "Le code érotique est composé d'unités qui ont été soigneusement déterminées et nommées par Sade lui-même. L'unité minimale est la *posture*, c'est la plus petite combinaison que l'on puisse imaginer car elle ne réunit qu'une action et son point corporel d'application [...] Tous ces règles [l'opération, la figure, l'épisode] sont soumises à des règles de combinaisons —ou de composition. Ces règles permettraient facilement une formalisation de la langue érotique, analogue aux 'arbres' graphiques proposés par nos linguistes: ce serait en somme l'arbre du crime." Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier et Loyola*, p.34.

13. See above, p.287.

14. Walter Benjamin, 'Über das Programm der kommenden Philosophie', in *Angelus Novus. Ausgewählten Schriften 2* (Frankfurt: 1963: repr. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1988), p.28.

15. Empiricism presumed the existence of an achieved harmony between will and control, between sensibility and transformation: a theory of the senses joined a theory of action, the notion of direct evidence was to be replaced by the notion of calculable effects.

16. See above pp.68, 73, 8. This early notion was to reveal itself as a fundamental concept of psychoanalytic theory. Despite its resistance to analysis, the notion of *experience* remained a cardinal concept of psychoanalysis.

17. Freud had already used similar notions before. In *Trieb und Tribschicksale*, Freud seeks to account for the paradoxical entanglement of pleasure and unpleasure, discernible in sadism and masochism. He states for the first time this idea: the *unpleasure of pain* [*die Unlust des Schmerzes*] which, few lines later, transforms itself into the *enjoyment of pain* [*Schmerzgenießen*]. The expression will reappear later, in *Trauer und Melancholie*, as the term *Schmerzunlust*, which was translated into *painful unpleasure*. Finally, in *Das ökonomische Probleme of Masochismus*, Freud forges an similarly built concept: *Schmerzlust*, used by Freud to define the overlaying of sensations which stem from the erotogenic masochism. Strachey inattentively translated into different expressions this unusual series of terms: the *Schmerzlust* is rendered as *pleasure-in-unpleasure*. However, Pontalis —perhaps more accurately— translates literally the genitive form of the german expression in *Schmerzunlust* as *déplaisir de douleur*, and *Schmerzlust* as *plaisir de douleur*. This problem of translation does not involve only a slight deviated, interpretation. Rather, it leads the reader to an important misunderstanding of the complex paradoxical opposition and alliance, which remain entirely eclipsed, between pleasure, unpleasure and its obscure identities.

18. Deleuze has remarked, in an acute remark, that sadism and masochism are not linked through a reversible, folding operation as Freud asserted. The complementariness of these two categories was more a heritage from the medical tradition, than a rigorous conclusion of psychoanalytic enquiry: "La croyance à une unité sado-masochiste repose, non pas sur une argumentation proprement psychanalytique, mais sur une tradition pré-freudienne, faite d'assimilations hâtives et de mauvaises interprétations génétistes, que la psychanalyse, il est vrai, s'est contentée de rendre plus convaincantes en lieu de mettre en question." Gilles Deleuze, *Présentation de Sacher Masoch*, p.132.

19. Sigmund Freud, *Jugendbriefe an Eduard Silberstein: 1871-1881*, p.78.

20. John S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, p.447.

21. Another, later letter from Freud to Silverstein, describes thoroughly his preferred readings: Macaulay, Fechner, Adam Smith. See Sigmund Freud, *Jugendbriefe an Eduard Silberstein: 1871-1881*, p.202.

22. Binswanger remarked a special parallelism between Freud and Locke. Nevertheless, Binswanger did not mention the extremely important place accorded to pleasure in the human universe of values: "Le parallèle entre Locke et Freud est extrêmement instructif. S'il s'agit chez Locke de la question fondamentale:

