
Lacan
Écrits: a selection

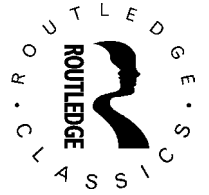
Écrits

'Lacan's work marks a crucial moment in the history of psychoanalysis, a moment which will perhaps prove as significant as Freud's original discovery of the unconscious.'

Colin MacCabe

'Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Georges Bataille had often urged Lacan to publish the text of his seminars: the influence of his teaching can be observed in works by Maurice Blanchot and Michel Foucault . . . in Roland Barthes's studies on semiology and Louis Althusser's "reading" of Marx. But it can be felt still more basically [in] the current revival of interest in psychoanalysis . . . the desire for a return to origins which is a common factor in so many avenues of modern thought.'

The Times Literary Supplement



Routledge Classics contains the very best of Routledge publishing over the past century or so, books that have, by popular consent, become established as classics in their field. Drawing on a fantastic heritage of innovative writing published by Routledge and its associated imprints, this series makes available in attractive, affordable form some of the most important works of modern times.

For a complete list of titles visit
www.routledgeclassics.com

Jacques

Lacan

Écrits

A selection

Translated by Alan Sheridan

With a foreword by Malcolm Bowie

London and New York

This book is a selection from *Écrits*
originally published in French
by Éditions du Seuil

This translation first published in the United Kingdom 1977
by Tavistock Publications
First published by Routledge 1989

First published in Routledge Classics 2001
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

Typeset in Joanna by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN10: 0–415–25546–5 (hbk)
ISBN10: 0–415–25392–6 (pbk)

ISBN13: 978–0–415–25546–2 (hbk)
ISBN13: 978–0–415–25392–5 (pbk)

Contents


Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

Translator's Note

This selection of nine essays, representing well under a half of the material contained in the *Écrits*, is Lacan's own.

The Classified Index of Major Concepts and the Commentary on the Graphs are based on those prepared by Jacques-Alain Miller for the original French edition of the *Écrits*.

I am indebted to George Gross, Baudouin Jourdan and Stuart Schneiderman for their help with many of the difficulties presented by this uniquely difficult work.

I should also like to acknowledge assistance from the Arts Council of Great Britain.

The short glossary below is not intended to provide adequate definitions of concepts. To do so would be quite alien to the nature of Lacan's work, which is peculiarly resistant to interpretation of a static, defining kind. Though rooted in Freudian psychoanalysis, Lacan's concepts have evolved over the years to meet the requirements of a constant reformulation of psychoanalytic theory. They are best understood, therefore, operationally, at work in a number of different contexts. However, some of the terms do call for comment, if only by way of introduction. This, with the assistance of Jacques-Alain Miller, I have attempted to provide. In certain cases, however, Lacan has preferred that a term be left entirely unglossed, on the grounds that any comment would prejudice its effective operation.

The first italicized word in brackets in each entry is Lacan's French word, the second, where necessary, Freud's German. It is assumed that the reader is familiar with the terminology of 'classical' Freudian psychoanalysis.

AGENCY (*instance*, *Instanz*). Lacan's use of the term '*instance*' goes well beyond Freud's '*Instanz*'. It represents, one might say, an exploitation of the linguistic possibilities of the French equivalent of Freud's German term. In the absence of any exact equivalent of Lacan's French term, one is thrown back to the term used by Freud's English translators, 'agency'. In Freud, the reference is most often to the three 'agencies' of the id, ego and superego. In Lacan, one must bear in mind the idea of an 'acting upon', even 'insistence', as in the title of the essay, 'L'instance de la lettre'.

COUNTERFEIT (*le semblable*). This notion of the 'specular ego' was first developed in the essay, 'The Mirror Stage'.

DEMAND (*demande*). See DESIRE.

DESIRE (*désir*; *Wunsch*, *Begierde*, *Lust*). The *Standard Edition* translates Freud's '*Wunsch*' as 'wish', which corresponds closely to the German word. Freud's French translators, however, have always used '*désir*', rather than '*voeu*', which corresponds to '*Wunsch*' and 'wish', but which is less widely used in current French. The crucial distinction between '*Wunsch*' and 'wish', on the one hand, and '*désir*', on the other, is that the German and English words are limited to individual, isolated acts of wishing, while the French has the much stronger implication of a continuous force. It is this implication that Lacan has elaborated and placed at the centre of his psychoanalytic theory, which is why I have rendered '*désir*' by 'desire'. Furthermore, Lacan has linked the concept of 'desire' with 'need' (*besoin*) and 'demand' (*demande*) in the following way.

The human individual sets out with a particular organism, with certain biological needs, which are satisfied by certain objects. What effect does the acquisition of language have on these needs? All speech is demand; it presupposes the Other to whom it is addressed, whose very signifiers it takes over in its formulation. By the same token, that which comes from the Other is treated not so much as a particular satisfaction of a need, but rather as a response to an appeal,

a gift, a token of love. There is no adequation between the need and the demand that conveys it; indeed, it is the gap between them that constitutes desire, at once particular like the first and absolute like the second. Desire (fundamentally in the singular) is a perpetual effect of symbolic articulation. It is not an appetite: it is essentially excentric and insatiable. That is why Lacan co-ordinates it not with the object that would seem to satisfy it, but with the object that causes it (one is reminded of fetishism).

DRIVE (*pulsion*, *Trieb*). Lacan reinstates a distinction, already clear in Freud, between the wholly psychical *pulsion* (*Trieb*) and *instinct* (*Instink*), with its 'biological' connotations. As Lacan has pointed out, Freud's English translators blur this distinction by translating both terms as 'instinct'.

