The Paternal Metaphor

From the First to the Second Paternal Metaphor

The Lacanian idea that language enters an infant in a divisive, splitting fashion has become rather commonplace by now. The "I think" of being is split by the jouissance of Freud's Es. Yet one still hears the idea stated in reverse: that the infant enters into the symbolic by acquiring language, as if some prior condition made it possible for an infant to passively receive language.

Lacan taught that language is acquired in the uniting of three correlated—but not corresponding—orders: sounds that become attached to words and to a proper name (the symbolic); identifications that constitute the body (the imaginary); and the effects of loss insofar as they leave a trace on the biological organism (the real). The libidinal qualities produced by the gaze, the voice, and so on, are repressed as "objects" that give rise to unary signifiers marked by a primary jouissance—an attachment to reminiscences of oneness. These signifiers bind the outer world to a seemingly "inner" void in one single stroke. This minimal Borromean structuring of a signifying chain constitutes what we call "mind" in a series of triadic units. And since one of these units—the real—infers constant loss, which, in turn, produces anxiety, people use language to seek the emotional comfort of closing out the real.

Lacan teaches that language is acquired in a series of conjunctions and disjunctions that run counter to historical or chronological time and that it is loss, desire, and anxiety that introduce a temporal dimension into language. And since loss produces anxiety—an opening onto the impasses of the real—desire constitutes itself in language as the desire to annul loss, language itself becom-
ing the filler of the gap between wanting and being. The necessary condition that renders human animals capable of becoming speaking beings—subjects of unconscious desire—is that a proper name be tied to an image of the body and joined to the libidinal experience of loss. The symbolic (word) binds the imaginary (image) to the real (the traumata of a missed encounter). At the point of overlap, one encounters three kinds of jouissance: phallic jouissance, (the symbolic), the Other jouissance (the real), and the jouis-sens of meaning or the Other (the imaginary). For Lacan, the signifying chain is not a chain of language sounds and concepts, then, but a necklace made up of associations whose logic is both synchronic and diachronic. These three orderings, three different kinds of “material”—the symbolic, the real and the imaginary—are the Stoff of memory and meaning that governs thought by jouissance. Thus, any semblance or appearance of a “naturalness” of language is paradoxical insofar as the prohibition to full satisfaction first creates lack. Lack, in turn, mediates between the false fullness of visible images and the traumatic effects of the real that remain as positivized loss, speaking a language of excess and pain.

In 1966 Jean Laplanche disagreed with a major Lacanian precept. The unconscious makes language possible, Laplanche argued, perception being its basis or guarantee. The unconscious is the condition of language, Lacan taught.1 His revolutionary discovery—that language provides a distance from the real of jouissance which enables individuals to represent themselves by words—shows that the unconscious is constituted as a product of language.2 Laplanche’s argument does not differ from any other theory that takes an innate pre-given as the cause of being or knowing. Starting with the cut into jouissance that produces an awareness of loss, Lacan portrays language as that which clothes the void, covering it over with images and words that serve, in turn, as the material into which the real returns, cutting into language, being, and flesh. The impasses that constitute the real make holes in grammar and in the apparent fullness of the perceived (or visible) world. And since most infants displace the mother as the primary object (the function of metonymy), this primary sublimation guarantees that a certain stability be maintained by the function of substitution (metaphor). And things, persons, games, words, are all “objects” that substitute for this primordial loss. Thus, metaphor “operates” the mental apparatus long before it is called a linguistic or literary trope, enabling infants to play repetitious games around the edges of a real void of anxiety they try not to fall into. And this is not a metaphor.
Between the imaginary (i.e., perceptual) illusion of a fullness of the visible world and the real of anxiety, language imposes itself as a parasitical "body." As such, language plays a paradoxical role. It provides a guarantee of consistency that is lacking in persons, things, beliefs, or in the body itself. Although substitutions of one thing for another seem to create new meanings and to foment change, in reality, the static movement of substitution only produces superficial change. This function, nonetheless, describes the energetics of language which Lacan called the law of the signifier, itself constituted as a dialectical movement between Verdichtung (condensation or metaphor) and its referent, Verschiebung (displacement or metonymy). The symbolic imposes differential order on imaginary identificatory fusions and also tries to name the real losses that are not symbolized as grammatical meaning. And while the symbolic and imaginary collude to give the illusion of totality, the gap caused by the necessity of representation itself prevents such closure. And this structuring of being-for-lack—the gap between the thing and the saying of it, written \( (-\phi) \)—is the negative phallus which has concrete loss as its principal referent. Lacan finds the *jouissance* of being here, locating it in the overlaps between the real and the symbolic.

We know that Lacan replaced the Freudian Oedipal myth with his concept of the phallus whose terms are those of identification—being "it" or having "it." One is either desiring (the position of lover) or desired (the beloved). In contrast, Freud's patient efforts to describe a phallic phase of reality always bore on his effort to distinguish *Wirklichkeit* (sense-data reality) from *Realität* (psychic reality). Lacan argued in "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet" that "it" refers to the organ *per se* only in the imaginary register. Rather, the concept "phallus" names a process of signification wherein *jouissance* inscribes the biological organism for "psychic" sex. A dialectic between desire and *jouissance* does not bear on heterosexual or homosexual difference, then—the choice of the same or different sex for a partner existing in "normal," neurotic, psychotic, and perverse structures—but on identification with the position of the masculine or the feminine in reference to castration and the phallus. In the masculine position one has "it" in the sense that identification with the *jouissance* phallus \( (\Phi) \) means identification with a master signifier \( (S_1) \) or the reality principle. The effect produced by identification with a symbolic order position is a belief *in*, or considerable certainty about, the knowledge one takes as reality.
In the feminine position, one identifies with being “it” \((a)\), thus establishing a knowledge on the side of the demand for love. From the masculine position, language is spoken in the imperative and in the declarative modes. Feminine identification bears on the question; that is, it unveils impasses in the knowledge that bases its claims on certainty. Lacan gave the name sexuation to the unconscious choice of masculine or feminine sexual identification. One loses one part of the Other sex \((S[0])\) by identifying with the same (the mother) \(qua\) feminine, or with the masculine that turns away from the mother in the name of difference, itself a signifier. Because the losses are not symmetrical, an \textit{obstacle}—or divide—is erected between the masculine and feminine, creating a “beyond” \textit{in} language at the points where sex, anatomy and gender are not aligned in a one-to-one way precisely because one does not “get” one’s psychic sex from one’s biological sex.

In the 1970s when Lacan reconceptualized the structure of the paternal metaphor in relation to the order of the symptom \((\Sigma)\), which he rewrote in the medieval French spelling, \textit{sinthome}, to capture its particularity in each person’s life story, he attributed to the \textit{sinthome} a logic of consistency that he called \textit{jouissance}. In his early work on the symptom, Lacan had described it as having the substitutive structure of metaphor insofar as it is enigmatic, undeciphered meaning. As such, the symptom was said to cover over its own \textit{sinthomes} or particularities, the metonymic causes of desire from which each person draws the libidinal energy that gives meaning to his or her unconscious fantasies in the circuit of the drives. Indeed, this fourth category is an ordering of the knot itself. That is, the “structure” Lacan calls Borromean is created out of an \textit{extrinsic} knotting that \textit{sections} a cord \textit{in places}, a cord woven of the concrete threads of life itself. “When the cord is worn down to the thread, the thread shows through, showing that the weave is not distinguished in fabric [which] . . . could be an image of substance itself. But there is not fabric without weave.” The name Lacan gave this knot or cord was the \textit{paternal metaphor}, or the fourth element that holds the three orders together, or not.

Lacan used knots to elaborate his second theory of the symptom in which the real inhabits metaphor as \textit{jouissance}. In this definition, metaphor is not a secondary constellation of substitute meanings. Rather it carries the \textit{jouissance} of the drives as a libidinal meaning system equal in importance to the representational system of words. Yet knots are, by definition, opaque. Appearing at the interfaces of all the orders, they mark impasses of the real as it returns, cutting
into consistencies to create discontinuities that appear as anxiety or conflict. "I am trying to constitute another geometry," Lacan said, "which would deal with the being of a chain. It has never, never been done. This geometry is not imaginary; contrary to the one of triangles, it is real; it is knots of string" ("Conférences," 56). While remaining quite clearly defined as to "kind" within their discrete orderings—language differentials (symbolic), identificatory collusions (imaginary), the effects of loss that create trauma (real)—these serial Borromean chains of association are not innate. They are constituted by the external world of words, images, and the loss that gives rise to the object $a$. When there is no paternal lineage giving the law of "no" to psychic oneness with the mother, the mother is not lost as primary object of jouissance. Inadequate difference from the mother means there is not enough distance from a compelling jouissance to establish one's own identifications. In this failure to sublimate the object $a$, the mana of metaphor collapses into metonymic proximity with the primary jouissance object qua real. The symbolic order boundaries one might label as the law of distance disappear.

Freud spoke of human pathologies, which Lacan called the differential categories of desire created by the way a paternal metaphor is (or is not) knotted in a given life to produce the neuroses (hysteria, obsession, phobia), psychoses, or perversion which structure the sinthome as a writing of the real that traces the particular path of the dialectic between desire and jouissance in a given life. More particularly, in Lacan's first formula for the paternal metaphor, written in the 1950s, one thing substitutes for another: $\frac{\text{FN}}{\text{MD}} \cdot \frac{\text{MD}}{x}$. The Name-of-the-Father substitutes for the mother's desire which is unknown, the Father's Name coming to mean dead speech (the Other), and the phallus coming to mean the value assigned an infant within the economy of the mother's desire (Other) (phallus). Lacan's goal here was to correct Freud's use of the Oedipus myth by explaining how human sexual difference is constituted. Lacan referred, instead, to persons—not myth—and to the fact that the relation of Mother ♠ Father (a kinship bond) does not translate the enigma of the sexual formula, Man ♠ Woman. Borrowing the word phallus which Freud used ambiguously in his early writings, Lacan discovered, instead, the effect of lack. Lacan first used this word to mean the unknown value that plays enigmatically in language, being, and relationships. And most children quickly en-
counter the *che vuoi*—What do I want? Who am I?—that poses a question about the value of one's worth at the heart of all quests. Since psychotics lack such *lack*, they remain bound up in a primary attachment to a real *jouissance* they can not lose. Neurotics, on the other hand, appear to move, substituting one thing for another. Lacan saw neurotic movements as static repetitions, however, as running in place, changing partners, but not fantasies. Weighed down by running to answer to the archaic desire of the Other, identifying with the dead *jouissance* of an archaic past, a neurotic remains complicitous with the value assigned him or her in the Other scene.

In psychosis, one might describe the unconscious as annulled insofar as nothing is lacking. The Other is present, not absent, that is. Psychotic language is drenched in *jouissance* minus desire, minus the lack that causes an awareness of others as desiring. If the relation of being to time is the timing of unconscious desire in neurosis, and if the lack of desire is the triumph of *jouissance* in psychosis, it makes sense that this subject's mooring in the symbolic order would disappear in psychotic episodes. When nothing is lacking in the *jouissance* of being, no unconscious *fantasy*—based on the divided subject—subtends the use of language. Rather a fundamental *lalangue* of delusion materializes language by *jouissance*, interweaving itself throughout psychotic speech. Thus, the psychotic "acts out" what the neurotic hides so well in multiple lies of repression and denial. Sustaining the Other's existence by his fusion with the Other's *jouissance*, the psychotic blurs distinctions between self and other, manifesting boundary limits only by miming others, or in passing directly to acts of violence. His deficiency lies in a difficulty in representing a self for others.

In Lacan's first formula for the paternal metaphor, the field of representations he named the Other is supported by the phallus, itself symbolizing a question mark about the mother's desire in reference to the Father's Name. Although the mother is certainly a signifier (in the symbolic) and a being with desire (in the imaginary), Lacan points out that her place in the symbolic and imaginary cannot be separated from the real of primordial effects that first constituted her child's *jouissance* at the level of *la lalangue* where the signifier of the mother's body is inseparable from the unrepresentable, unspeakable real of the drives. Contrary to Freud, Lacan argued that the mother must be lost as an object signifying satisfaction. When she intrudes, signifying herself as all to the child, she blocks the child's capacity to constitute desire as a lack-in-being
by which he or she becomes able to (re)-constitute a "self" in relation to others, negotiating this "self" in language and in the drives as a desired or desirable "object". Put another way, subject position is merely a functioning of desire acquired by the tying together of a corporal *Gestalt* (the imaginary) with a proper name (the symbolic) for which "I" can then be substituted. A child's self image and proper name are infused with energy from the real in the form of impasses he or she, in turn, seeks to avoid by making unities in language and in identifications.