jusqu'où s'étend la capacité de connaissance en général de l'homme, il s'agit chez Freud de la question fondamentale: jusqu'où s'étend la capacité de culture en général de l'homme. Si Locke recherche la méthode de connaissance exacte, Freud recherche la méthode du mode exact de vie relativement à la culture. Si Locke part de ce doute, à savoir: l'objectif d'une connaissance exhaustive est-il accessible à l'homme d'après son essence, Freud part de ce doute, à savoir: l'objectif d'une capacité générale de culture est-il accessible à l'homme d'après son essence? L'un et l'autre, relativement à la méthode, optent pour la constitution du composé à partir du simple, du général à partir du particulier. L'un et l'autre conçoivent la vie de l'âme comme un 'mouvement - régulier d'éléments simples', chez Locke les représentations, chez Freud les pulsions. L'un et l'autre commencent (plus exactement, donc, terminent) par le symbole de la 'table rase'. L'un et l'autre sont de rigoureux empiristes psychologiques et remontent donc en cela à Descartes. L'un et l'autre ne croient pas préjuger d'une hypothèse métaphysique. L'un et l'autre sont orientés de façon principalement sensualiste et nominaliste, etc. Naturellement, les différences, elles aussi ne manquent pas, principalement dues au fait que Freud est un pur explorateur de la nature ou empiriste, tandis que Locke n'est pas seulement un philosophe empirique, mais aussi déjà critique (cf. à ce sujet Riehl, *Der Philosoph, Kritizismus*, I [Le Philosophe, criticisme, I]). Pour conclure, nous pouvons formuler ainsi le parallèle entre Freud et Locke: si Locke déclare "nihil est in intellectu, quod non fuerit in sensu", Freud déclare: "nihil est in homine cultura, quod non fuerit in homine natura". (Ludwig Binswanger, *Analyse existentielle et psychanalyse freudienne*, pp.206-207).

23. See below, further developments of the transformation of the ethic conception of Mill into Freud's conceptual framework, p.339.

24. As Strachey himself did. When this "inversion" occurs he barely remarks this sudden and undeclared abandonment of the former category.

25. Freud wrote in his *Autobiographical Study*: "Zwar habe ich in diesem letzten Dezennium noch manch wichtiges Stück analytischer Arbeit unternommen, wie die Revision des Angstproblems in der Schrift *Hemmung, Symptom und Angst*, 1926[d], oder es gelang mir 1927 die glatte Aufklärung des sexuellen "Fetischismus", aber es ist doch richtig zu sagen, daß ich seit der Aufstellung der zwei Triebarten (Eros und Todestrieb) und der Zerlegung der psychischen Persönlichkeit in Ich, Über-Ich und Es (1923[b]) keine entscheidenden Beiträge mehr zur Psychoanalyse geliefert, und was ich später geschrieben habe, hätte schadlos wegbleiben können oder wäre bald von anderer Seite beigebracht worden." (Sigmund Freud, *Nachschrift* (1935), in *Selbstdarstellung* (1925). *Schriften zur Geschichte der Psychoanalyse*, ed. by Ilse Grubrich-Simitis (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1989), pp.97-98)[It is true that in the last decade I have carried out some important pieces of analytic work, such as the revision of the problem of anxiety in my book *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926) or the simple explanation of sexual 'fetishism' which I was able to make a year later (1927). Nevertheless, it would be true to say that, since I put forward my hypothesis of the existence of two classes of instincts (Eros and the death instinct) and since I proposed a division of the mental personality into an ego, a super-ego and an id (1923), I have made no further decisive contributions to psychoanalysis: what I have written on the subject since then has been either unessential or would soon have been supplied by someone else. (FP, 15: 256-257)

26. See Max Schur, *Freud. Living and Dying* (The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis. 1972).

27. A strange temporal paradox appears in the *Standard Edition*: while Freud's text exhibit his efforts to create an expectation on future theoretical proposals, and he promises the coming solution of the enigmas he was trying to solve, Strachey introduces an astonishing remark alluding to another note, which in turn derives from another Freud's brief, early reference to the enigma of pain, this time from *Die Verdrängung*. Strachey's new note refers to a puzzling later passage: one of Freud's unsettling speculations of *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*. This accidents of text evinces Freud's resistances to approach the unresolved notion of pain.

28. See above, p.64

29. Jean-Blaise Pontalis, 'Sur la douleur (psychique)', in *Entre le rêve et le douleur* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), p.256.

30. Jacques Lacan was perhaps the first to perceive the importance of the disquieting duality of the primal object of satisfaction both strange and harmful, and its role in the emergence of the imaginary attachments of the subject. See Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1973-), VII: *L'éthique de la psychanalyse*.

31. Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, p.551.

32. As a consequence of his distinction between pleasure and unpleasure, Kant had carefully distinguished between two conditions: a mere state of want foreign to any object, and the experience of the lost object. "[Vergnügen und Schmerz] sind einander nicht wie Erwerb und Mangel (+ und 0) sonder wie Erwerb und Verlust (+ und -)" [Delight and Pain are not as gain and lack, but as gain and lost] (Immanuel Kant, *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*, p.550).