ENUNCIATION (*énonciation*). The distinction between '*énoncé*' and '*énonciation*' is a common one in contemporary French thinking. '*Énoncé*', which I translate as 'statement', refers to the actual words uttered, '*énonciation*' to the act of uttering them.

IMAGINARY, SYMBOLIC, REAL (*imaginaire*, *symbolique*, *réel*). Of these three terms, the 'imaginary' was the first to appear, well before the Rome Report of 1953. At the time, Lacan regarded the 'imago' as the proper study of psychology and identification as the fundamental psychical process. The imaginary was then the world, the register, the dimension of images, conscious or unconscious, perceived or imagined. In this respect, 'imaginary' is not simply the opposite of 'real': the image certainly belongs to reality and Lacan sought in animal ethology facts that brought out formative effects comparable to that described in 'the mirror stage'.

The notion of the 'symbolic' came to the forefront in the Rome Report. The symbols referred to here are not icons, stylized figurations, but signifiers, in the sense developed by Saussure and Jakobson, extended into a generalized definition: differential elements, in themselves without meaning, which acquire value only in their mutual relations, and forming a closed order – the question is whether this order is or is not complete. Henceforth it is the symbolic, not the imaginary, that is seen to be the determining order of the subject, and its effects are radical: the subject, in Lacan's sense, is himself an effect of the symbolic. Lévi-Strauss's formalization of the

elementary structures of kinship and its use of Jakobson's binarism provided the basis for Lacan's conception of the symbolic – a conception, however, that goes well beyond its origins. According to Lacan, a distinction must be drawn between what belongs in experience to the order of the symbolic and what belongs to the imaginary. In particular, the relation between the subject, on the one hand, and the signifiers, speech, language, on the other, is frequently contrasted with the imaginary relation, that between the ego and its images. In each case, many problems derive from the relations between these two dimensions.

The 'real' emerges as a third term, linked to the symbolic and the imaginary: it stands for what is neither symbolic nor imaginary, and remains foreclosed from the analytic experience, which is an experience of speech. What is prior to the assumption of the symbolic, the real in its 'raw' state (in the case of the subject, for instance, the organism and its biological needs), may only be supposed, it is an algebraic *x*. This Lacanian concept of the 'real' is not to be confused with reality, which is perfectly knowable: the subject of desire knows no more than that, since for it reality is entirely phantasmatic.

The term 'real', which was at first of only minor importance, acting as a kind of safety rail, has gradually been developed, and its signification has been considerably altered. It began, naturally enough, by presenting, in relation to symbolic substitutions and imaginary variations, a function of constancy: 'the real is that which always returns to the same place'. It then became that before which the imaginary faltered, that over which the symbolic stumbles, that which is refractory, resistant. Hence the formula: 'the real is the impossible'. It is in this sense that the term begins to appear regularly, as an adjective, to describe that which is lacking in the symbolic order, the ineliminable residue of all articulation, the foreclosed element, which may be approached, but never grasped: the umbilical cord of the symbolic.

As distinguished by Lacan, these three dimensions are, as we say, profoundly heterogeneous. Yet the fact that the three terms have been linked together in a series raises the question as to what they have in common, a question to which Lacan has addressed himself

in his most recent thinking on the subject of the Borromean knot (*Séminaire* 1974–75, entitled 'R.S.I.').

JOUISSANCE (*jouissance*). There is no adequate translation in English of this word. 'Enjoyment' conveys the sense, contained in *jouissance*, of enjoyment of rights, of property, etc. Unfortunately, in modern English, the word has lost the sexual connotations it still retains in French. (*Jouir* is slang for 'to come'.) 'Pleasure', on the other hand, is pre-empted by '*plaisir*' – and Lacan uses the two terms quite differently. 'Pleasure' obeys the law of homeostasis that Freud evokes in 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', whereby, through discharge, the psyche seeks the lowest possible level of tension. '*Jouissance*' transgresses this law and, in that respect, it is *beyond* the pleasure principle.

KNOWLEDGE (*savoir*, *connaissance*). Where 'knowledge' renders '*connaissance*', I have added the French word in brackets. Most European languages make a distinction (e.g. Hegel's *Wissen* and *Kenntnis*) that is lost in English. In modern French thinking, different writers use the distinction in different ways. In Lacan, *connaissance* (with its inevitable concomitant, '*méconnaissance*') belongs to the imaginary register, while *savoir* belongs to the symbolic register.

LACK (*manque*). '*Manque*'is translated here as 'lack', except in the expression, created by Lacan, '*manque-à-être*', for which Lacan himself has proposed the English neologism 'want-to-be'.

LURE (*leurre*). The French word translates variously 'lure' (for hawks, fish), 'decoy' (for birds), 'bait' (for fish) and the notion of 'allurement' and 'enticement'. In Lacan, the notion is related to '*méconnaissance*'.

MÉCONNAISSANCE. I have decided to retain the French word. The sense is of a 'failure to recognize', or 'misconstruction'. The concept is central to Lacan's thinking, since, for him, knowledge (*connaissance*) is inextricably bound up with *méconnaissance*.