The Oedipal scenario Lacan paints goes something like this. An infant needs food in order to live, so it cries out for food. The response given to this "call" by an other begins to constitute the subject as desiring a certain consistency that gives a sense of well being or satisfaction. If the "call" is answered only negatively, autism may be the result. Later, we make others responsible for answering our precise demands, even though our expectations have already been primed by the fixing of *jouissance* in libidinal pleasures or displeasures which are repeated for ever after in a dialectic of anticipation and retroaction.

Lacan's second formula for the paternal metaphor shows the Freudian Oedipal complex to be a myth. In *Television* Lacan defined myth as "the attempt to give an epic form to what is operative through the structure." We know that epic generally means on a grand scale. And we know that Lacan defines structure in *Encore* as a direct equivalent of topology. Thus, myth is the mock heroic epic that shows each person as a *sinthome* of her or his experience of sexual being, first constituted in unary traits of primordial identifications. These traits bond *jouissance* to language and to the palpable void created by the trauma that produce the real as an order of unassimilated knowledge. That this topological interlinking of words, images, and impasses of the unbearable to know composes the Borromean chains in overlapping, non-linear associations, accounts for the lapses and blind spots we call denial and repression. It accounts, as well, for the sporadic ups and downs of memory and forgetting. Thus, language is not sufficiently consistent to give a unity to being, either as a fictive name or as a set of signifiers.

Jacques-Alain Miller has clarified Lacan's second theory of the paternal metaphor. In his "Geneva Lecture" (1975), Lacan suggested that one might erect a logic of inconsistencies wherein the phallus is a predicate, not a nominative. In this context each person's mock heroic epic shows that person dealing with his or her *sinthomes* in terms of being or having the phallus, wherein phallus
means the value assigned to the sexual difference as a signifier in
its own right. But how does Lacan’s paternal metaphor reveal the
Freudian Oedipal complex to be a myth? In his Course at Paris VIII
in 1988–1989, Miller argued that one way the Oedipal can be un­
stood after Freud is by “interpreting the cause.”17 “When Freud
says that the father is already the phenomenon of sublimation, he
is saying nothing other than what I am repeating there,” Miller says.
“And that is why we may accept that what we call the function
of the father is language itself, as dead” (Miller, “To Interpret the
Cause,” 44). That is, language clothes our jouissance in semblances
that make our identifications seem pregiven or “natural” fixities
despite the fact that this libidinal glue blocks us from reshaping our
thoughts or fantasies so we can (re)-constitute our desire and, thus,
change.

In the 1950s Lacan had already begun to undercut his first theory
of the paternal metaphor by arguing that the leftover effects of loss
that he called surplus or excess jouissance—the petit a—introduced
inconsistencies into language, being, and body. Lacan said such
positivized effects of jouissance are caused by the functions of sep­
aration and alienation that produce the object a whose common
factor is that it is bound to the orifices of the body. Moreover, the
a throws everything off balance, elliptical, askew (“Seminar of Jan­
uary 21, 1975,” 164). Indeed, Lacan developed his science of the
real in trying to account for jouissance as meaning concentrated
in traits or marks whose effects produces the affects Lacan calls
the ups and downs of life.18

In Lacan’s first formula for the paternal metaphor, we remember,
the phallus stands for what is unknown about the mother’s desire,
i.e., it stands for the unconscious. Clarifying Lacan’s structural read­
ing of the Freudian Oedipal myth, Miller argued that the parental
couple can be made into a matheme; i.e., a fixed relation one can
write as a formula. But the only fixed relation a child can find in
the parental couple, as the child tries to figure out who he or she
is as a gendered, sexed, speaking being, is a link missing in language
and representation. Lacan called this “missing link” the phallus.
In moving from Lacan’s first to his second theory of the paternal
metaphor, Miller says the Lacanian phallus can be translated from
an “unknown jouissance to the phallization of jouissance, that is
to [the] significantization of jouissance” (“To Interpret the Cause,”
46). Insofar as jouissance of being makes up for being castrated,
such a jouissance is correlated with ego conviction. Other names
Lacan gave this jouissance are the passion of ignorance or the mas-
ter discourse. We also seek a *jouissance* of meaning by a ciphering of the unconscious that seeks to ascertain what the voice carries of the real. Miller says a child tries to derive *its* knowledge of what a *relation* of Man ♦ Woman would be from the formula Mother ♦ Father (41). Both Mother ♦ Father and Man ♦ Woman work as relations or functions that enable analysts to structure something in knowledge that asks for an interpretation of the cause (42).

But between Freud’s Oedipus and Lacan’s first paternal metaphor \( \frac{\text{NF}}{\text{DM}} \), a large gap appears. While Freud equated the parental couple (M ♦ F) to the sexual relation (M ♦ W), Lacan viewed the parental couple as an obstacle to sexual relations. He developed this argument in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1959–1960) by showing the dialectical tension between a primary lost object and the repetitions of *jouissance* aimed at Oneness with an “object” that is both forbidden, and not itself One to start with. The opposition between a desire for Oneness and the surplus *jouissance* left over by the loss of *jouissance* creates a third thing: the substitution of speech or language to replace the primordial mother with the father as Other. Here the Other means the speech or culture that signifies an obstacle to silent fusion with the mother as primary guarantee. Insofar as the mother is a signifier for the primary object whose loss causes desire, she also signifies the *loss* of the desired objects, associated with her body, that sub tend language. Such loss lies at the heart of a cultural *malaise* as well and nothing can ultimately cure it. Certainly Freud’s fantasized harmonious sexual *relation* between man and woman has never been a cultural panacea.

Unlike Freud’s formula, Lacan’s is not strictly sexual. (Miller, “To Interpret the Cause,” 40). Rather, Lacan sees language as the cultural medium that allows order to be instituted around the desire for libidinal objects. By taking the differential phallic third as a point of reference—a name and an identity myth correlated imaginarily with gender—the bar between father and mother \( \frac{F}{M} \) comes to equal substitution, while the primary mother equals the object *qua* lost: \( \frac{F}{M} \). This simple formula denotes a temporal metaphorical structure. Although the primordial repressed part that causes desire is lost, its effects do not disappear. They are displaced into speech as the object *a* that materializes thought around *jouissance*. Thus, although a “subject” of desire is produced by and in language, it is
not defined only by it. For the excess in *jouissance*—the non-utilitarian real part—has to do with the effort to have a relation with the Other, even though a hole in the Other places radical loss beyond the bar of the sexual divide. In Miller's clarification of Lacan's first formula for the paternal metaphor, he emphasizes that one starts with $\frac{F}{M}$: Father-bar-Mother. But in this "generalized formula," which unifies Freud's Oedipal theory and his castration complex, there is no fixed sexual symbol—such as the penis or the Father's Name—that causes the mother's desire ("To Interpret the Cause," 45-46).

In this simple formula, the bar signifies that the child *does not know* how to decipher what it means to be male or female based only on observing the relationship between its parents. Father and mother do not translate into a sexual formula for the child where girl clearly equals woman and boy clearly equals man ("To Interpret the Cause," 35-44). So father comes to mean language *qua* difference only in the sense of something that imposes an obstacle for the child, or a distance from the mother *qua* object of hoped for libidinal fulfillment. Structurally speaking, the paternal metaphor hypothesizes that a child substitutes language for *being* something other than a libidinal extension of the mother, in the form of an object a identified with her gaze, voice, breast, and so on. The child who is stuck to these partial objects elides the cut of separation, and remains the mother's real phallus. Such a child demonstrates the logic of autism or a preliminary psychosis. For distance is indeed a correlate of the difference that makes metaphorical substitution possible as a mental function. This particular function of desire derives from the loss of *jouissance* that makes lack a structure ($\$$) that pushes one to build a fiction of *being* a self or identity.

In clarifying Lacan's second paternal metaphor, Miller writes this formula: $\frac{F}{M} - \frac{\text{Phallus}}{x} - \frac{O}{J}$. The *jouissance* left over from the loss of primary objects is itself enigmatic, an enigma that many people would rather worship than examine. Miller describes the *jouissance* phallus as an excess of affect in the body which, nonetheless, serves as a reality principle. That is, the *jouissance* phallus (JΦ) denotes the cultural identifications by which individuals keep from encountering the void in the Other [S(Ø)] which is linked to the Ø by an arrow in the sexuation graphs (Lacan, "Love Letter," 149). And *jouissance* enters the field of representations as a "quota of affect."
Miller clarifies Lacan's 1958 Oedipal formula for the paternal metaphor by arguing that the *jouissance* phallus represents the *quest* for a Oneness with a primary object and in this sense symbolizes the principle of difference that causes desire. Pushing toward the infinite—the limits of the knowable—*jouissance* gives meaning to biological sex by inscribing the organism with a limit in "psychic" (tychic, tuche) sex. Lacan stresses that Freud sought to distinguish between psychic *Realität* and biological sense data (*Wirklichkeit*) every time he tried to delineate a phallic phase ("Le phallus, pierre de touche," 35).

Lacan used the word *sexuation* to describe the imposition of a *jouissance* metalanguage upon the body (Miller, "To Interpret the Cause," 46-48). Put another way, the loss of the mother as the primary object gives rise to the search for a guarantee at the level of identifications. Miller unites Lacan's first and second paternal metaphors by these mathemes:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{FN} & \to \Phi \text{ (inconsistent Other)} \\
\text{DM} & \to x \text{ (enigma)} \\
& \to \Theta \text{ (loss)} \\
& \to -\phi \text{ (lack)} \\
& \to \Theta \text{ (a)}
\end{align*}
\]

We fill up the gaps in the Other with condensed bits of *jouissance* (a) that Miller calls libidinal consistencies. These stoppers guarantee a cohesion to our lives via the paradoxical pleasures of familiarity, thereby constituting the strange paradox of the death drive in which consistency and familiarity are more important to people than change, truth or freedom from suffering.

In the second paternal metaphor, Woman as *mother* becomes a signifier for the suppression of a *jouissance* of the One, which can be equated with the impossibility of infinity. Yet many of the figures erected in the name of Woman—whether idealized or degraded—appear whenever the real of loss is at stake. One thinks of frustrated male taxi drivers saying "Mother of God," "Holy Virgin," "cunt," and so on. Freud's inability to grasp why the pleasure principle ran up against the death drive in the form of repetition (in 1921) fascinated Lacan, whose discovery that Eros is built out of Thanatos, not in opposition to it, enabled him to unveil the structure of loss itself as a positive limit in being or knowing. This is only because loss of the primordial mother gives rise to the partial drives whose aim is to replace lost objects. No mother's desire will ever be reducible to behavior or a "natural" knowledge, then, because both male and female children will always be tied to some part of the
maternal objects that first begot jouissance as a positive "quality" they seek to avoid, or to replace via substitutions.

Thenceforth, Woman is associated with the primary object at the level where the mother is the first good. Because of the confusion between Woman and mother, woman comes to signify a totality or an essence in masculine fantasy where she is partialized, fetishized, and sought on the slope of the real, outside representable meaning. Yet grammatical language can only function realistically—i.e., driven by fantasy—as long as the primary object is lost, is the metonymical lost cause of language. Displacements, which Lacan denoted by the object a, are thus libidinized images, things, persons, bodies, or events, each "object" functioning to stop up the hole in the Other. Thus, thinking moves along the order of the body, although philosophy supposes an order of the mind. Indeed, the heterogeneous a takes many forms, having no form common to it, although it is generally thought of orally (taking in) or shittily (expelling), its common factor being, rather, that it is bound to the orifices of the body, and so throws everything off balance (Lacan, "Seminar January 21, 1975," 164). At the level of the symptom, the a is the subject of metaphor that hides itself as the metonymic cause of desire, materializing being, body, and language by jouissance.

From Metaphor to Topology

In Lacan's theory of how one acquires language, not only is language not innate, neither are time or space. There are, for example, no innate Chomskian tendencies or capacities for language. The only innate language features arise from the biological organism with its vocal cords and capacities to produce sounds. Nor could one argue for the Chomskian distinction between competence and performance, a distinction which enabled the famous linguist to explain away whatever did not fit within his theory of innate linguistic structures. By evoking a Platonic notion of an ideal speaker-listener in a homogeneous speech-community, Chomsky and other cognitionists in his wake have relied on hypothesized perfect language conditions to account for the imperfect body of language. Yet, in Chomsky's lineage, American linguists, cognitive psychologists, biologically inclined psychiatrists, and even object-relations analysts, still think that the human "capacity" for language is innate and its prime mover, biology. This evolutionary theory would sup-
pose that the “cause” of language resides in links between genes and neural synapses in the brain as they have evolved over millennia. Having pinpointed material causes in the organic history of the human animal, partisan theorists assume that most people learn to use speech and language more or less correctly. “Misuse” or deformation of recognizable syntax or semantics is labeled as a learning disorder, attributed to a biologically caused dysfunction of the body qua organism (the brain, the hormones, and so on).