33. Jean-Blaise Pontalis, "Sur la douleur (psychique)", p.257.

34. See above, p.355

35. Leo Bersani has lucidly explored in several texts the aporias of masochism and sexuality in Freud's writings; Bersani discerns an *essential* contradiction, inherent in Freud's energetic conception of pleasure, which leads to the fundamental theoretical tensions in his conception of masochism. See Leo Bersani, *The Freudian Body. Psychoanalysis and Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986); *Baudelaire et Freud*, trans. to French by Dominique Jean (Paris: Seuil, 1981); and *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). See above, p.379.

36. Kant wrote in his *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*: "Die Zeit ist keinen diskursiver, oder, wie man ihn nennt, allgemeiner Begriff, sondern eine Form der sinnlichen Anschauung." (Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. by Wilhelm Weischedel, 12 vol (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1977), III: *Kritik der reinen Vernunft I*, p.78 [time is not a discursive or, as it is often said, a general concept, but the form of the sensible phenomenon].

37. See above, p.262

38. It is possible to perceive in the Freudian notion of *duration* an actual, yet distorted echo of Bergson: "Quand je suis des yeux, sur le cadran d'une horloge, le mouvement de l'aiguille qui correspond aux oscillations du pendule, je ne mesure pas de la durée, comme on paraît le croire ; je me borne à compter des simultanités, ce qui est bien différent. En dehors de moi, dans l'espace, il n'y a jamais qu'une position unique de l'aiguille et du pendule, car des positions passées il ne reste rien. Au dedans de moi, un processus d'organisation ou de pénétration mutuelle des faits de conscience se poursuit, qui constitue la durée vraie. C'est parce que je dure de cette manière que je me représente ce que j'appelle les oscillations passées du pendule, en même temps que je perçois l'oscillation actuelle. Or, supprimons pour un instant le moi qui pense ces oscillations du pendule, une seule position même de ce pendule, point de durée par conséquent." (Henri Bergson, *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Paris: 1927; repr. Paris: PUF, 1991), p.80).

39. Malcolm Bowie, *Freud, Proust and Lacan: Theory as Fiction*, pp.22-23.

40. Freud encounters the dilemmas of transience, its mixture of exultation and tragedy in a brief but unsettling reflection. In it, he alludes to a conversation with a "young poet" —probably Rilke— and comments: "I could not see the way to dispute the transience of all things, nor could I insist upon an exception in favour of what is beautiful and perfect. But I did dispute the pessimistic poet's view that the transience of what is beautiful involves any loss of its worth." (FP, 14: 287) [*Ich konnte mich weder entschließen, die allgemeine Vergänglichkeit zu bestreiten, noch für das Schöne und Vollkommene eine Ausnahme zu erzwingen. Aber ich bestritt dem pessimistischen Dichter, daß die Vergänglichkeit des Schönen eine Entwertung desselben mit sich bringe* (Vergänglichkeit, SA, 1916, X: 225)]. (For a suggestive reflection on Freud's meditation on transience, see Franco Rella, *Il silenzio et la parole* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1981).)

41. François Gantheret, pp.117-118.

42. Deleuze has clearly distinguished in Freud's text two different notions implied in the discussion of the death instinct: "Quand nous parlons d'instinct de mort, en revanche, nous désignons Thanatos à l'état pur. Or Thanatos comme tel ne peut pas être donné dans la vie psychique, même dans l'inconscient: comme dit Freud dans des textes admirables, il est essentiellement silencieux." (Gilles Deleuze, *Présentation de Sacher Masoch*, p.28). Deleuze conceives thus, the *death instinct* as *pure negative force* different from the *active death drive* (*pulsion de morte*).