NAME-OF-THE-FATHER (*nom-du-père*). This concept derives, in a sense, from the mythical, symbolic father of Freud's *Totem and Taboo*. In terms of Lacan's three orders, it refers not to the real father, nor to the imaginary father (the paternal imago), but to the symbolic father. Freud, says Lacan, was led irresistibly 'to link the appearance of the signifier of the Father, as the author of the Law, to death, even to the murder of the Father, thus showing that although this murder is

the fruitful moment of the debt through which the subject binds himself for life to the Law, the symbolic Father, in so far as he signifies this Law, is certainly the dead Father' (*Écrits*, 'Of a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis').

NEED (*besoin*). See DESIRE.

OBJET PETIT a. The '*a*' in question stands for '*autre*' (other), the concept having been developed out of the Freudian 'object' and Lacan's own exploitation of 'otherness'. The '*petit a*' (small 'a') differentiates the object from (while relating it to) the '*Autre*' or '*grand Autre*' (the capitalized 'Other'). However, Lacan refuses to comment on either term here, leaving the reader to develop an appreciation of the concepts in the course of their use. Furthermore, Lacan insists that '*objet petit* a' should remain untranslated, thus acquiring, as it were, the status of an algebraic sign.

OTHER (*Autre, grand Autre*). See OBJET PETIT a.

PLEASURE (*plaisir*). See JOUISSANCE.

REAL (*réel*). See IMAGINARY.

STATEMENT (*énoncé*). See ENUNCIATION.

SYMBOLIC (*symbolique*). See IMAGINARY.

WANT-TO-BE (*manque-à-être*). See LACK.

Bibliographical Note

THE MIRROR STAGE AS FORMATIVE OF THE FUNCTION OF THE *I*

Le stade du miroir comme formateur de la fonction du Je. An earlier version, entitled simply *Le stade du miroir*, was delivered at the fourteenth International Psychoanalytical Congress, held at Marienbad in August 1936 under the chairmanship of Ernest Jones. An English translation of this version appeared in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 18, part I, January, 1937, under the title, '*The Looking-glass Phase*'. A much revised later version was delivered at the sixteenth International Psychoanalytical Congress, in Zurich on July 17, 1949. It was published in the *Revue française de psychanalyse*, no. 4, October–December, 1949, pp. 449–55. The present translation is of the later version.

AGGRESSIVITY IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

L'aggressivité en psychanalyse. A theoretical report presented to the eleventh Congrès des psychanalystes de langue française, Brussels, May, 1948. Published in the *Revue française de psychanalyse*, no. 3, July–September, 1948, pp. 367–88.

THE FUNCTION AND FIELD OF SPEECH AND LANGUAGE IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse. Report to the Rome Congress held at the Istituto di Psicologia della Università di Roma, 26 and 27 September, 1953. Published in *La Psychanalyse*, P.U.F., vol. 1, 1956, pp. 81–166.

THE FREUDIAN THING

La chose freudienne ou Sens du retour à Freud en psychanalyse. Amplification of a lecture given at the Neuro-Psychiatric Clinic, Vienna, November of 1955. First appeared in *L'Évolution psychiatrique*, no. 1, 1956, pp. 225–52.

THE AGENCY OF THE LETTER IN THE UNCONSCIOUS OR REASON SINCE FREUD

L'instance de la lettre dans l'inconscient ou la raison depuis Freud. Delivered on 9 May, 1957, in the Amphithéâtre Descartes of the Sorbonne, Paris, at the request of the Philosophy Group of the Fédération des étudiants ès Lettres. Written version dated 14–16 May, 1957. Published in *La Psychanalyse*, vol. 3, P.U.F., pp. 47–81.

ON A QUESTION PRELIMINARY TO ANY POSSIBLE TREATMENT OF PSYCHOSIS

D'une question préliminaire à tout traitement possible de la psychose. Based on the author's seminar for the first two semesters of the year 1955–6. Written December, 1957–January, 1958. Published in *La Psychanalyse*, vol. 4, P.U.F., 1959, pp. 1–50.

THE SIGNIFICATION OF THE PHALLUS

La Signification du phallus. Lecture given in German under the title *Die Bedeutung des Phallus* at the Max-Planck Institute, Munich, at the invitation of Professor Paul Matussek, 9 May, 1958.

THE DIRECTION OF THE TREATMENT AND THE PRINCIPLES OF ITS POWER

La direction de la cure et les principes de son pouvoir. First report to the Colloque international de Royaumont, 10–13 July, 1958, at the invitation of the Société française de psychanalyse. Published in *La Psychanalyse*, vol. 6, P.U.F., 1961, pp. 149–206.

THE SUBVERSION OF THE SUBJECT AND THE DIALECTIC OF DESIRE IN THE FREUDIAN UNCONSCIOUS

Subversion du sujet et dialectique du désir dans l'inconscient freudien. Delivered at a conference entitled 'La Dialectique', held at Royaumont, 19–23 September, 1960, at the invitation of Jean Wahl.


Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group
http://taylorandfrancis.com

1

THE MIRROR STAGE AS FORMATIVE OF THE FUNCTION OF THE *I* AS REVEALED IN PSYCHOANALYTIC EXPERIENCE

The conception of the mirror stage that I introduced at our last congress, thirteen years ago, has since become more or less established in the practice of the French group. However, I think it worthwhile to bring it again to your attention, especially today, for the light it sheds on the formation of the *I* as we experience it in psychoanalysis. It is an experience that leads us to oppose any philosophy directly issuing from the *Cogito*.

Some of you may recall that this conception originated in a feature of human behaviour illuminated by a fact of comparative psychology. The child, at an age when he is for a time, however short, outdone by the chimpanzee in instrumental intelligence, can nevertheless already recognize as such his own image in a mirror. This recognition is indicated in the illuminative mimicry of the *Aha-Erlebnis*, which Köhler sees as the expression of situational apperception, an essential stage of the act of intelligence.