“Syntax,” in a typical dictionary definition, is “the pattern or structure of the word order in a phrase, clause, or sentence.” In Lacan’s theory of language, syntax might better be thought of as pre-conscious, based on the unconscious and jouissance. That is, consciousness (language or thought) is ordered by something other than itself, by signifiers already there in suspension or in sufferance, and by primordially repressed objects that cause desire and enable drive because they are lost except as vague reminiscences that call one toward the resonance of unary traits. Linked to a void of leftover jouissance that occupies an empty place, these unary traits attach themselves both to the world and to the void as one-stroke signifiers that bind perception to consciousness, the latent to the manifest. One may make sense of such an idea in light of Jacques-Alain Miller’s comments on Lacan’s Television where he describes laws of the unconscious and of jouissance. At the time of the interview, which aired on French television for two hours, Lacan answered Miller as to why he would use a Freudian word like “the unconscious.” Although the word is negative, Lacan said, Freud did not find a better one and there is no need to go back on it now (Lacan, Television, 5).

Miller later suggested a way one could work with the word “unconscious” precisely because it is negative, reminding us that Lacan defined the unconscious in Television as

a very precise thing in intent, not just the negative of consciousness. . . . He reminds us there is no unconscious without language and speech. So, the path of Lacan . . . goes from . . . the supposedly known which is language, to the unknown which is the unconscious. You know the old theory of the unconscious by Lacan, the classical one, which . . . defines language . . . on the basis of the distinction of signifier and signified. This is Lacan’s simplification of Saussure. . . . What Lacan adds to this separation is a relation of causality between the signified and the signifier (Miller, “A Reading,” 18–19).
In Seminar XV, L'acte psychanalytique (1967–1968) Lacan named three poles that constitute knowledge in a Borromean unit, but are not a revision of the linguistic sign. The poles are: the symbolic order signifier that joins the world of language to that of imaginary images and objects; the unary trait which links the body to others via the functions of projection (expelling) and incorporation (taking in) that operate the process of identification; and the object a which Lacan described as a piece of the real falling onto the vector which runs from the symbolic to the imaginary. Put another way, some piece of the real—either an absent cause of desire or a veiled object a that stops up the hole in the Other—always lies between one's actions and one's consciousness of one's acts. Moreover, at the level of referent, this nothing is *some-thing*: the void place Lacan called a positivized negative whose effect is that of the *more* than language in language that weighs it down.

Alexandre Leupin describes this surplus in language or in the body as the *quality* of meaning Lacan called the *jouissance* (too much, too little, enough, and so on) that one encounters between secondary process (grammatical language) and primary process (desire). But Lacan did not find a reason to make the *jouissance* of meaning the cause of the other two *jouissances*. Rather, the three *jouissances* stand at different intersections of the three orders, demonstrating three ways jouissance aims to embody the object a at the heart of every signifying unit. Yet insofar as the aim of the drive is not the Freudian constancy of entropy as a tensionless state, but the consistency of jouissance, no aim can find its final mark. No fantasy can tally with its ideal. No object can be "good enough." At best, pleasure must be repeatedly sought through the repetitious pathways of displeasure. Our hopes for totality, for ongoing pleasure, for final harmonies, are inane dreams that make us suffer and keep us from making any change at all. Yet we whitewash our hopes, give dignity to our life lies, and keep ourselves from realizing the price we pay for clinging to the familiarity of jouissance that blocks any exit from pain and discontent. Since fantasy, the drive, and desire can only seek their goals via the material of language—grammar supported by a primordial *lalangue* that parasitizes language—people are "used" dishonestly by the language which they assume informs or communicates, rationally and objectively. Although individuals believe they seek information or knowledge, they unconsciously seek to be satisfied by a return of the only jouissance they know: their own. Thus, people stick together around jouissances of belief, body, or interpretive communities of meaning.
If language is not a biological pre-given, then it becomes crucial to ask how it constitutes fixed illusions that harden into solid convictions and set beliefs. As he gradually moved away from Saussurean laws of linguistics (which he had redefined from the start anyway), Lacan not only reformulated the Saussurean discovery, he also gave further understanding to Jakobson's work on metaphor and metonymy. He also added unconscious jouissance and desire to Jakobson's efforts to categorize the pathways of communication in categories of addressee/adressee, etc. Language is not only not innate in a newborn, neither does its acquisition correspond to the kind of pre-ordained natural cooperation theory Kenneth Burke hypothesized in "A Rhetoric of Motives." Lacan debunked the idea that the biological organism develops its own knowledge, as if there were a "natural" human propensity for intelligence. By going from the structure of psychosis to the "psychosis" of normativity, Lacan formalized a science of the real, subtended by a theory of the logical structures spawned by the paternal metaphor. In tackling problems of the truth functionality of contradictions and inconsistencies, Lacan widened the scope of what we consider rational by explaining the logic of what is generally written off as irrational.

Moreover, he explained the structure of psychic reality that determines a person's relationship to knowledge in terms of unconscious identification as masculine or feminine. Such self images, as we know, are established in the experience of relating to the phallic third term of difference qua difference between the masculine and feminine. While psychosis is the failure of an inscription for lack—of being all one sex—neurosis denying the difference and perversion repudiating it, each structure is laid down in a logic that is not arbitrary, but whose relation to jouissance determines how being, body, and meaning will interact. And since masculine or feminine identification do not correspond to gender, nor do they determine the gender of sexual object preference.

Lacan's theory evolves as an extension of Euclidean geometry into a topological structuralism of the subject wherein his break with classical psychoanalysis, as well as with classical philosophical theories of epistemology and ontology, comes to the fore. And although the implications of his break are radical at the level of epistemology, Lacan's immediate concerns were always analytic treatment. Not only do his new views of subject and object answer questions about how the world becomes mind, and how mind, in turn, becomes matter, his answers also tell us how unconscious fantasies structure what we call mind or reason out of the desire
that is each person’s cause and the *jouissance* that maintains it or blocks it.

In one sense, the limit of language can be said to appear at the place where a seemingly unified subject falls out of grammar, showing the face of thwarted desire that subtends language. At this limit point, *jouissance* appears as palpable libido, emptying a weight of affect into secondary-process meaning. In mathematics, the limit symbolized by +00 can be taken as a correlate of the real of *jouissance*. That is, in a number series, if every number has a limit (i.e., is real), “it is in this measure that it is infinite” (Manseur, “(−φ) et jouissance,” 89). In Lacan’s analytic terms, this means that castration (−φ or −00) has a functional limit in the life of a subject precisely because he or she can hypothesize an infinite sexual *jouissance*, lack implying infinite *jouissance*. But the impasses of the real mark a limit in desire at the point where knowledge of loss causes unconscious identification to be constructed around the issue of the whole or not whole.

When sexual difference is first perceived it “says nothing to the child,” Freud wrote in 1925. With the discovery of the Other’s (mother *qua* Woman) absolute alterity, Lacan points out that the phallus takes on its meaning in relation to castration. Lacan’s stress is not on anatomy, however, but on how one chooses to desire in interpreting the phallus as a universal value: “Castration can be written as the passage from Φ to −φ.” That is, if one forecloses difference, one chooses psychosis. The other choices all accommodate the difference itself in differing ways of relating to desire.

In his sexuation graphs, Lacan shows that identification with the whole, with a universal proposition, is a lie based on an error concerning why law is necessary. He places this lie within the symbolic (*Encore*, 73). By thinking of oneself as an exception to the rule of lack, the masculine position in knowledge reveals its certainty in a master discourse based on the denial of the unconscious. The masculine illusion of wholeness compensates for identification away from the primal mother *qua* loss itself, away from the intimations of death that anxiety (whose object is the void) brings us. Lacan’s point, a crucial one, is that masculinity is a stance taken toward knowledge, not a matter of gender or biological sex. Males who identify with group laws represent the *norme* of a society. Lacan described females who identify with masculine belief in the whole as *nor-mâle*.

Lacan uncovered this paradox: In life, as well as in mathematics, limits arise from the possibility of conceptualizing an “experience”
or knowledge without limits. Frege denoted this fact by the number 1 (one), the Lacanian signifier of non-existence. Lacan equates Frege’s number 1 with his One (l’Un)—a set of the whole—which opposes itself to lack (−φ). But Lacan’s lack, or castration, is not, then, equatable to Frege’s zero (0). Rather, the limit of castration placed on infinity is the One which Lacan symbolized by this symbol for limit: the Φ of jouissance which fills in lack. The minus phi of castration (−φ) explains what Frege could not answer: Why zero grounds the actual number one and then splits into a −00 rather than producing infinity as a +00. The One of totality (or absolute jouissance as exemplified by the mythic uncastrated father of the Freudian primal horde) is a lie because the all (le tout) marks an impossibility in mathematics, in language, and in being, not an infinity. Yet this avoidance of the real—by a belief in Oneness—places a certain dissatisfaction within the subject of grammatical language who wages a dialectical war between desire and jouissance. Seeking the infinite or ideal, and stymied by the real of its impossibility, “masters” will always be confused as to why things do not work as they expect them to.

Arguing that the human “subject” is logical, not biological, Lacan’s long emphasis on the mathematical logic of “relationship” culminated in a rhetoric of the unconscious. Moving away from models of intuitive geometries, Lacan turned to topology insofar as it is dependent on Leibniz’s logic of position (analysis situs). Working with the relationships of functions one to another, as in metaphor and metonymy, Lacan went beyond the imaginary aspects of his early schemas, grounding his later ones in the logic of the symbolic order (Leupin, Lacan, 12–13). From this he evolved a science of the real. In 1972 he began to elaborate his new topology of the three orders, situating the “subject” in varying positions, depending on whether “it” is momentarily centered or balanced in the imaginary, symbolic, or real. Thereby he elaborated a means for studying the relative positions of geometrical “beings” one to another in terms of quality, not quantity (empiricism). Leupin writes: “As such, this topology makes meaning (=quantity) dependent on structure (=quality). . . . Needless to say, this insistence on quality permits at the same time its formalization and its total transmissibility” (Leupin, Lacan, 13).

In his Seminar R.S. I., Lacan demonstrated how the real makes the field of language inconsistent and incomplete, writing the axiom this way:  $ϕ(∅)$. In his new topology, Lacan redefined his three orders as exigencies or tori. A torus looks like a doughnut or
a car tire. Lacan found this figure important in his efforts to redirect thinking about the Freudian unconscious toward the idea of a real hole in being and body that places space both inside and outside a person, collapsing inside and outside into an extimate object that is the subject. That is, the void in language, being, and body forms a torus where inside and outside define two voids—an internal and external one—that point to something real in form itself. That something that we see as a sphere, a spiral, and so on, is caused by an ab-sens at the very heart of meaning. Indeed, the similarities between the laws of form and the forms of the human body give one pause. That this hole functions as a palpable density is a radical concept, a hole acting as a compacity between all seeming unities and preventing the actual totalization of anything. Not only does the void evacuate non-utilitarian jouissance into language, thereby destroying imaginary illusions that like equals like, it also intersects with the unconscious as it appears at the edges of cuts that first gave rise to desire as a corporeal knowledge: an ability to distinguish between satisfaction and dissatisfaction when the infant momentarily loses the breast it imagines belongs to it, not to the mother, or loses a familiar voice singing it to sleep, and so on.

In this last period, Lacan taught that wherever thought fades or becomes feeble, wherever consciousness thinks itself at its own limits, one encounters unconscious desire hiding in the void, behind representations. And one can depict these moments in formulae that pin down certain fixed functions Lacan called axioms: repeating phenomena whose constancy is ahistorical and, in this sense, structural. "There is no such thing as a science of man," Lacan said, because science's man does not exist, only its subject does. . . . It is logic which here serves as the subject's navel, logic insofar as it is in no way linked to the contingencies of a grammar. The formalization of grammar must literally circumvent this logic if it is to be successfully carried out, but the circumventing movement is inscribed in this very operation." So, for example, the matheme signifying castration (−φ) denotes one of the limits on jouissance. Such a limit correlates with desire, insofar as it arises from a lack in being. Desire does not emanate from innate elements with which being then coheres in some harmonious correspondence with an a priori reality of sexual jouissance.

Lacan's science of the real finds its "subject" of jouissance in the lines, points, intersections, and overlaps that appear in language as mysteries, confusions, mistakes, miscommunications, lapses, enigmas, affects. He argues that these ever-present inconsistencies tell
the story of the return of the real. But most people do not consider castration, repression, or trauma as the agents that structure decision or choice because they think of knowledge as a content that fills a container they call mind. In that Lacan's Borromean chain operates as "mind" in associational linkages and co-joinings of relations and oppositions, one can talk about the "dimension" of a human subject whose language is the body's jouissance. But the subject is also marked by a jouissance of meaning, i.e., a continual use of language ($\Phi$) to interpret the unconscious ($\mathcal{S}$) in order to fill up the hole ($a$) at the heart of the Other ($S[\emptyset]$).