43. Gilles Deleuze, *Presentation de Sacher Masoch* (Paris: UGE, 1967), pp.64-65.

44. The translation of Strachey, once again, might be misleading. It clearly exhibits the undeclared, or even inadvertent constraint of the psychoanalytical tradition in English speaking countries, perhaps reticent and even foreign to the speculative trends of the Freudian thought regarding the enigmas of masochism. Pontalis has noticed the subtle but steep transformation brought about in the psychoanalytic conception by this seemingly slight linguistic minutia: "Un des traits marquants de la littérature psychanalytique anglo-saxonne de ces vingt dernières années est l'accent mis sur le *self*. Nous disons anglo-saxonne, nous disons *self*, et nous hésitons à traduire par le "soi". Obstacle linguistique qui est aussi un obstacle épistémologique" (Jean-Blaise Pontalis, 'Naissance et reconnaissance du "soi"', in *Entre le rêve et la douleur*, p.159)

Conclusions

I. Reading Freud

There is no conclusive reading of Freud. Each interpretation seeks to explore a limited range of the potential senses, of the nuances of the exposition, Freud's silences or the emphasis put by him on certain obscure topics of the elipsis and rejections of essential aspects of human experience, of the repetitions of the text and the obstinate return of Freud to certain premises and isolated assertions. The endeavour of the present thesis was not to offer an image of Freud's writing as a coherent exposure of a theory, or to present his texts as a single effort to progressively and congruously elucidate the nature of subjectivity. To consecrate its scientific achievements or its always polemical, clinical adventures was as well foreign to the primordial intension of this exposition.

The present text sought to explore, on the one hand, the complex web of philosophical, aesthetic, social discourses which informed and unveiled the tensions between several crucial topics in Freud's universe and created the social and historical conditions of its relevance to the modern conception of the self; the fertility of Natural History, of Romantic thought, of the patterns of writing in the last decades of nineteenth century, of the changing epistemological relevance of the conceptions of the gaze; on the other, the thesis seeks to read, in the movements, folds, hollows and crevasses of Freud's writings, as well as in its allegories and metaphors, the strategies for the comprehension of the boundaries of experience, identity and behaviour which remain obscure and unfathomable to the reflexive consciousness and the consecrated means of rationality: the power of dismembered mnemonic traces and residues to fashion the subject's experience, their effects on the subject's primal experience of the disappearance of the other as source of pain, as well as the wordless primordial experience of the subject's own finiteness, envisioned by Freud, of a primordial pain which gives rise both to desire and to the primal, speechless structures of thought; the

paradox of a symbolic yet non-conventional memory of the loved object as one of the driving forces of consciousness and of articulated language.

II. The extraterritoriality of Freud's conceptual origins

In an article written on the occasion of Kant's death, Schelling wrote of him:

Il marque précisément la *limite* entre deux époques en philosophie, l'une à laquelle il a mis fin pour toujours, l'autre qu'il a préparée négativement par une sage restriction à ne poursuivre que son but, simplement critique.¹

Kant became the emblematic figure of a critical moment of intense cultural and political tensions socially perceived as an historical breach in modern history: what was seen as a transition between Enlightenment and Romanticism give rise to the image of a cultural fracture which bred a profound disquiet regarding the nature and the sense of expressiveness; a moment at which a morbid and obscure *pathos* seemed to ally itself to a prodigal and live exploration of the confines of human experience: mesmerism and animal magnetism, hysteria and madness, dream and instinct, the sublime and the physiological basis of thought and sensation, the celebration of genius and the institutional development of positivistic disciplines for education, perversion and exacerbation of moral convention, the praising of liberty and the creation of vast architectural and political devices for the reclusion and vigilance, the exaltation of secrecy and the enthroneing of the gaze. In this web of antagonistic forces, the crisis of the prestiges of tangible evidence defined a new place for observation and a new and meaningful perception of silence; provoked the wreck of the former notions of knowledge, of individual identity and the emergence of a ciphered image of the subject's personality and its expression; this new perception of silence enlivened the fervour for enigma and silently acknowledged secrecy as a constitutional, legitimate form of social relation and of the modern strategies for the exertion of power.

III. Freud's writing and the Baroque

Vienna became a privileged scene in which the tensions bred by the encounter of

conflicting social, cultural and political strategies emerged as a crisis of aesthetic expression and its exacerbation. The individual and social experience of finiteness adumbrated by Kant's illuminations reached a paroxysmic intensity and exhibited themselves in the mixture of sombre Baroque explorations of the limits of expressiveness and the exultant flourishing of decorative arts, the theatrical displays, the enthusiasm for sceneries, and the cult for the masquerade and the facade. Exuberance and bareness of expression, the passion for spectacularity and for austere functionality, appeared as tokens of an acute awareness of the fracture of individual identity and the obliteration of the future. History and memory acquired a symptomatic and unsettling relevance: the social experience of time faced the sudden veiling of the future and the deluding images of tradition and aristocracy, while the violent and debasing utopias which sprung from bureaucracy and market imperceptibly pervaded the intimate forms of reciprocity and social solidarity; at this moment, the temptations of solipsism seemed to arouse, simultaneously, an intense want for individual identity and social patterns of relation which sprung from the anxiety provoked by the crumbling of the collective construction of the self.