This act, far from exhausting itself, as in the case of the monkey, once the image has been mastered and found empty, immediately rebounds in the case of the child in a series of gestures in which he experiences in play the relation between the movements assumed in the image and the reflected environment, and between this virtual complex and the reality it reduplicates – the child's own body, and the persons and things around him.

This event can take place, as we have known since Baldwin, from the age of six months, and its repetition has often made me reflect upon the startling spectacle of the infant in front of the mirror. Unable as yet to walk, or even to stand up, and held tightly as he is by some support, human or artificial (what, in France, we call a '*trotte-bébé*'), he nevertheless overcomes, in a flutter of jubilant activity, the obstructions of his support and, fixing his attitude in a slightly leaning-forward position, in order to hold it in his gaze, brings back an instantaneous aspect of the image.

For me, this activity retains the meaning I have given it up to the age of eighteen months. This meaning discloses a libidinal dynamism, which has hitherto remained problematic, as well as an ontological structure of the human world that accords with my reflections on paranoiac knowledge.

We have only to understand the mirror stage *as an identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image – whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term *imago*.

This jubilant assumption of his specular image by the child at the *infans* stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence, would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject.

This form would have to be called the Ideal-I,[1] if we wished to incorporate it into our usual register, in the sense that it will also be the source of secondary identifications, under which term I would place the functions of libidinal normalization. But the important point is that this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination,

in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone, or rather, which will only rejoin the coming-into-being (*le devenir*) of the subject asymptotically, whatever the success of the dialectical syntheses by which he must resolve as *I* his discordance with his own reality.

The fact is that the total form of the body by which the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power is given to him only as *Gestalt*, that is to say, in an exteriority in which this form is certainly more constituent than constituted, but in which it appears to him above all in a contrasting size (*un relief de stature*) that fixes it and in a symmetry that inverts it, in contrast with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him. Thus, this *Gestalt* – whose pregnancy should be regarded as bound up with the species, though its motor style remains scarcely recognizable – by these two aspects of its appearance, symbolizes the mental permanence of the *I*, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination; it is still pregnant with the correspondences that unite the *I* with the statue in which man projects himself, with the phantoms that dominate him, or with the automaton in which, in an ambiguous relation, the world of his own making tends to find completion.

Indeed, for the *imagos* – whose veiled faces it is our privilege to see in outline in our daily experience and in the penumbra of symbolic efficacity[2] – the mirror-image would seem to be the threshold of the visible world, if we go by the mirror disposition that the *imago of one's own body* presents in hallucinations or dreams, whether it concerns its individual features, or even its infirmities, or its object-projections; or if we observe the role of the mirror apparatus in the appearances of the *double*, in which psychical realities, however heterogeneous, are manifested.

That a *Gestalt* should be capable of formative effects in the organism is attested by a piece of biological experimentation that is itself so alien to the idea of psychical causality that it cannot bring itself to formulate its results in these terms. It nevertheless recognizes that it is a necessary condition for the maturation of the gonad of the female pigeon that it should see another member of its species, of either sex; so sufficient in itself is this condition that the desired effect may be obtained merely by placing the individual within reach of the field of reflection of a mirror.

Similarly, in the case of the migratory locust, the transition within a generation from the solitary to the gregarious form can be obtained by exposing the individual, at a certain stage, to the exclusively visual action of a similar image, provided it is animated by movements of a style sufficiently close to that characteristic of the species. Such facts are inscribed in an order of homeomorphic identification that would itself fall within the larger question of the meaning of beauty as both formative and erogenic.

But the facts of mimicry are no less instructive when conceived as cases of heteromorphic identification, in as much as they raise the problem of the signification of space for the living organism – psychological concepts hardly seem less appropriate for shedding light on these matters than ridiculous attempts to reduce them to the supposedly supreme law of adaptation. We have only to recall how Roger Caillois (who was then very young, and still fresh from his breach with the sociological school in which he was trained) illuminated the subject by using the term '*legendary psychasthenia*' to classify morphological mimicry as an obsession with space in its derealizing effect.

I have myself shown in the social dialectic that structures human knowledge as paranoiac[3] why human knowledge has greater autonomy than animal knowledge in relation to the field of force of desire, but also why human knowledge is determined in that 'little reality' (*ce peu de réalité*), which the Surrealists, in their restless way, saw as its limitation. These reflections lead me to recognize in the spatial captation manifested in the mirror-stage, even before the social dialectic, the effect in man of an organic insufficiency in his natural reality – in so far as any meaning can be given to the word 'nature'.

I am led, therefore, to regard the function of the mirror-stage as a particular case of the function of the *imago*, which is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality – or, as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*.

In man, however, this relation to nature is altered by a certain dehiscence at the heart of the organism, a primordial Discord betrayed by the signs of uneasiness and motor unco-ordination of the neo-natal months. The objective notion of the anatomical incompleteness of the pyramidal system and likewise the presence of certain humoral

residues of the maternal organism confirm the view I have formulated as the fact of a real *specific prematurity of birth* in man.

It is worth noting, incidentally, that this is a fact recognized as such by embryologists, by the term *foetalization*, which determines the prevalence of the so-called superior apparatus of the neurax, and especially of the cortex, which psycho-surgical operations lead us to regard as the intra-organic mirror.