Thus, representations (language and images) bind themselves to a void which is continually constituted and reconstituted out of loss of jouissance. That is, the first cuts that create losses give rise to unary traits—i.e., "divine details"—of words, images, and libidinal effects linked to a palpable void. Thus, the void itself is positively charged by jouissance, which continually empties itself into language. And each conjunction of the real and symbolic, the symbolic and the imaginary, and the imaginary and the real, shows the absence of the master signifier Lacan named the phallus (Leupin, Lacan, 15). That is, signifiers install order by substituting things for a master signifier that has disappeared from signifying itself as such. Yet one can retrieve the effect of things that have been substituted for by other things through traces of jouissance that are left in imaginary being, the body, or the meanings one makes of language—effects that are retrievable in dreams, fantasy, and symptoms. But they are not observable at the level of remembered experience or coherent narrative, only in the more than language in language that Lacan called a jouissance knowledge.

The Logic of Autism, Prior to Any Metaphor Whatsoever

Autism is a rare condition that usually appears at approximately eight months of age. One may ask what bearing this condition could have on Lacan's theory of language acquisition? The answer is that we can better understand the paternal metaphor by which Lacan explains what Freud was trying to get at with the Oedipal myth in light of his work on the structure of autism. The Random House Dictionary defines autism as "self absorption, esp. extreme withdrawal into fantasy." In 1990, Colette Soler proposed that autism is one pole of psychosis. Rather than defining it as biologically caused, she argues that it is an extreme point of negativity in which
mirror identification with the mother (or primary caretaker) has been foreclosed. Unlike most autistic children, psychotics frequently participate in the symbolic order. But since the castration that constitutes lack as a differential key signifier for most people is foreclosed, we remember that the psychotic identifies rigidly with language and rituals. While doubt and the search for proof give a way of life to most people who deny any lack in being, or repress that fact, the psychotic functions as a subject of certainty, rather than a subject of doubt. But such rigidity prevents any easy movement within the order of the imaginary, described by Alexandre Leupin as “the system of projections and identifications [that] displaces the Freudian ego.” While the psychotic lacks the distance from the real that would enable him to easily represent his body and being within the change and flux of the symbolic, the autistic child is not even divided by the mirror Gestalt or projective plane (Leupin, Lacan, 22). Thus, the autistic identifies wholly with the real of the drives, rather than the social structure of transference where self symbols are exchanged within a syntactical flow of words substituted for lack.

A psychotic who is troubled during the mirror stage (or an autistic who never reaches a mirror moment) manifests a difficulty in identifying with a signifier for the pronoun “I,” for gender, or with a unified image of the body. Between the poles of autism (a pre-psychosis) and a psychosis from which a person functions in the social world, one sees the sheer death weight of trying to maintain a consistent jouissance. Here the living being is the object of the drive, not its subject, the prevailing real producing all kinds of libidinal confusions and illusions in language and fantasy. To fight this discomfort, most people depend on the symbolic and imaginary to maintain a law of measure, equanimity, and balance through attachment to familiar beliefs. If, however, there is inadequate loss of the mother as primary object, or if the father puts forth no desire for the child to fulfill, the excluded real returns into the symbolic as paranoia and onto the imaginary body as schizophrenia, with a vengeance that results in violent acts and endless suffering.

The autistic lives in the real of the void, a place where jouissance consistency makes of being the demand for nothing. Thus, autism is the condition of not using grammatical language at all or using it woodenly or incorrectly—i.e., the pure structure of metonymy in which words are used like things, unlike the structure of metaphor wherein words substitute for images and things.

In Encore Lacan defined language used in an effort to commu-
nicate with others as "discourse." Although all language is not used for that purpose, the bond or "social link" forged by discourse is itself the basis for a principle of law. In this sense law means exchange and is built upon a scaffolding of transference. Although autism forecloses the conventional imaginary of transference relations, there is a structural similarity between the pre-psychosis one might call autism and the episodic breaks undergone by psychotics. In both autism and psychosis, the imaginary is lived as if it were real. Since maintaining a consistent jouissance is the goal of psychosis, jouissance is not represented dialectically for the purpose of deciphering unconscious meaning. Such ciphering gives most people a way to distance themselves from the drives which demand immediate gratification. Both language and identifications are "dehumanized" in psychosis, then. Although a psychotic may well function in language as if he or she were in the social network, the tension manifest in the unmitigated pain of autism comes from a complete identification with the only bond the autistic knows: "Being as a purely negative libidinal servitude to the primary Other. Indeed, the primordial jouissance present in psychosis is locatable in the signifier for infinity and inexistence, in a place beyond the symbolic where there is no law of limit (Manseur, "(−ϕ) et jouissance," 89).

Anxiety and violence dwell at the surface of autism precisely because transference has not been built up as an imaginary bond that will allow substitutions of one thing for another. In autism, there has been no cut, no mirror stage, no separation from the primary real of bodily jouissance. No hole has been made in the Other that will allow the constitution of the void as a space in being. If autism is the most primitive pole of psychosis, as Colette Soler has suggested, one might speak of schizophrenia as a pre-mirror failure to identify with one's body as a whole image. In psychosis the drives divide the infant, rather than giving it a semblance of unity in representations that co-join the real and imaginary in two overlapping voids. When the real becomes unhooked from the symbolic and produces haunting voices and gazes wherein language and images are not repressed, they can not re-present a subject of desire that is negotiated between dialectical signifiers. Nonetheless, in treating psychosis, the signifier must remain the guide in the forest of psychotic language.\textsuperscript{33} In autism, however, since no mirror-stage moment of identification ever joined an image of the infant to loss of that image, the body itself suffers the full force of being its own cause. The lack of distance between the real of the biological
organism and the field of imaginary representations produces a horrific version of Condillac's "man machine." In psychosis proper the mirror effect constituted a tenuous imaginary which must, nonetheless, be imitated from the outside because no signifier for difference ever made a phallic split between the imaginary *qua* representation of name and sexual identity.

Although the primacy of primary *jouissance* disappears in most children, it does not disappear in autistic infants. When early experience of the gaze or the voice is too weighty, too negative, too poisonous, too absent for an infant to bear, that infant remains entrapped in the pure real of a negative *jouissance* which constitutes his or her identification in the Other. Most children who depend on language—that is, on identification with the symbolic father—are *free to invent the Other* out of repressed memories, giving a guarantee to being and knowing which anchors them (albeit retroactively) to the names of ideals: imaginary daddies in the guise of political leaders, heroes or heroines, authors, characters, artists, religious figures, ideological belief systems, and so on.

But how does this celebrated *manque-à-être* (lack in being) come to *ex-sist* for most people, when neither being nor lack are material pre-givens? Nor are they commensurate with the biological organism or "perception." As early as *Seminar* I (1953–1954), Lacan tells us that whatever is reduced to the eye, to the visible, is imaginary:

In order to reduce us for a moment to being only an eye, we had to put ourselves in the shoes of the scientist who can decree that he is just an eye, and can put a notice on the door—*Do not disturb the experimenter.* In life, things are entirely different, because we aren't an eye. So, this eye, what does it mean? It means that, in the relation of the imaginary and the real, and in the constitution of the world such as results from it, everything depends on the position of the subject. And the position of the subject—you should know, I've been repeating it for long enough—is essentially characterized by its place in the symbolic world, in other words in the world of speech. Whether he has the right to, or is prohibited from, calling himself *Pedro* hangs on this place. Depending on what is the case, he is within the field of the cone or he isn't.\(^4\)

In Melanie Klein's celebrated case of four-year-old Dick (whose "developmental" level she describes as being between fifteen and eighteen months), she portrayed Dick as using words in a deformed way, inopportunistly. Dick is further characterized, in Kleinian theory, as being apathetic because he had encountered bad objects *in*
his mother's body. Lacan contradicts the Kleinian view of Dick, pointing out: “this child has no desire to make himself understood, he doesn't try to communicate, his only activities . . . are emitting sounds and taking pleasure in meaningless sounds, in noises” (Sem. I, 81). Indeed, “well-functioning” psychotics manifest this same love of playing on the sounds of words. Such subjects prefer to use words non-dialectically rather than pursue problems of meaning or efforts at communication. Making meaning and exchanging with others both disrupt the consistency of jouissance that only silence or non-dialectical invention provide.

Lacan points out that Klein's patient grasped something of language, nonetheless, or Klein could never have made Dick understand her. Taking account of Klein's various statements about the "real" objects in the world available to the child, Lacan makes this point: "If we now sum up everything that Melanie Klein describes of this child's attitude, the significant point is simply the following—he makes no call (appel)" (Sem. I, 83). That is, he does not call out to the other. He is not in the social domain of transference relations. By drawing attention to the fact that the first signifier of most infants is a "call" to the other, wanting something from the Other, Lacan argues that desire is the basis of transference. Stressing that Dick—at four years of age—already had his own system of language, Lacan says that that system was quite sufficient for him. "The proof is that he plays with it. He even makes use of it to play a game of opposition against the adults' attempts to intrude. When adults ask him to reproduce words he uses correctly, he reproduces the 'correct' word in an unintelligible, deformed manner" (Sem. I, 83).

By distinguishing between "negation" as the denial Freud named Verneinung—which points to something already there to deny, i.e., an unconscious repression—and a negative manner, Lacan alerts us to a kind of negativity that is different from denial or repression. He finds the prototype of this kind of negativity in Freud's Verdrängung, the primordial repression which establishes a lining of the real in subject function. In other words, the prespecular objects that first cause the "call," thereby constituting the field of the real—the Ur-lining of the subject—can be organized in such a way that they will not cause desire. They will not give rise to a being that lacks. And such primordial negativity occurs even prior to the negation Lacan called foreclosure or Verwerfung: throwing out the signifier for a father's name from the symbolic. Indeed, the first resistance possibly causes the second one. But in both cases—psychosis or autism—whatever is foreclosed from the symbolic does
not disappear. It returns in the real. That is, at the level of the real or trauma one does not escape effects just because they have not been assimilated or symbolized in conscious knowledge.

In autism, need is equated with demand such that nothing is subtracted from language or drive. Indeed, the autistic child cannot bear the intrusion of Otherness and the lack it brings with it. As impossible as it may seem, refusing relationships with others is a(n) (h)ontology that takes on its most graphic form wherein the "human" is constituted as a machine of destruction. Since autistic children are objects of the Other's jouissance, by definition, they are not re-presented or -signified in the Other. If the primordial object held out to an infant for its "satisfaction" is a malevolent gaze, a dismissive voice, an all-consuming invasive mother, or simply absence itself, it is only logical that this infant take these offerings of the primary caretaker's fatigue, distress, momentary disability, real dislike, or apathetic disinterest for what they are—negative. What is even more surprising in this logic of the real is that such an infant can make a system of meaning—of the non-sens meaning of the letter of "being"—from such offerings. When Lacan says that the autistic child does not drop the object a, he stresses that the object is the only thing that defines him with some guarantee of "being" qua consistency. Any infant must cling to something, even if it is a poisonous relation to the gaze or voice of the real that has constituted him or her as a creature of rage.

In introducing l'appel (the call to the other), Lacan tells us he is not slipping language into his theory (not even a higher level of language such as a metalanguage), but la lalangue, a primordial level of murmuring beneath language. Even pets, deprived of speech, make "calls" to you, says Lacan. "To the human call a further, richer development is reserved, because it takes place precisely in a being who has already reached the level of language" (Sem. I, 84). That is, a human cry is more than a meow, bark, chirp, and so on. What the autistic rejects is not language qua language, but the primordial structuring agents of separation: the gaze and the voice. For the autistic, these Ur-objects show the Other as a dangerous persecuting presence. Their negative power lies in that they function to structure the subject as an object of the drives. If the voice and the gaze are causes that structure desire for most people, one sees how the theory of an actual "bad breast" (versus a good one) could arise in a clinic such as Melanie Klein's where the analyst takes the visible organ to be the thing in itself, or a symbol of it.
Lacan’s teaching is a topological structuralism, however, not a moralistic or imaginary set of prescriptions. Not only does the autistic not call out to the other, Colette Soler pinpoints a second autistic trait: the autistic’s efforts to annihilate the offensive Other of which he or she is, paradoxically, the “victim.” The refusal to permit any intimation of the Other’s word constitutes a third trait of autism. Since the autistic identifies with rejection of a persecuting voice, he or she must refuse words themselves, for words confront this subject with a negative intrusion of the world of objects, with a threat of division he cannot permit. If identification with a negative voice or gaze conditions a refusal of the other’s look, voice, or touch—of what are generally taken as signs of affection—the autistic’s larger refusal to enter symbolic relations entails a rejection of the drive qua demand for satisfaction addressed to an other ($D$). The autistic cannot ask or desire because he or she does not trust (believe in) others. With a negative primordial Other as his or her guarantee, the autistic, by definition, forecloses the social Other, remaining an extension of the primordial Other who provides the only guarantee for being open to him or her (Soler, “Hors discours,” 17–19).