Perhaps, some of the most significant contributions to the understanding of the obscure dynamics of the Baroque were Deleuze's notion of fold —conceived as an operative principle of the Baroque expression— and Benjamin's conception of allegory, typical of the Baroque, as a privileged form likely to negatively express the intrinsic failure of representation. Despite their seeming foreignness, both notions seek to apprehend the creative force which springs from the limits of sense revealed by an endless serial folding and unfolding of variations and resonances of a sense the source of which has been lost or remains beyond any interpretation. The Baroque displays itself as a form which expose the dismembered evidence of an intrinsic silence, an unarticulable sense. Thus, secrecy appears as an essential feature of sense; it manifests itself both as a profuse and sordid strategy of concealment which aims at the exertion of power, and as intrinsic silence of language. Deleuze's and Benjamin's contributions elucidate different facets of the rising and the singular physiognomy of the Baroque climate, which both enhances and transforms the classic notions of Wölfflin and d'Ors.

Freud's attitude towards knowledge, his striving for style and his desire were

meaningful factors that informed his conception of subjectivity which emerged, in turn, from the allegorical and metaphorical exploration of the maladies of language and narration, deeply rooted in this vast landscape of conflicts.

The folding, discontinuous and heterogeneous movement of his writing built the modern image of subjectivity from a mixture which involved the complex construction of his reader and the anticipation of future interpretations, the obsessive re-reading, re-writing and revision of his own texts, the obliquity of his allusions and the crooked logic and changing quality of his arguments, the frequent intrusion of nostalgic and paradoxical views of art conceived both as an anticipation of truth and as a confirmation of the legitimacy and eloquence of his own enterprise; psychoanalysis appeared as well as a privileged enacting of the disintegration and consecration of expressiveness which springs from the perturbation and maladies of the soul. Freud made an ambivalent use of speculative philosophy both as model and as a mythical prediction of the achievements of psychoanalysis, and yet as an example of construction of a permanent mirage, the lures of which should be refused. Moreover, his writing was also pervaded of acknowledged signs of reticence and exclusion, of deliberate and compulsive silence, of an accepted failure and of unadmitted muteness and defeat of his own speech.

IV. The passion for shattered language

From the beginning, Freud's work exhibited the obsessive reappearance of two elusive topics a meditation on the destruction of language and the hindrances of speech. Aphasia and hysteria appeared as contrasting though similar maladies of the soul. Aphasia had its unequivocal source in physical destruction of the 'language apparatus', yet hysteria revealed itself as an enigmatic hindrance, not of language but of the subject's will and his capacity to narrate, an allegorical aphasia which exhibited the subdued psychical force of memory, without suffering any physical damage. From its origins, the wreck of language exhibited the non-elucidated tension between the psychical and the physical domains of human identity, and with it, the obscure nature of their relation.

Freud's reflections on aphasia revealed the inherent limits of the subject's self-image of his own body; the non-elucidable obscurity of the corporeal processes exhibited the intrinsic limits of the notion of psychical representation, yet, it also revealed its essential role in the constitution of subjectivity. The relation between the psychical and the physical domains of subjectivity was to remain associated with a notion of representation characterized by Freud as a mythical bond between body and mind, as a speculative image of a driving force which both brings them together and transforms them into "dependent concomitant", and yet introduces an irreducible breach between them. The allegory of aphasia illuminated the limits of the notion of representation and the mythical conceptions in the root of Freud's thought. Moreover, it revealed the invincible opaqueness of the experience of the body; the fragmentary and delusive image of its shape, of its performance, of the weave of physical processes. Yet, this opaqueness led to another: that of consciousness, which eludes the artifices of self-reflection and the subject's meditation on the own intimate limits of perception and understanding.