This development is experienced as a temporal dialectic that decisively projects the formation of the individual into history. The *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call orthopaedic – and, lastly, to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development. Thus, to break out of the circle of the *Innenwelt* into the *Umwelt* generates the inexhaustible quadrature of the ego's verifications.

This fragmented body – which term I have also introduced into our system of theoretical references – usually manifests itself in dreams when the movement of the analysis encounters a certain level of aggressive disintegration in the individual. It then appears in the form of disjointed limbs, or of those organs represented in exoscopy, growing wings and taking up arms for intestinal persecutions – the very same that the visionary Hieronymus Bosch has fixed, for all time, in painting, in their ascent from the fifteenth century to the imaginary zenith of modern man. But this form is even tangibly revealed at the organic level, in the lines of 'fragilization' that define the anatomy of phantasy, as exhibited in the schizoid and spasmodic symptoms of hysteria.

Correlatively, the formation of the *I* is symbolized in dreams by a fortress, or a stadium – its inner arena and enclosure, surrounded by marshes and rubbish-tips, dividing it into two opposed fields of contest where the subject flounders in quest of the lofty, remote inner castle whose form (sometimes juxtaposed in the same scenario) symbolizes the id in a quite startling way. Similarly, on the mental plane, we find realized the structures of fortified works, the metaphor of

which arises spontaneously, as if issuing from the symptoms themselves, to designate the mechanisms of obsessional neurosis – inversion, isolation, reduplication, cancellation and displacement.

But if we were to build on these subjective givens alone – however little we free them from the condition of experience that makes us see them as partaking of the nature of a linguistic technique – our theoretical attempts would remain exposed to the charge of projecting themselves into the unthinkable of an absolute subject. This is why I have sought in the present hypothesis, grounded in a conjunction of objective data, the guiding grid for a *method of symbolic reduction*.

It establishes in the *defences of the ego* a genetic order, in accordance with the wish formulated by Miss Anna Freud, in the first part of her great work, and situates (as against a frequently expressed prejudice) hysterical repression and its returns at a more archaic stage than obsessional inversion and its isolating processes, and the latter in turn as preliminary to paranoic alienation, which dates from the deflection of the specular *I* into the social *I*.

This moment in which the mirror-stage comes to an end inaugurates, by the identification with the *imago* of the counterpart and the drama of primordial jealousy (so well brought out by the school of Charlotte Bühler in the phenomenon of infantile *transitivism*), the dialectic that will henceforth link the *I* to socially elaborated situations.

It is this moment that decisively tips the whole of human knowledge into mediatization through the desire of the other, constitutes its objects in an abstract equivalence by the co-operation of others, and turns the I into that apparatus for which every instinctual thrust constitutes a danger, even though it should correspond to a natural maturation – the very normalization of this maturation being henceforth dependent, in man, on a cultural mediation as exemplified, in the case of the sexual object, by the Oedipus complex.

In the light of this conception, the term primary narcissism, by which analytic doctrine designates the libidinal investment characteristic of that moment, reveals in those who invented it the most profound awareness of semantic latencies. But it also throws light on the dynamic opposition between this libido and the sexual libido, which the first analysts tried to define when they invoked destructive and, indeed, death instincts, in order to explain the evident connection

between the narcissistic libido and the alienating function of the I, the aggressivity it releases in any relation to the other, even in a relation involving the most Samaritan of aid.

In fact, they were encountering that existential negativity whose reality is so vigorously proclaimed by the contemporary philosophy of being and nothingness.

But unfortunately that philosophy grasps negativity only within the limits of a self-sufficiency of consciousness, which, as one of its premises, links to the *méconnaissances* that constitute the ego, the illusion of autonomy to which it entrusts itself. This flight of fancy, for all that it draws, to an unusual extent, on borrowings from psychoanalytic experience, culminates in the pretention of providing an existential psychoanalysis.

At the culmination of the historical effort of a society to refuse to recognize that it has any function other than the utilitarian one, and in the anxiety of the individual confronting the 'concentrational'[4] form of the social bond that seems to arise to crown this effort, existentialism must be judged by the explanations it gives of the subjective impasses that have indeed resulted from it; a freedom that is never more authentic than when it is within the walls of a prison; a demand for commitment, expressing the impotence of a pure consciousness to master any situation; a voyeuristic–sadistic idealization of the sexual relation; a personality that realizes itself only in suicide; a consciousness of the other than can be satisfied only by Hegelian murder.

These propositions are opposed by all our experience, in so far as it teaches us not to regard the ego as centred on the *perception–consciousness system*, or as organized by the 'reality principle' – a principle that is the expression of a scientific prejudice most hostile to the dialectic of knowledge. Our experience shows that we should start instead from the *function of méconnaissance* that characterizes the ego in all its structures, so markedly articulated by Miss Anna Freud. For, if the *Verneinung* represents the patent form of that function, its effects will, for the most part, remain latent, so long as they are not illuminated by some light reflected on to the level of fatality, which is where the id manifests itself.

We can thus understand the inertia characteristic of the formations of the I, and find there the most extensive definition of neurosis – just

as the captation of the subject by the situation gives us the most general formula for madness, not only the madness that lies behind the walls of asylums, but also the madness that deafens the world with its sound and fury.

The sufferings of neurosis and psychosis are for us a schooling in the passions of the soul, just as the beam of the psychoanalytic scales, when we calculate the tilt of its threat to entire communities, provides us with an indication of the deadening of the passions in society.