Alienation and Separation

Lacan’s discovery that humans are constituted as pre-determined effects of particular causes is new to epistemology. In the 1960s Lacan taught that culture is essentially installed by the two logical operations of “alienation” and “separation.” In “Alienation and Separation: Logical Moments of Lacan’s Dialectic of Desire,” Bruce Fink points out that Lacan reconceptualized alienation as a logical operation on the level of the symbolic (language), rather than on the imaginary level, as Hegel had. While Hegel’s concept of an alienated subject is consisted of the you/me, either/or model, the Lacanian “subject of desire” is defined at the point where he or she is not thinking, but is there as lacking or absent. Lacan translates Freud’s Wo Es war, soll Ich werden to “There where it was,” I would like it to be understood, “it is my duty that I should come to being.”

Although one is there in a moment of jouissance which is itself re-presented in language, Ich will redefine Es in the analytic treatment.

The either/or dialectic of Hegelian alienation belongs to the realm of conscious reification or ego politics. But Lacanian “alien-
ation” is essentially the result of an individual’s encounter with language, from which one emerges as castrated by language or not. The phallus as Lacan defines it is not positive—i.e., the real organ penis—but negative, in the sense that it refers to something not quite visible or tangible. One is speaking, rather, of the veil of desire which responds to a lack in being. The phallic signifier, phallus, paternal metaphor, Father’s Name, master signifier, or object a are just so many different names for the same effect: alienation or eclipse of the subject of jouissance behind language. Alienation is Lacan’s name for the unconscious; that is, the unknown as a presence of imaginary castration, or something lacking (−φ). Moments of fading in language and perception give one a momentary glimpse of the unconscious behind the world of visible consciousness, behind a random ordering of symbols, within a somewhat chaotic ordering of the so-called developmental stages (Lacan, Four Fundamental Concepts, chap. 5).

The neither/nor dialectic of “separation,” which Lacan also called the cut, both marks the void by the negativity of loss and binds jouissance to the void via imaginary traits, signifiers, and libidinal effects inscribed in and on the body (Fink, “Alienation and Separation,” 80, nn. 17, 18; 115–16). Lacan described these effects of separation as the beginnings of the constitution of structure, visible only in the unary traits (lalangue or primordial jouissance) that appear as excesses of jouissance in language. That is, unless a unary trait becomes a signifier—jouissance significantized, representing a subject for another signifier, the S₁ or binary signifier—meaning cannot come into existence (Lacan, Four Fundamental Concepts, 199). Thus one may define the Other as the “battery” or set of all signifiers where S₁ or the phallus is repressed by the subject of unconscious fantasy: § ⊗ a. Insofar as the S₁ is a signifier which has no corresponding signified, it institutes the unconscious by attaching the desiring subject to the Other via inaugural signifiers that constitute an ego ideal. Bruce Fink writes that “S₁ represents the subject (of the unconscious) for all the other signifiers. S₁ is the signifying chain’s point of origin and the sine qua non of the constitution of the subject as a subject in language. Lacking this fundamental mooring, the other signifiers (designated as a whole by S₂)—to the extent that they are even assimilated—are condemned to drift without ever giving rise to meaning” (Fink, “Alienation and Separation,” 88).

In Extimité Jacques-Alain Miller explains that the phallus is the signified for which the Father’s Name is the signifier. On the one
hand, language functions as a metaphor, referring to itself by the signifier of the Other. At the same time, language also functions in relation to a law (or serial ordering) Lacan called the Father's Name. But even as early as the 1950s Lacan saw that one aspect of meaning is not representable as the signifier: the primordially repressed Ur-objects (the mammilla, the feces, the voice, the gaze, the urinary flow, the phoneme, the [imaginary] phallus, the nothing) that are in-corp-orated via the mother or her substitute. But only one of these objects causes or inaugurates human demand via the pathway of need where physical survival is at issue: the mammilla. The feces are located elsewhere in the mapping of psychic reality. That is, the first demand that an infant win approval in the eyes of others concerns the deposition and destruction of the feces. This act marks an infant as socialized. The contradictory aspect of the demand—Give this gift which is also disgusting—places the feces in the realm of the visible, under the mark of the superego. Lacan depicts the realm of the scopic drive as one where judgments concerning ideal performance beget anxiety which returns throughout life in moments of logical time. Loss begets anxiety which makes one seek to fill up the void that marks the body with knowledge of loss. It is not as things in and of themselves that these Ur-objects constitute the real lining of the subject of desire, however, but through their effects as "objects," if only in the sense they give of an oscillation between satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Still, the drive aims at satisfaction although it always stumbles on a gap between the real effects of Ur-objects and the deception of imaginary lure objects that appear to be das Ding an sich. This missed encounter occurs, in part, because the real object a that causes desire has the property of being separable from the organ which seems to produce it. Such separation suggests the incompatibility of loss with the things sought to appease it.

If the object causes desire and then defaults on payment, Lacan found Freud's argument that a nucleus of the unconscious is real logical. Formed as the Urverdrängt of primordial repression, this something lost is but a trait or mark of the effect of loss itself, which is inscribed as the jouissance of meaning, body, and the organism. Freud's einziger Zug becomes Lacan's imaginary bond or unary trait which retains a piece of the real at the moment of loss (the cut), thereby attaching the mark of a radically lost "object" to the void: i.e., joining two lacks. In other words, loss is posited in language as a palpable and dense (material) presence that one encounters in enigmatic impasses, in any suspicion of a "beyond" in language,
as well as in symptoms written on the body. In this context, the signifiers of language re-present a subject as an object a one might call a signified. Insofar as signifiers retain repressed resonances of libidinal attachments that cannot be spoken at the level of memory or experience, the jouissance of meaning is what psychoanalysis tries to understand. One might call this a metalanguage of effects whose jouis-sens comes from its bond with a jouissance of being, thereby eroticizing lack/desire at the body's edges and rims.  

In Freud's theory of repression, he said the Vorstellungsrepräsentanz or the representative of a representation stands behind what is represented. But both Freud's concept and his term (which has been translated into English as the "ideational representative" of the drive) remained enigmatic for him. Lacan chalked this up to his seeking the link between representations and repression in perceptions or affects. Lacan linked representations to repressions in another way. By viewing the Vorstellungen as a priori repressions of unary signifiers created by the primordial loss of "objects," Lacan showed that such cuts create a dialectic with loss itself. And this dialectic, symbolized by S[Ø], destroys the possibility of a true Oneness between a person and the words, images, or others that constitute his or her world. Neither perception, affect, language, nor anything else, can mean on its own. In The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis Lacan points to the Fort! Da! bobbin reel game Freud used as an example of how repetition is linked to representation, to argue a novel idea. This Freudian concept sheds more light on Freud's theory of primal repression, the Urverdrängt, than it does on representation, Lacan said. The Repräsentanz is not the bobbin reel as some composite symbol of the mother, as Freud suggests, nor any primordially repressed imago of a breast. Rather, the game itself mimes the effect of the mother's departure on the infant, the departure momentarily creating a ditch of loss that de-centers the child, giving it a sense of being there or not being there. Rather than representing what is actually visible in the game, the departure shows what is a priori: loss catalyzing the real of anxiety which pushes the child to fill up the hole with an activity (Lacan, Four Fundamental Concepts, 63).  

Representation is not linked to repetition at the level of the visible, then. In Lacan's teaching, Freud's theory becomes an imaginary interpretation in which images and repeated acts (such as the game) serve as a shorthand for Lacan's concept of function. Both cover over a gap or a Spaltung in the subject. In the bobbin reel game, the mother's departure causes the child to acknowledge loss
by identifying with another "object," but not because some pri-
mordial affective bond has been severed. Rather, the child en-
counters anxiety when he experiences the opening of the void. Such
an encounter with loss elicits anxiety as a "knowledge" about the
void which, in turn, gives rise to the quest for jouissance qua con-
sistency via the repetitions intended to guarantee a continuity in
language and being as they constitute the body for a meaning "be-
yond" itself.

In the field of language the S₁ or master signifier is the "I think"
of the "I am's" more inclusive savoir (S₂). Desire lies between the
two signifiers for language and points to the subject's cause in fan-
tasy and jouissance, not in communication or in relationships per
se. And the object a denotes an écriture that is absent as a visible
referent between word and thing, but palpably present as the mys-
terious cause of desire. Such an invisible cause is not, however,
simply the nothingness of empty space, but something precise pro-
duced by the cut that creates a quota of jouissance—nonsense, a
non-utilitarian libido—which only seems to emanate from the lure
objects one desires. Loss of jouissance, paradoxically, makes one
seek objects as a guarantee of grounding, not as an object per se,
although people generally think of objects as "the thing in itself."
Objects are actually semblances that hide a real void in language.
This becomes an even more perplexing notion when one notes that
master signifiers (S₁) can only be inscribed as such by re-presenting
the object a as a subject for another signifier, the S₂ or binary sig-
nifier. That is, S₁ alone cannot symbolize thinking, for it is retro-
actively defined by S₂ which takes "repressed" desire into account.
Psychotic speech does not function this way, however. It is bom-
barded, rather, with a plethora of S₁s. But most speech is not psy-
chotic and so must work with repressed desire. Because of this,
"thinking" continually ends up in hermeneutical dead ends where
people find solutions to problems in the order of the visible where
seeing is believing.

In Television Lacan described jouissance as a "knowledge" sys-
tem whose components are: a "battery" or set of signifiers, pleasure
and displeasure in the body, the shocks one gets from encountering
the symptoms whose jouissance provides a sense of meaningful
consistency to one's being. Jacques-Alain Miller points out in "A
Reading of Some Details in Television" that jouissance is a "knowl-
edge" of the real, where "I think" coalesces with the Freudian
primordial father—the exception to the rule of castration—to be-
come the Lacanian "more than you in you" (Miller, "A Reading,"
18–29; esp. 26). This real is proximate to the void of anxiety, but is not the void spoken of by Malcolm Bowie as a "boundless and inexpressible vacuity." It is, rather, a powerful encounter with the absolute weight of the void, emptying the jouissance effects of imagined oneness into language. And these effects constitute a knowledge that materializes language around the partial drives.

In "To Interpret the Cause" Miller said one might equate the alienated field of the Other with representations (O), but the quota of affect that governs the deployment of representations is jouissance: $\frac{O}{J}$. And the residue or excess between the two is Lacan's object a, the filler of the void (Miller, "To Interpret the Cause," 49). Combining Lacan's first and second paternal metaphors, Miller rewrote Lacan's formula for the primordial paternal metaphor this way: $\frac{F}{M} = \frac{O}{J}$. Something which is not a signifier—the mother as lost desire—is substituted for by something which is a signifier: The Father's Name. But the secret of the paternal metaphor, of Oedipus, is not that. Rather, any phallic anchor (be it a Father's Name as a signifier or an object a acting as a signifier) can make a fixed substance—a libidinal glue—out of the jouissance which fills the void. In the sexuation graphs in "A Love Letter" (Encore), Lacan designated that link as a tie between the symbolic and the real:

\[
\begin{array}{c|c}
S & R \\
\hline
\Phi & S (\emptyset) \\
\end{array}
\]

(Feminine Sexuality, 149). Miller's formula mentioned above shows that jouissance can be inscribed in the symbolic order because the mother is lost qua primary object ("To Interpret the Cause," 46).

Memory does not come from the mind, then, or from a grammatical language chain adequate to its own functioning. Memory comes from contingent associations. And inconsistencies in memory come from difficulties encountered in the ordering of desire around the impasses of jouissance which one might also call libido, or a quota of affect. In the real, memory is a knot of unassimilated
meanings which persist, organizing unconscious desire, the fundamental fantasy, and the symptom around unsymbolized (traumatic) knowledge. Yet the real “returns” anyway in bits and pieces of jouissance that “cannot enter the place of the Other, cannot be marked and transferred as a signifier. And that is precisely what Lacan called small a . . . the plus de jouir as the difference between the libido and language which produces this small a as a residue, $J - O = a$” (Miller, “To Interpret the Cause,” 49). Thus, the small a unites language to libido in the fetish objects marked by a surplus value. Although the object a usually succeeds in hiding the void in the Other, the jouissance of being, body, and meaning are continually disrupted by the impasses that “return” in moments of loss, displeasure, or “death” (Lacan, Four Fundamental Concepts, 55).

Being only seems ontological to us because it appears to give a person a place of position or identity without one’s having to see the obvious: that each person can only find recognition of his or her being (as a particular constellation of signifiers Lacan called an ego ideal) from others. Yet narcissistic creatures though we are (m’être), we will do anything to hide the inverse face of narcissism: our shame (hontology) at being less than the ideal we pretend to be in our lies to self and other. Moreover, our happiness resides, not in others per se, but in the jouissance we recoup from them, although we treat this “knowledge” by denial, repression, repudiation, or foreclosure. Yet desire remains inextinguishable as it unfurls its relation to castration in the position one takes toward the phallus where one values oneself as masculine, i.e., in the symbolic, or feminine, i.e., in the real. Lacan argues that this drama culminates in neurosis (denying that the sexual difference is itself a distinction between the masculine and feminine), psychosis (foreclosing knowledge of the difference), perversion (repudiating belief in the difference), and the norm (the père-version or sexual “perversion” where the difference is acknowledged, but its cause is repressed).