Freud's failure to uncover the roots of the obscure limits of consciousness also exhibited his impossibility to theoretically fathom the boundaries of the other construed, psychical agencies: unconscious and preconscious, the id, the ego and the super-ego, and the nature of their processes and transformations. In his last work, published posthumously, in which he attempted to summarize the complete spectrum of his achievements, he did not hesitate to admit:

worin bestehen dann die eigentliche Natur des Zustandes, der sich im Es durch die Qualität des Unbewußten, im Ich durch die des Vorbewußten verrät, und vorin liegt der Unterschied zwischen beiden?

Nun, darüber wissen wir nichts und von dem tiefdunkeln Hintergrund dieser Unwissenheit heben sich unsere spärlichen Einsichten kläglich genug ab. (*Abriß der Psychoanalyse*, GW, 1939, 17: 88)*

The attempts to solve this enigma, present throughout his entire work, lead him,

*What, if this is so, is the true nature of the state which is revealed in the id by the quality of being unconscious and in the ego by that of being preconscious and in what does the difference between them consist? But of that we know nothing. And the profound obscurity of the background of our ignorance is scarcely illuminated by a few glimmers of insight. (FP, 15: 395)

however, to astounding illuminations and insights about the nature of the psychical processes. In the very beginning of his psychoanalytic reflection, Freud posited a fundamental notion of experience which can be understood as a radical criticism of this notion issued from the Enlightenment. Freud's notion formulated in terms of quantities and displacement of energy, involved also a dynamic characterization of memory. The notion of experience rested upon a speculative thesis early acquired by Freud in his early discussions on the theories of aphasia, inspired in the results of the research of Hughling Jackson: the tenacity of memory, the endurance of the remains of language and perception in deep layers of the psychical apparatus beyond the reach of reflexive consciousness. A new notion of experience emerged from an image of subjectivity constituted by the memory of an inextricable web of images and actions, of different temporalities which involved not only consciousness and language, actual associated actions and evocations, perceptions and word representations, but also a fundamental and primal non-linguistic judgement, a primary thought built upon a lasting memory of pain. The subject's experience of time emerged from this complex web of images and thoughts, of words, shreds of words and wordless memories likely to transform desire, hallucinations and phantasies into predictions and augurs or into reminiscence and remembrance. The judgements of language veiled the informing power of the intimate force of wordless memories and secret judgements.

Thus, what constitutes the main feature of language, as it emerges from Freud's theory, was not the plenitude of sense, but its inherent fragility and silence; the narrative act, engendered as an echoe of phantasies and fictional unfolding of sense, arised from the memory residues, detached from the apparent unity of language itself. The severe displacement imposed by Freud to the notion of experience inherited from Enlightenment touched directly the implicit notions of truth and expression, conferring on them a purely aesthetic attribute.

V. The allegories of body: sexuality and pain

The allegories of the body became the privileged form of portrayal of the fragmented, senseless evidence of its physiological process, the figure of the trenches which oriented

the movement and stagnation of energy, and the lost parcels of the corporeal sensations and intensities. Sexuality was to be conceived both in terms of this allegorical images and as a description of psychical processes likely to encompass the manifold temporality and the vast and intricate weave of representations which shaped the experience of the subject. Sexuality was envisioned by Freud, as an endless series of allegories: names of potencies, metaphors of forces and struggles, of attributes and impulses. It became associated to desire, to the name of intensities and flows transformed into a mute representation of a lost and unnameable primal object and its allegorical manifestations in the love bond. Together with sexuality, perversion and pain, destruction and culpability gave rise to other series of allegorical images and figures.

As attested by Freud's late disquieting contributions to his previous conceptions of anxiety, pain became an intractable issue, and nevertheless, a cardinal piece the unfathomable character of which should render senseless the previous reflections on subjectivity. Despite the obscure nature of pain, its abrupt conceptual yet implicit presence was to drive Freud's conception of subjectivity, centered upon the notion of destruction, to a vast Baroque allegory of pain and perversion embodied in the figures of masochism.

Freud's work, dense and dismembered, empiricist and allegorical, austere and lavish, reticent and loquacious, introspective and crudely objective, remains in itself an enigmatic illumination not only of the cardinal motives, processes, tensions and trends of modernity; it also cast an enduring light on the subject's experience of limits which defines the fate of its search for identity.

NOTES

1. Friedrich W. J. Schelling, 'Emmanuel Kant (1804)', trans. by Pascal David, in *Philosophie*, 22 (1989), p.9 [Paris: Minit] (first published by *Fränkische Staats- und Gelehrten-Zeitung*, 49-50 (March 1804)).

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