At this junction of nature and culture, so persistently examined by modern anthropology, psychoanalysis alone recognizes this knot of imaginary servitude that love must always undo again, or sever.

For such a task, we place no trust in altruistic feeling, we who lay bare the aggressivity that underlies the activity of the philanthropist, the idealist, the pedagogue, and even the reformer.

In the recourse of subject to subject that we preserve, psychoanalysis may accompany the patient to the ecstatic limit of the '*Thou art that*', in which is revealed to him the cipher of his mortal destiny, but it is not in our mere power as practitioners to bring him to that point where the real journey begins.

NOTES

Delivered at the 16th International Congress of Psychoanalysis, Zürich, July 17, 1949.

1 Throughout this article I leave in its peculiarity the translation I have adopted for Freud's *Ideal-Ich* [i.e., 'je-idéal'], without further comment, other than to say that I have not maintained it since.
2 Cf. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, Chapter X.
3 Cf. 'Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis', p. 8 and *Écrits*, p. 180.
4 '*Concentrationnaire*', an adjective coined after World War II (this article was written in 1949) to describe the life of the concentration-camp. In the hands of certain writers it became, by extension, applicable to many aspects of 'modern' life [Tr.].

2

AGGRESSIVITY IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

The preceding report concerned the use we make of the notion of aggressivity in the clinic and in therapy. It remains to me to prove to you whether or not this notion can be developed into a concept capable of scientific use, that is to say, capable of objectifying facts of a comparable order in reality, or, more categorically, of establishing a dimension of experience whose objectified facts may be regarded as variables.

All of us here share an experience based upon a technique, a system of concepts to which we remain faithful, partly because this system was developed by the man who opened up to us all the ways to that experience, and partly because it bears the living mark of the different stages of its elaboration. That is to say, contrary to the dogmatism that is sometimes imputed to us, we know that this system remains open both as a whole and in several of its articulations.

These gaps seem to focus on the enigmatic signification that Freud expressed in the term *death instinct*, which, rather like the figure of the Sphinx, reveals the aporia that confronted this great mind in the most profound attempt so far made to formulate an experience of man in the register of biology.

This aporia lies at the heart of the notion of aggressivity, the importance of whose role in the economy of the psyche we are only just beginning to realize.

This is why the question of the metapsychological nature of the death tendencies is continually being discussed by our theoreticians, not without contradiction, and often, it must be admitted, in a somewhat formalist way.

I would just like to make a few remarks, propose a number of theses on the subject. They are the fruit of years of reflexion on the veritable aporia of the doctrine, and of the feeling that I have on reading many of these theoretical studies of our responsibility in the present evolution of psychology in the laboratory and as treatment. I am thinking, on the one hand, of the researches of the so-called behaviourists, who, it seems to me, owe their best results (slender as they often are in comparison with the apparatus with which they surround themselves) to the often implicit use they make of categories introduced into psychology by psychoanalysis; and, on the other hand, I am thinking of the kinds of treatment, given to both adults and children, that might be grouped together under the heading *psychodramatic* treatment, and which seeks its efficacity in the abreaction that it tries to exhaust on the level of play, and in which, again, classical psychoanalysis provides the principal underlying notions.

THESIS I

Aggressivity manifests itself in an experience that is subjective by its very constitution.

It would be useful to return to the phenomenon of psychoanalytic experience. In approaching first principles, this reflexion is often omitted.

It can be said that psychoanalytic action is developed in and through verbal communication, that is, in a dialectical grasp of meaning. It presupposes, therefore, a subject who manifests himself as such to the intention of another.

It cannot be objected that this subjectivity must necessarily be obsolete according to the ideal fulfilled by physics, which eliminates it by means of the recording apparatus – though it cannot, inciden-

tally, avoid the possibility of personal error in the reading of the result.

Only a subject can understand a meaning; conversely, every phenomenon of meaning implies a subject. In analysis a subject offers himself as being capable of being understood, and indeed *is* capable of being understood: introspection and supposedly projective intuition do not constitute here the vitiations of principle that a psychology, taking its first steps along the path of science, has regarded as insuperable. This would be to create an obstacle out of abstractly isolated moments of the dialogue, when one should be concerning oneself with its movement: it was Freud's great merit to have taken risks in this direction, and then to have overcome them with a rigorous technique.

Can his results form the basis of a positive science? Yes, if the experience is verifiable by everyone. But this experience, constituted between two subjects one of whom plays in the dialogue the role of ideal impersonality (a point to which I shall return later), may, once it is completed, and providing that it fulfils the conditions of efficiency that may be required of any special research, be resumed by the other subject with a third subject. This apparently initiatory way is simply a transmission by recurrence, which should cause surprise to no one, since it springs from the very bipolar structure of all subjectivity. Only the speed of diffusion of the experience is affected by it, and although its restriction to a particular cultural area may be a matter of dispute, everything would indicate that its results may be sufficiently relativized to provide a generalization capable of satisfying the humanitarian postulate that is inseparable from the spirit of science.

THESIS II

Aggressivity in experience is given to us as intended aggression and as an image of corporal dislocation, and it is in such forms that it shows itself to be efficient.

The analytic experience allows us to feel the pressure of intention. We read it in the symbolic meaning of symptoms, as soon as the subject throws off the defences by which he disconnects them from their relations with his daily life and his history, in the implicit finality of his

behaviour and his rejections, in his unsuccessful acts, in the avowal of his privileged phantasies, and in the riddles of his dream life.