When Lacan symbolized the experience of being this or that by the game Freud’s nephew played with the bobbin reel, he showed that the reel’s importance is not as an object. Any object—be it concrete or experiential—can be invested with a small part of the real that, in turn, imbues that object with the anxiety surrounding loss. Jacques-Alain Miller has called the Ur-lining of the real—the objects that cause desire—a pre-symbolic real ($R_1$). After coherent language is learned, a person inhabits a post-symbolic real ($R_2$) where the objects invested with jouissance show the tedious, deadly

A New Theory of Identification

Lacan reinterpreted Freud's theories of identification from *Totem and Taboo*, "Psychology of the Group and Analysis of the Ego," and "The Ego and the Id." From these he built his theory of identification around his interpretation of the Freudian death drive. Taking Freud's mythical primitive father of "Totem and Taboo" as the first object of identification—the real father who "enjoys" beyond the law of limit as a *veritable parasitical presence* in our "minds" and bodies—he argues that a primary *jouissance* is emblazoned in a montage of images, sounds, and experiences surrounding the primary object. Thus, frustration, castration, and privation are constituted in a triadic relation to the object, prior to a secondary sublimation one might equate with the paternal metaphor.

But the Lacanian real father is not the pre-Oedipal mother of Kleinian theory, nor any actual father as a conscious being or an imaginary figure. Nor is he an object a, cause-of-desire. Rather the obscene "father" enjoyment—the Ur-symbol of exception to the rules—encapsulates identification with the *jouissance* of the death drive taken as that which hurts us even as we cling to the semblant of appearance over the truth of our lives. In this sense, the primordial cause of being and desiring is the void: \( \emptyset \). The symbolic father \( \left( \frac{0}{(a)} \right) \) comes after, in the guise of whatever symbol of order provides a source for identifying with the rules of the group in which one defines oneself as *all*. And the contradiction between believing one is an exception to the rule of loss because one is, paradoxically, identified with a group of the supposed whole (all those who deny lack: \( \exists x \, \neg x \)) and the reality of there being no all or whole that will annihilate the void at the heart of being, places the masculine on the slope of the death drive, along with its accoutrements—violence, aggression, power, and control. Jacques-Alain Miller has explained that the residual quantum of affect Freud described is Lacan's object a. Not finding a place in the Other, the "object" is displaced into language and
the body, concentrated in pockets of excess *jouissance* that *repeat* deadly rituals. These rituals, nonetheless, give the illusion of a consistency in being. Insofar as the function of the object *a*—in and of itself an inexistent, empty form—is to delimit the anxiety produced by an emptying out of *jouissance* from the void, it is heterogeneous. Any fetished or cherished object, be it a ritual, a walk down a certain street, a *Glanz auf der Naze*, and so on, can constitute the object *a* as a stopper to the void.

In “The Analytic Experience” Miller extends Lacan’s theory of libido. “Repression is a *separation* of the idea [representation] and the quantum of affect [the object *a*], with only anxiety standing apart as the affect that does not mislead.” That is, repression is not simply a denial or a disassociation. Repression is a real cut or split between an idea and a *quantity* of feeling. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, such a theory gives rise to a very different kind of clinical practice than those praxes in which analysts advise people to “talk about their feelings.” For what disturbs and troubles—the repressed truth—is precisely *what one cannot say*. Lacanian analysis separates the object *a* from the void it fills in a series of cuts into an analysand’s narrative. This procedure gives rise to fantasies that support destructive *jouissance* which, in turn, informs blind drive. That is, as we go through multiple identificatory fusions, we become subjects of the drive Lacan described as a collage (*Four Fundamental Concepts*, chap. 13). Analytic treatment aims at breaking up the destructive collusion between the object *a* and the “better than nothing” pleasure one takes in the illusion that all is well with one’s world.

Primordial identification with the real of absolute *jouissance* produces the Freudian primitive father that Lacan “translates” as a libidinal object: a profound identification of oneself as an object of *jouissance*, not as a subject of language. The subject as object of the partial drive goes through the Freudian drive circuit—source, goal, aim, and thrust—on the side of the real, of a material sense of Oneness (*Four Fundamental Concepts*, chap. 14). But Lacan does not see the drive as achieving satisfaction in some mythic evolution from orality to anality to a harmonious genitality. Rather, the drive's aim is to make a unity between desire and the realization of a *fantasy*. But the drive repeats failures instead, because the desire for pleasure that Lacan calls Freud’s primary process and the reality of repetition that Lacan calls Freud’s secondary process coalesce in the solitary *jouissance* of one’s fixities.

But what has this to do with the paternal metaphor? Slavoj Žižek,
for example, explains Lacan's notion of the Name-of-the-Father as
the dead symbolic father, or the father of dead letters.\textsuperscript{45} Not only
is language made of the archaic memories of already dead tongues, 
Jacques-Alain Miller clarifies Lacan's re-reading of Freud further
to say that one name of the object $a$ is the real father as a living
presence of death. The real father is to be found in the burning
coals of dead letters that pierce desire and language with jouissance.\textsuperscript{46} If jouissance is first linked to the world via the insignia of
images and words, then the primal sexuality of any being is marked
by the impossibility of Oneness, by the loss of the primary object.
The craziness in psychosis is the radical foreclosure of this loss.
Thus, the first human identification (constituted by the infant's re-
peated demands for satisfaction) is with the real father \textit{qua} rejection
of limits. Yet, the first limit encountered is the mother as primary
forbidden object: What is forbidden is that some other being erad-
icate our own losses once and for all. The incest taboo, structurally
speaking, is ahistorical, then, ensuring that most infants acquire
language within the framework of Oedipal law.

At the level of a secondary \textit{jouissance} or reality principle ($\Phi$), the
symbolic order prevails over the primordial relation to the mother.
In differentiating themselves away from their mothers, sons identify
with symbolic order myths that delineate some concept of the
whole. $\exists x$ is the matheme for the subject whose \textit{existence} is based
on the illusion of being an exception to the rule of castration, a
function which is, in fact, foreclosed ($\exists x$) (\textit{Feminine Sexuality}, 149).

In Lacan's teaching, the superego (or ego or id) are not agencies
of some predetermined psyche that exists apart from the drives or
language. The superego starts as an \textit{Ur-object} of the real that con-
stitutes the ego and the id insofar as the voice and the gaze of the
primordial Other are the first agents of castration or judgment. In
later life a neurotic tries to obey the Other's desire which is, none-
theless, opaque to him or her, while the psychotic follows the dic-
tates of the Other's \textit{jouissance}.\textsuperscript{47} As we have already said, whether
we speak of neurosis, psychosis, or perversion, we refer to different
outcomes of the way the orders are knotted by the paternal met-
aphor. We remember that the three exigencies—real, symbolic,
imaginary—constitute the "mind" as a necklace of signifying chains
ordering each person's desire, first in reference to the phallus, i.e.,
as a symptom of a mother's unknown desire correlated with the
\textit{signifier} for a father's name. But this "relation" from Lacan's first
formula is not adequate to explain how a mother's unconscious
desire plays such a powerful role in constituting subjectivity, pre-
cisely when it is ungraspable as clear conscious knowledge. Concepts such as *lalangue* or unary signifiers try, at best, to describe reminiscent traces of desire. But these are not empirical facts or retrievable events. Thus, the mother's desire can only be understood by the law of the signifier: when it is taken with the signifier for her partner—the father.

But no opposite and equal function obtains. Rather, both sons and daughters are referred to the signifier for that part of the mother's desire that goes beyond her child. And since both sexes identify first with the mother, the issue of gender will always concern identifying *with* her or *away* from her. Insofar as daughters identify *with* her, this means being part of a group of people who have ex-sistence beyond the symbolic order of rules and closure. Sons who identify *away* from her, do so by identifying with a group of the (imagined) whole, bound by certain societal rules. If no signifier for difference *separates* the child from its mother's desire, then castration does not occur; lack is not introduced into being. *Jouissance* or libido holds sway such that meaning cannot be created in a substitutive flow of dialectical movement, metaphor being the way meaning is built by one thing *substituting* (exchanging) for another: \( \frac{2}{1} \) (Miller, "To Interpret the Cause," 45). Whenever the referent is not represented in the imaginary as a signifier for sexual difference, the void produces jouissance that must be constantly evacuated in order to clear space for producing any meaning (Miller, "Language: Much Ado about What?" 34).

Derrida claims one can knock out the sign for opposition between two binaries thereby *cancelling* out opposition or "differance," collapsing opposites into the same. The traces of language and noise that build knowledge out of language into a logocentrism are supposedly subverted in this way. Yet Lacan sees language as functioning dialectically only when the phallic signifier for difference (the bar of substitution) has been learned as sexual difference. One might call this signifier an "introject" that allows humans the freedom to move in language, even to *play* within language. If this difference is not put in place to start with, a tragic being evolves, one who is subjugated from infancy to words and sounds enunciated by a superego maternal voice. Consequently, the psychotic produces meaning like an automaton. Because words are equated with drives, they are not pliable.

The fact that subject structuration comes from how one is programmed for sexual difference imposes a spatial effect within the
linearity of a person's use of grammar. Lacan described this effect as the unconscious working in language to insert the timing of desire by the function of substitution. The time of jouissance persists in language as a stoppage, limit, or blockage to its smooth flow. Jouissance is not unconscious, then, in the sense of the Unbewusste or not known. Rather, the jouissance of being and the jouissance of the body insert symptomatic inconsistencies and enigmas into language, showing that language is always inadequate to the task of representing thought. Moreover, the primordial objects that cause the desire that materializes language around desired objects allow language to function only by the temporality of anticipation and retroaction. Thus, repression refers to the experience of rediscovering desire that has been pressed under before. Insofar as loss and gain are always in play, Lacan says the symptom is always being written in language, a writing of ups and downs ("Seminar of 21 January 1975"). That is, the unconscious is not timeless at all, as Freud supposed, except in the sense that language, identifications, and symptoms are nailed down, fixed. And the subject is not an individual, but an instant in time.

When language refers the child away from the signifier mother as primary object of desire, toward the signifier for a father's name, a fourth term is created: the subject as a point one can identify at the intersections of the orders in each person's signifying chains. In a manner of speaking, the "subject" qua symptom registers the catastrophe everyone experiences who loses the primary object, a loss which gives rise to fantasies of how to recoup jouissance from the world. Thus, fundamental fantasies structure our subjective positions in life as unconscious movements toward jouissance (Miller, "To Interpret the Cause," 43). But one does not move directly toward jouissance. Lacan gives this reason. Finding no fixed or symmetrical relationship between father and Man, or mother and Woman, Lacan suggested a third term of reference: the phallus defined as an object of desire or mark of lack-in-being that defines each person in reference to castration (Miller, "To Interpret the Cause," 46). But, if the mother's desire is unknowable at the level of lack (phallus), then the secret of Freud's Oedipus can be found in Lacan's second paternal metaphor where something that is not a signifier is substituted for something that is. Lacan denotes the inscription of jouissance in the symbolic order by the signifier of the phallic jouissance.

\[
\begin{align*}
F & \rightarrow \Phi \\
M & \rightarrow x \\
O & \rightarrow J
\end{align*}
\] (Miller, "To Interpret the Cause," 46).
In the first paternal metaphor, Lacan’s phallus supports language to say that something is unknown: a signified without a signifier, an enigma. Later, in “Subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire” Lacan opined that one can only receive one’s own message from the Other by reading backward in the chain of signifiers. Thus, at the point where a subject is signified as a symptom, as a metaphor of the paternal enigma, this first formula shows the phallus functioning as an x, as a question mark or mystery concerning the mother. An infant cannot define him- or herself in terms of what the mother wants precisely because the phallus stands for this truth: something always lacks in desire (−ϕ). And this something missing in knowledge plagues every person whose “cause” is always already lost, unsayable (everyone except the psychotic who believes his cause is not lost). Given this reality, Lacan argued that meaning cannot be ascertained outside discourse, which defines the social “link” in terms of language used in the service of transference relations. That is, even though the real resides outside the social link, it still inhabits language as an excess in meaning, an hors-sens (Encore, “A Jakobson”).

The phallus is not only the knowledge one lacks about what the mother wants, then, but also a question about what she enjoys. What failed identification, what ideal, govern what she says to her child? Does she enjoy martyrdom, inducing guilt, maligning (or lauding) her husband? In one sense the phallus denotes the structural function of lack and the “object” one hopes will fill the lack. In signifying that the subject lacks knowledge about what the Other really wants of him or her, the phallus hides as a question mark in the forest of what is said. This is quite a different notion of the phallus from Malcolm Bowie’s view of Lacan’s 1958 reading of Freud’s phallus as organ or symbol: “There is something desperate about this apotheosis of the phallus. It is of course agreeable to see the relations between Mind and Word turning for a visionary moment upon a single hinge.”

At the level of signifiers (insignia of the imaginary and symbolic) the ideal ego unconscious formation has become a principle of resistance, a function usually ascribed to the ego. If the signifier for lack (−ϕ) gives rise to the symbolic order—

$$\exists x \phi x$$
$$\forall x \phi x$$

—one could describe this order as the distance from the primary
jouissance that bolsters the ego's resistance to knowing about primordial identifications. Perhaps what we generally call perception—or perspective in art—is actually a measure of distance from the primary object, a distance that is lacking in the structures of autism and psychosis. It is not the actual father who is at issue, then, but the foreclosure of the signifier for one's lived existence as based on identification with a father and with a lineage or history of the father's name. It is not, then, the father's proper name that is in question.

The Second Theory of the Paternal Metaphor

We come again to Jacques-Alain Miller's elaboration of a second formula for the Lacanian paternal metaphor. Unlike Lacan's 1958 formula, there is no consistent Other in this second formulation. Eric Laurent wrote in "The Uses of Phantasy" that the second formula concerns an inconsistent Other, perhaps in the sense of Bertrand Russell's inconsistent logics, but not consistent with Russell's meaning of "consistent." The Other produces a negative phallus (castration) and a remainder (the object a). One can write the effect like this: $\emptyset$ Other Discourse $\rightarrow \phi$ Phallic Signifier (Laurent, p. 36).

That is, any lack has a sexual meaning if loss is taken to mean the loss of jouissance. Even sexuality itself becomes one more substitute for filling the void of anxiety. In this context, the father's name would function as an object $a$, rather than as a signifier or a name. We remember that an object $a$ marks a place that is empty at the level of symbolized meaning. But this very emptiness causes fantasy to circle around it, making the referent of all language the void. Put another way, the Father's Name functions as a signifier for lack (alienation, castration) in the symbolic only if the father does not act like a real father who is beyond the law of castration (as did Schreber's father, or certain "fathers" of countries such as Hitler, Hussein, or any other such dictator).

A real father denotes a person (male or female) who enjoys in flagrant rejection of the laws that constitute the distance, boundaries, or conventions that order the symbols of the symbolic. The second formula for the paternal metaphor—the formula, as well, for the repression (refoulement, Verneinung) of the object $a$—places this object under the inconsistent Other $\emptyset / a$. This formula denotes
the human effort to deny castration or lack via jouissance or sublimation (Laurent, "Uses of Phantasy," 36). The difficult point in this second formula is that no father (either as a signifier or name) can be taken as a guarantee of limit or law. Not only is Woman not a guarantee, neither is the father in whose name we speak, whether it be the father of a family, an ideology, a belief, a theory, and so on. Rather, to some degree, every desiring person forecloses law in favor of jouissance, taken as a guarantee of being and knowing.

This formula \( \Theta \) means that no knowledge, person, method, or ideology can truly provide the certainty that would ensure objectivity or truth (except in terms of certain physical or mathematical laws). Supporting the place of the inconsistent Other where something is missing, one finds not a positive phallus (\( \Phi \)), but the sign for castration (\(-\phi\)). Because something is lacking in knowledge and being (\(\$\)), persons are driven to represent themselves one to another, or to themselves, as fully present and autonomous subjects. The truth of the matter is that any subject qua person is suspended in representational networks (\(S_i\)) of their own master signifiers. Two signifiers—\(S_1\) and \(S_2\)—represent the field of language, but only because lack (\(\$\)) makes it impossible for fantasy (\(\$ \diamond a\)) to fill the void with a semblance of being a subject of consistent jouissance.

In his first theory of the paternal metaphor, Lacan tried to delineate differential clinical structures on the basis of belief in the father qua symbolic father. The neurotic was an atheist or an agnostic, a disbeliever in God who tries to evade the problems of the Other while holding on to the Other's desire. The pervert was a true atheist, one who has no symbolic father at all, only the gaze of the real father. The psychotic, the only true believer, believes in the gods who inhabit the field of the real, speaking in omniscient voices and casting looks that scald. Belief shows that we necessarily think we "have" a structural deficiency we must deny. But even in his first theory of the paternal metaphor, Lacan was already arguing that behind the metaphor of the father, taken as subject of the law, the metonymy of castration is hidden in the name of the phallus (Laurent, "Uses of Phantasy," 34).

Miller's clarification of the second paternal metaphor is founded in part on Lacan's "Geneva Lecture," where he argued that one can organize the phallus as a predicate on the basis of already existing mathematical knowledge of inconsistent logics (Analysis, 7–26). The fact that the Other as father—either as name or as signifier
of a law—is not a sufficient guarantee on which to base either knowledge or belief, answers yet another question for Miller: Why is sex a trauma that links language to desire and lack, thereby constituting differential clinical categories? Why would sex be so traumatic as to create each person as an effect of the real, cut in many places by the montage of the drives?

The answers are to be found in the second paternal metaphor in that it shows the subject as an effect not only of identifications, but most particularly of Oedipal ones. Three fates await an infant as it assumes a myth of identity as a gender fiction. All three fates are derived from a position taken vis-à-vis the phallus: castration brings neurosis; foreclosure brings psychosis; disavowal brings perversion. In the context of the second paternal metaphor, a child does not seek to know what is “inside” the mother, then, as Melanie Klein thought, but rather to make the father’s name function as a signifier that will guarantee a sense of worth to his or her being in the Other. But signifiers have two sides. One produces imaginary and symbolic messages for another signifier concerning some issue of desire. The other produces traumatic (jouissance) knowledge that pertains to loss, and thus enters language as silence, enigma, symptom. But desire partakes of both sides of the signifier. The neurotic identifies with the Other’s desire via the jouissance of meaning—taking “pleasure” in deciphering his own unconscious without seeing the double bind. A dialectical effect is constituted for the neurotic by identification with a problematic symbolic father who, nonetheless, stands for the law or social bond Freud called the superego. In trying to foreclose the symbolic father, the obsessional opens desire directly onto the omnipresent lack he tries to exclude, a lack with which the hysteric identifies.

In psychosis, where desire is for a totalized jouissance of Being, desire is static and petrified, its signifier a lack of lack. In explaining the meaning of Lacan’s concept of the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father, Miller writes the matheme for psychosis this way: O ≡ J (Stevens, “Two destinies for the subject,” 26). In identifying with the real of jouissance in the field of speech and language, the psychotic will always be caught up in the drives in a painful way. The Otherness or difference that constitute the order Lacan calls symbolic (its rules and conventions) will always seem alien and unclear to psychotics who can only follow rules via the mimesis of imaginary models. Thus, the psychotic’s only guarantee of a semblance of unity is through jouissance. While most people are used by language or changing conventions and are carried along by a seem-
ingly "natural" flow of substitutions and displacements, in psychosis, rigidity itself forms the knot that substitutes for cuts or splits never made in the Other. For neurotic subjects, splits in the Other are filled up with pseudo-consistencies (objects a) that, in turn, offer a semblance of totality and the comfort of imaginary closure. When such closure functions, one believes there is a unity among image, language, and body. But in psychosis there is no semblance of a consistent identity, no solid name, no final trust in language, for this subject cannot depend on the mother's desire as a signifier that allows distance. Indeed, the psychotic cannot relinquish proximity to a primary libidinal object—deployed in language or body—because it is his or her only guarantee of being.

Instead of finding comfort within language, the psychotic encounters hostile gazes and voices that speak as if they were split off from his or her thought. In a psychotic episode voices or gazes become literally detached from thought and function as hallucinatory persecutions or commands. But even though most persons are not psychotic, traits of voices, gazes, and so on appear in their language as the multiple insignia of partial objects that cause desire. If a young child chooses to identify with the primary object qua totality of jouissance instead of with the signifiers and the object a which cut into body to constitute a lack in being, psychosis waits in the wings. Yet this is rare. Indeed, most people are not even deeply neurotic—by which one infers a norm—but are unthinking, blindly ignorant subjects, carried along by their own dialectical movement between desire and jouissance wherein substitutive repetitions, identifications with words and with images and things, leave little space for genuine questions or authentic doubt.

One can denote the structure of neurosis by this matheme—$\frac{\$}{-\phi}$. Herein, desire ($\$) is supported by castration situated in the position of truth ($-\phi$) (see "A Jakobson" in Encore). The neurotic equates the lack of knowledge about the Other's desire with the primordial lack that begets desire in the first place. Such a union creates an identification with the imaginary wherein a signifier from the Other's desire becomes the unary trait that dialecticizes identificatory meaning thus: $I \frac{\$}{-\phi} \rightarrow \frac{S2}{S}$ (Stevens, "Two destinies for the subject," 98). The seemingly least troubled of discourses, the one where denial works well and certainty prevails, is the master discourse of "normative" neurosis—i.e., relatively untroubled individuals who make meaning spontaneously, fluidly, easily, by identifying ego with
the social codes of their group context. Insofar as language is supported by a lack—that is, no signifier assures one of a finished identity or totalized meaning to “self”—“going along” with others requires little effort for the norme-mâle and his female counterpart, the nor-mâle. Both speak a master discourse, set forth in “A Jakobson” as: $S_1 \sim S_2 \sim a$ (Encore, 21). Socially current values produce jouissance as the cause of desire, and desire itself is repressed as cause.

Confrontation with division—be it of language, image, need, or drive—unveils unconscious desire as primary process. But we see clearly that Lacan’s primary process is not Freud’s primary-process condensation and displacement except insofar as desire has the structure of displacement. Rather something unknown—a gap, ditch, or empty place—appears in language, thought, or body, making a rupture between seemingly unified perception and conscious unawareness. Bringing a seemingly non-temporal locus into language, such ruptures cause fading, forgetting, slips of the tongue, dreams, laughter, silence, excessive responses, and so on. When the metaphorical duality of language is momentarily unveiled, the splits in being disappear, allowing us to glimpse ourselves (or others) as lacking. We “see” that at the center of being each one seeks jouissance—not objects—to fill the hole that keeps us from being One with ourselves. Lacan used the expressions “excluded interior” or “excluded on the inside” to describe this phenomenon.

Identification and the Object a

Jacques-Alain Miller explains this paradox of “internal exclusion”—where the inside and outside meet in a point Lacan called extimacy—as internal to the very structure of being which, by necessity, we repeat to enable the thinking that defines us as beings of desire and pursuers of jouissance. Yet the moment of repetition reintroduces conflict as a split, showing loss at the center of repetition. “Pleasure principle” “reality principle,” or “death drive” are different names for the same function: the quest to maintain or attain jouissance as a “libidinal” glue meant to guarantee permanence, certainty, and objectivity through repetitions of known modes of satiety. The object $a$ on which one depends to close out
loss is intended to guarantee this consistency and stability once and for all.

By accepting the impossibility of a totalized, exclusive identification with the desired primary object, most children accept, instead, identification with cultural values whose ideals they try to meet (Lacan, *Four Fundamental Concepts*, 199). But forever after humans seek a primordial *jouissance* in their relations that is only acknowledged at the level of profound affects, not understood. But one does not usually think of *jouissance* as an *a priori* knowledge about the value of one's life, a knowledge that is both rational and logical. Psychotic or neurotic, we cannot know who or what we are as extimate objects, as responses of the real, for *jouissance* is veiled by the misrecognitions and lies that come from identifying with ideals.

In Lacan's first formula for the paternal metaphor, desire as signified by the mother appears in the child's question, "Who am I?" In his second formula, Lacan equated language and the reality principle of repetition with the *jouissance* phallus (Φ) (*Sém. XX*, 73). One wonders why he made this change in his thinking about the phallus. A possible answer lies in Lacan's development of Freud's third theory of identification, where Freud questioned the idea that we identify with some preformed ego. In scrutinizing Freud's theory here, Lacan finds a hysterical identification with the split in the subject itself: $\frac{i(a)}{a}$. One seeks to make one's being commensurable with one's ideal of being, an impossible feat. Yet narcissistic convictions allow people to believe their own lies about their worth as adjudged in terms of "self" fictions. Miller explains Lacan's matheme as meaning that the image of another person as ideal clothes or covers over the real of one's own ex-sistence as object (Miller, "Extimité," 128). Miller develops Lacan's matheme thus:

$I \rightarrow \frac{i(a)}{\text{ego}}$ (Stevens, "Two destinies for the subject," 99). That is, identification with the imaginary constitutes the completion of the master discourse or *père-version* in an identification with the social order *qua* norm: $\frac{O}{a}$ (Miller, "Extimité," 128). Narcissistic identifications stop up the void opened by the intervention of the object $a$ in language, body, relationships, and all other seeming totalities: $\frac{\emptyset}{(a)}$. Identification with conventional wisdom and with the "in"
group one chooses enables people to deny the divine details that build "being" on the scaffolding of loss, detail by detail. Yet, at some level, "normative" people "know" they are stopping up loss. Religion, myths, the love of fiction, film, and sport are all denials of the unbearable obvious. We are not whole within ourselves. There is no autonomous self whose life course is charted free of others.