We can measure it partly in the demanding tone that sometimes underlies his whole discourse, in his unfinished sentences, his hesitations, his inflexions and his slips of the tongue, in the inaccuracies of his descriptions of events, irregularities in his application of the analytic rule, late arrivals at sessions, calculated absences, and often in recriminations, reproaches, phantasmic fears, emotional reactions of anger, attempts at intimidation; the true acts of violence being as rare as the combination of circumstances that has led the patient to the doctor, and his transformation, accepted by the patient himself, in a convention of dialogue, would lead one to expect.

The efficacity proper to this aggressive intention is manifest: we constantly observe it in the formative action of an individual on those dependent on him; intended aggressivity gnaws away, undermines, disintegrates; it castrates; it leads to death: 'And I thought you were impotent!' growled a mother, suddenly transformed into a tigress, to her son, who, with great difficulty, had admitted to her his homosexual tendencies. And one could see that her permanent aggressivity as a virile woman had had its effect; I have always found it impossible, in such cases, to divert the blows away from the analytic enterprise.

This aggressivity is exercised within real constraints of course. But we know from experience that it is no less effective when given expression: a severe parent is intimidating by his or her very presence, and the image of the Punisher scarcely needs to be brandished for the child to form it. Its effects are more far-reaching than any act of brutality.

After the repeated failures of classical psychology to account for these mental phenomena, which, using a term whose expressive value is confirmed by all its semantic acceptations, we call images, psychoanalysis made the first successful attempt to operate at the level of the concrete reality that they represent. This was because it set out from their formative function in the subject, and revealed that if the transient images determine such individual inflexions of the tendencies, it is as variations of the matrices that those other specific images, which we refer to by the ancient term of *imago*, are constituted for the 'instincts' themselves.

Among these *imagos* are some that represent the elective vectors of aggressive intentions, which they provide with an efficacity that might be called magical. These are the images of castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body, in short, the *imagos* that I have grouped together under the apparently structural term of *imagos of the fragmented body*.

There is a specific relation here between man and his own body that is manifested in a series of social practices – from rites involving tattooing, incision, and circumcision in primitive societies to what, in advanced societies, might be called the Procrustean arbitrariness of fashion, a relatively recent cultural innovation, in that it denies respect for the natural forms of the human body.

One only has to listen to children aged between two and five playing, alone or together, to know that the pulling off of the head and the ripping open of the belly are themes that occur spontaneously to their imagination, and that this is corroborated by the experience of the doll torn to pieces.

We must turn to the works of Hieronymus Bosch for an atlas of all the aggressive images that torment mankind. The prevalence that psychoanalysis has discovered among them of images of a primitive autoscopy of the oral and cloacal organs has engendered the forms of demons. These are to be found even in the ogee of the *angustiae* of birth depicted in the gates of the abyss through which they thrust the damned, and even in the narcissistic structure of those glass spheres in which the exhausted partners of the garden of delights are held captive.

These phantasmagorias crop up constantly in dreams, especially at the point when analysis appears to be turning its attention on the most fundamental, most archaic fixations. I remember the dream of one of my patients, whose aggressive drives took the form of obsessive phantasies; in the dream he saw himself driving a car, accompanied by the woman with whom he was having a rather difficult affair, pursued by a flying-fish, whose skin was so transparent that one could see the horizontal liquid level through the body, an image of vesical persecution of great anatomical clarity.

These are all initial givens of a *Gestalt* proper to aggression in man: a *Gestalt* that is as much bound up with its symbolic character as with the cruel refinement of the weapons he makes, at least at the earlier,

craft-stage of his industry. It is this imaginary function that I should now like to elucidate.

I should state at the outset that to attempt a Behaviourist reduction of the analytic process – to which a concern for rigour, quite unjustified in my view, seems to impel some of us – is to deprive it of its most important subjective givens, of which the privileged phantasies are the witnesses in consciousness, and which have enabled us to conceive of the identification-forming *imago*.

THESIS III

The springs of aggressivity decide the reasons that motivate the technique of analysis.

In itself, dialogue seems to involve a renunciation of aggressivity; from Socrates onwards, philosophy has always placed its hope in the triumph of reason. And yet ever since Thrasymachus made his stormy exit at the beginning of the *Republic*, verbal dialectic has all too often proved a failure.

I have emphasized that the analyst cured even the most serious cases of madness through dialogue; what virtue, then, did Freud add to it?

The rule proposed to the patient in analysis allows him to advance in a blind intentionality that has no other purpose than to free him from an illness or an ignorance whose very limits he is unaware of.

His voice alone will be heard for a time whose duration remains at the discretion of the analyst. In particular, it will soon become apparent, indeed confirmed, that the analyst refrains from offering any kind of advice or trying to influence the patient in any particular direction. This constraint would seem to run counter to the desired end, and so must be justified by some deeper motive.

What, then, lies behind the analyst's attitude? The concern to provide the dialogue with a participant who is as devoid as possible of individual characteristics; we efface ourselves, we deprive the speaker of those expressions of interest, sympathy, and reaction that he expects to find on the face of the listener, we avoid all expression of personal taste, we conceal whatever might betray them, we become depersonalized, and try to represent for the other an ideal of impassibility.

In such behaviour we express not simply the apathy that we must

have brought about in ourselves if we are to understand our subject, nor are we simply preparing the oracular form that our interpretative intervention must take against this background of inertia.

We wish to avoid the trap that already lies concealed in the appeal, marked by the eternal pathos of faith, that the patient addresses to us. It carries a secret within itself. 'Take upon yourself,' the patient is telling us, 'the evil that weighs me down; but if you remain smug, self-satisfied, unruffled as you are now, you won't be worthy of bearing it.'