To sum up, it takes three stages to get to Freud's third identification where a fundamental split constitutes what Lacan calls the père-version or social norm ($S$), based on repression of unconscious desire. The first identification is to the real father qua jouissance that grounds an infant in seeming internal libidinal consistencies which are not consistent after all, and so must be sought by the repetition of master signifiers; i.e., unary strokes, that make an identification between jouissance and desire. The second identification with language and symbolic law is what Lacan called the signifier of a father's name ($S_1 \rightarrow S_2$, the Other or the symbolic order). This second identification gives individuals a sense of getting somewhere, a purpose in life, a place within a social order. The third identification with the group or leader (the law of the "norm") might be called a transference onto immediate others. Such transference is itself a way of denying one's unconscious foundations in the past and in unconscious fantasy. In this third identification the lack of a signifier for a "natural" sexual rapport is correlated with gender identity myths in ways that make social roles all important in the sexual masquerade.

In the third identification, the normative masquerade unveils the effects of an "Oedipal" trajectory wherein desire can be seen as structured. While "self" identification is clearly structured for most people, the issue of sexual object choice is not so certain. Indeed, actual object choices may be made late, or may change. Gender ambiguity is certainly a serious concern for the psychotic for whom identity difference was never learned as sexual difference; i.e., as symbolic. When an imaginary identity recedes in a psychotic episode, revealing sexual difference as foreclosed in the real, one witnesses psychotic women in the throes of the ultimate pain of the real, while psychotic men are feminized (the pousse-à-la-femme), tied as they are to the mother and to the oral drive. One can see that what has been foreclosed from the ego is distance from the mother's jouissance. Indeed, no identificatory fantasy is open to the male psychotic except a nostalgia for oneness with the mother, with God, music or some divine or sacred figure. Tormented by the ne-
cessity to create a fantasy that will align sexuality with organs and gender myths, psychotics find no basis for a fundamental fantasy that aligns body and world. Schreber solved his problem by delusion, by remaking his "self" identification into an impossible figure—himself as the wife of God. Fantasy bears on the possible, then, while delusion concerns impossibilities.

The issue of the relation of gender to sexuality is paramount for the neurotic, whose dilemma is that of being torn between mixed identifications with the father as Man and the mother as Woman. The hysterical always wonders whether she is a man or woman, whether she merits a name commensurable with her deficient narcissism. Rent between identifying with an impotent father and an all too present mother, the obsessional's question—Am I alive or dead?—is more primordial than the hysterical's: Am I a man or a woman? By definition the "normative" neurotic, the one for whom repression functions well, flees differences from others in identification with the law of the "social good." Answers, solutions, beliefs, are all antidotes to questions and doubts that circle around repression of the unconscious—all these give rise to the pseudo-debates of the pub, the church, or the country club.

In Lacan's second paternal metaphor, identification turns toward the object $a$, not the signifier. For example, in the third identificatory direction, men and women live by the conventions of their beliefs, posing questions only insofar as the object $a$ produces an excess in the jouissance surrounding the sublimation of a father's name. Is the president truly honorable, honest, etc? "Knowing" unfolds in discourses spoken by masters of opinion, professors of knowledge, hysterics whose mastery lies in subverting conventional certainties, or by analysts who do not presume to know what the analysand wants. Does one "know it all" as an ego accoutrement of the ideology of opinion, wherein confidence fills up the lack in being? Or does one "know it all" in an identification with fixed jouissance that makes certainty a psychotic trait? Or does one reveal the uncertainty of neurosis that underlies an overkill in "knowledge" where one finds the hysterical's subversion, or the obsessional's ritual doubt?

Lacan surprised us by placing sexuality on the slope of being where jouissance blocks truth, fading behind the object $a$. Yet truth has the structure of fiction—which elaborates unconscious fantasies—and, as such, lies along the path of desire insofar as desire sets into motion the partial drives that aim for jouissance ($\$ \Diamond a$). All such efforts at satisfaction tell one story. The object $a$ has more
than one meaning. Primordially repressed Ur-objects that become partial drives function first to evoke desire. Built up in signifying matrices, they return heterogeneously in the real, introducing fading and cuts into all objects sought for satisfaction. That is, desire is first constituted in reference to partial drives—oral, anal, invocatory, and scopic—that constitute each person as a sexed being. Body is libidinized by the object a at its rims, edges, and surfaces. Not only is there no sexual ratio or signifier for a man or a woman, there are only the objects each desires. Moreover, the lack of wholeness in being that sexual desire unveils comes not only from a permanent divide between one person's 'sex drive' and another's, but more profoundly from the real of sex which is itself unrepresentable. Yet we try to depict sex as a whole, in words or images of gender ideologies, in speaking of body types, or in semiotics of erotic organs linked to desiring codes, and so on.

Lacan said in 1969 that the terms supporting neurosis are knowledge (the Other/S₂), jouissance (J) and the object (a) as they make knots in the signifying chain in three logical moments, creating a first outcome of sexuality attained in adolescence. As pure subject of the drive, an infant is first constructed via the paths of alienating language, jouissance (libido), and a gathering together of whatever constitutes the object a meant to stop up the void. In Lacan's teaching the Oedipal structure concerns how one copes with jouissance and desire, then, not Freudian sexual complexes concerning whether a woman lacks an organ or a man has one.

Lacan's topological logic or science of the real explains the connection between language and desire. An individual is paradoxically enabled to believe him or herself whole only if there has been sufficient intervention in the mother-child dyad in the first place to displace the child's dependence on the mother—rooted as it is in pure jouissance—onto other things. The first distance between the orders (serial orderings) is created by the necessary cuts that constitute certain objects as lost: the breast, the gaze, the voice, etc. Paradoxically, the desire for these objects introduces the infant to an awareness of loss as loss of jouissance for which he or she compensates by identifying the symbolic mother with frustration (imaginary lack), the real father with interdiction, and the imaginary father with privation. To compensate for the fragmenting experience of separation qua cut, the infant forges unary links—a kind of real signifier that retains some trait of the imaginary and symbolic—that project onto the world a "sense" of what was lost. These unary links—Freud's einziger Zug—produce
jouissance as a positive thing, not a philosophical negativity of nothingness or simple emptiness.

Perhaps the idea that sexuality is constituted by a logic of the cut, wherein "sex" is partialized in the drives and language, will make sense if one keeps in mind that Lacan's topology is based on Leibniz's analysis situs wherein meaning (=quantity) is dependent on structure (=quality). Put another way, an infant chooses to "be" in the social link via lack, or to "be" petrified. If he or she chooses petrification, the status of being psychotic, that infant is identified with nonsense signifiers that fail to re-present him or her as a subject of desire for another signifier. Relying on Jacques-Alain Miller's 1984-1985 course "Orientation lacanienne," Bruce Fink explains the link between being and meaning this way: "Meaning (or signification) is only possible when there are two signifiers in question, one signifying a subject—no matter how devoid of being he may be—for the other. Meaning is produced only in that part of the Other's circle or 'field' where we find S₂. The autistic child's blockage at S₁ means that neither the subject nor the Other can come into existence, each requiring as it does the other's existence."

The question at stake in psychoanalysis is this then: "Language divides humans into subject and object, subject of a demand addressed to the Other, object as an answer coming from the other. There is no division such as male and female language." Both males and females are either subjects of desire in speech or objects of the drive in the quest for satisfaction. The sexual division in speaking beings is introduced by the real of the drive as it brings a certain kind of jouissance into sex which depends on the "object" we desire in (or from) the Other. If jouissance brings satisfaction only insofar as the other provides the "correct" response to the demand that constitutes the drive (§ D) as a demand for jouissance, one wonders how Jacques Derrida, George Lakoff, and many other important scholars can suppose that mastery over metaphor has been achieved.

For language is metaphor that is always at risk because metonymy enters its field as libido via the splits caused by desire. When confronted with "objects" that don't comply, language plays tricks rather than signifying things. For one must use words, only words, to bring the other to do what one has to do—just enough, not too much—for one's own jouissance (Apollon, Lacan and the Subject of Language, 119). Insofar as the desire for immediate jouissance is the law of perverse fantasy (a §), one is not surprised that a basis for all fantasies is primordial layers of desire turning around
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issues of law. Where the phallic effect has not intervened at all, as in psychosis where jouissance is the principle of ordonnance, psychotic poles are defined, as we know, by what is not missing: the distance from jouissance we call social exchange. Yet any tiny infant lives in a state of pseudo-psychosis, trying to escape the exquisite pain of identifying with the primordial real. An infant's "developmental" challenge lies in trying to stretch images and language over the chasm between the real and imaginary, trying to cover the brutal law of the unmediated real with the law of the symbolic. It does not lie in some supposed biological or cognitive climb up a ladder already mapped by the biological body.

In "Language: Much Ado about What?" Jacques-Alain Miller referred his audience to the beginning of the analysis of language in Bertrand Russell's 1905 theory of description that appeared the same year as Freud's "Three Essays on Sexuality." Russell tried to disambiguate language with such model sentences as "The King of France is bald" (Miller, "Much Ado about What?" 26). A first conclusion is that language produces its own references, sometimes to nonentities such as a bald king of France. Miller's point is that the whole enterprise of a philosophical logical analysis of language is grounded on nothing more than errors of reference. Indeed, language—meant to refer to things—generally fails to do so (27). Such references do not function by correspondence, but by what Miller calls a disappearance theory of language. In his picture, one would not say that language expresses something, but that language nullifies the referent because one speaks of the real which is impossible to represent. So, in speaking of the real, one erases it (29–30).

The simplest example of a classical Freudian analysis reveals the difference between the Lacanian direction of interpretation and a post-Freudian one, where exchanges like the following are typical correspondence-theory interpretations: Patient: "My husband repeated grow, grow; change, change to me all the time." Doctor: "Well, don't you see that he really wanted you to grow a penis, like the penis he could never accept his mother did not have? Grow, change did not refer to your character, but to the phallic mother. It was his way to tell you to protect him from being the homosexual he really wanted to be." Such examples illustrate the nonsense in the biological Freud.

In "Science and Truth," Lacan says:

Let us recall that Freud unties the knot in his discussion of the
lack of the mother's penis, where the nature of the phallus is revealed. He tells us that the subject divides here regarding reality, seeing an abyss opening up therein against which he protects himself with a phobia, and which he at the same time covers over with a surface upon which he erects a fetish, i.e. the existence of the penis maintained albeit displaced. Let us, on the one hand, extract the \( \text{pas-de} \) from the \( \text{pas-de-penis} \), to be bracketed out \([\text{à-mettre entre parenthèses}]\), and transfer it to the no-knowledge \( \text{pas-de-savoir} \) that is the hesitation step \( \text{pas-hésitation} \) of neurosis. . . . Let us, on the other hand, recognize the subject's efficacy in the \textit{gnomon} he erects, a \textit{gnomon} that constantly indicates truth's site to him. Revealing that the phallus itself is nothing but the site of lack it indicates in the subject.\textsuperscript{60}

In the site of lack, one carries the weight of a family's joy and disappointment. Moreover, only the analysand \textit{has} the knowledge of what that means to him or her. The analyst does not. Put another way, the unconscious is the knowledge that something is lacking in knowledge, not on the mother's body. This is not to say that children do not imagine that the mother has a penis, or that perversion does not replace this supposed penis with a fetish object in the imaginary whose cause is in the real. But Lacan argues that in a biological generalization of his theory, Freud mistook organs for knowledge. Moreover, Freud's idea of knowledge concerns the cause of being. In the notes to his translation of Lacan's "Science and Truth" Bruce Fink writes that Lacan's "Let us . . . extract the \textit{pas-de} from the \textit{pas-de-penis} . . . and transfer it to the \textit{pas-de-savoir} . . . that is the \textit{pas-hésitation} of neurosis" refers to page 198a, lines 15–16 of Aristotle's \textit{Physics} where Wicksteed and Cornford translated Aristotle as saying "It is clear, then, that there are such things as causes, and that they can be classified under the four heads that have been enumerated.\textsuperscript{62}

All of this brings us to Lacan on the issue of cause. "I am not the cause of myself," he says in "Science and Truth" (13). What is the cause? Unconscious fantasy is structured by a battery of signifiers—by language—and by the object \textit{a} that causes us to desire. But the object \textit{a} is not a new name for the cause as concept or as a thing-in-itself. And while the object \textit{a} offers the illusion of consistencies, it is "discontinuity, and not regularity that is essential to the notion of causality" (Miller, "To Interpret the Cause," 33). When something lacks in the signifying chain, cause shines through as an object \textit{a}, as an irreducible residue of indecipherable knowledge. Lacan taught that a question arises when loss penetrates meaning, when
an impasse blocks symbolization. Such moments tell us that lan-

Notes