What appears here as the proud revenge of suffering will show its true face – and sometimes at a moment decisive enough to enter the 'negative therapeutic reaction' that interested Freud so much – in the form of that resistance of *amour-propre*, to use the term in all the depth given it by La Rochefoucauld, and which is often expressed thus: 'I can't bear the thought of being freed by anyone other than myself.'

Of course, at a deeper level of emotional demand, it is participation in his illness that the patient expects from us. But it is the hostile reaction that guides our prudence, and which inspired Freud to be on his guard against any temptation to play the prophet. Only saints are sufficiently detached from the deepest of the common passions to avoid the aggressive reactions to charity.

As to presenting our own virtues and merits by way of example, the only person I have known to resort to such reactions was some establishment figure, thoroughly imbued with the idea, naïve as it was austere, of his own apostolic value; I well remember the fury he unleashed.

In any case, such reactions should hardly surprise us analysts; after all, do we not point out the aggressive motives that lie hidden in all so-called philanthropic activity?

Yet we must bring into play the subject's aggressivity towards us, because, as we know, these intentions form the negative transference that is the initial knot of the analytic drama.

This phenomenon represents in the patient the imaginary transference on to our person of one of the more or less archaic *imagos*, which, by an effect of symbolic subduction, degrades, diverts, or inhibits the cycle of such behaviour, which, by an accident of repression, has excluded from the control of the ego this or that function or corporal

segment, and which, by an action of identification, has given its form to this or that agency of the personality.

It can be seen that the slightest pretext is enough to arouse the aggressive intention, which reactualizes the *imago*, which has remained permanent at the level of symbolic overdetermination that we call the subject's unconscious, together with its intentional correlation.

Such a mechanism often proves to be extremely simple in hysteria: in the case of a girl suffering from astasia-abasia, who for months had resisted various kinds of therapeutic suggestion, my person was immediately identified with a combination of the most unpleasant features that the object of a passion represented for her; it should be added that her passionate feelings were fairly strongly marked by an element of delusion. The subjacent *imago* was that of her father, and it was enough for me to remark that she had lacked paternal support (a lack which I knew had dominated her biography in highly dramatic fashion) for her to be cured of her symptom, without, it might be said, her having understood anything, or her morbid passion being in any way affected.

These knots are more difficult to break, we know, in obsessional neuroses, precisely because of the well-known fact that its structure is intended particularly to disguise, to displace, to deny, to divide, and to subdue the aggressive intention, by means of a defensive decomposition very similar in principle to that illustrated by the stepping and staggering techniques employed in military fortification at the time of Louis XIV – indeed, a number of my patients have themselves resorted to metaphors of military fortification to describe the workings of their own defences.

As to the role of aggressive intention in phobia, it is, as it were, manifest.

It is no bad thing, then, to reactivate such an intention in psychoanalysis.

What we try to avoid by our technique is allowing the patient's aggressive intention to find the support of an idea of our person sufficiently elaborated for it to be able to be organized in those reactions of opposition, negation, ostentation, and lying that our experience has shown us to be the characteristic modes of the agency of the ego in dialogue.

I am characterizing this agency here not by the theoretical construction that Freud gives of it in his metapsychology, namely, as the *perception-consciousness* system, but by the phenomenological essence that he recognizes as being in experience the most constant attribute of the ego, namely, *Verneinung*, the givens of which he urges us to appreciate in the most general index of a prejudicial inversion.

In short, we call ego that nucleus given to consciousness, but opaque to reflexion, marked by all the ambiguities which, from self-satisfaction to 'bad faith' (*mauvaise foi*), structure the experience of the passions in the human subject; this 'I' who, in order to admit its facticity to existential criticism, opposes its irreducible inertia of pretences and *méconnaissances* to the concrete problematic of the realization of the subject.

Far from attacking it head-on, the analytic maieutic adopts a roundabout approach that amounts in fact to inducing in the subject a controlled paranoia. Indeed, it is one of the aspects of analytic action to operate the projection of what Melanie Klein calls *bad internal objects*, a paranoiac mechanism certainly, but one that is here highly systematized, filtered, as it were, and properly checked.

It is the aspect of our *praxis* that corresponds to the category of space, however little it embraces that imaginary space in which the dimension of the symptoms that structures them as excluded islets, inert scotomas, or parasitical compulsions in the functions of the person is developed.

To the other dimension, the temporal, corresponds anxiety and its effects, whether patent as in the phenomenon of flight or inhibition, or latent as when it appears only with the motivating *imago*.

Again, let us repeat, this *imago* is revealed only in so far as our attitude offers the subject the pure mirror of an unruffled surface.

But let us imagine what would take place in a patient who saw in his analyst an exact replica of himself. Everyone feels that the excess of aggressive tension would set up such an obstacle to the manifestation of the transference that its useful effect could only be brought about extremely slowly, and this is what sometimes happens in the analysis of prospective analysts. To take an extreme case, if experienced in the form of strangeness proper to the apprehensions of the *double*, this situation would set up an uncontrollable anxiety on the part of the analysand.

THESIS IV

Aggressivity is the correlative tendency of a mode of identification that we call narcissistic, and which determines the formal structure of man's ego and of the register of entities characteristic of his world.

The subjective experience of analysis immediately inscribes its results in concrete psychology. Let us indicate simply what it brings to the psychology of the emotions by showing the signification common to states as diverse as phantasmatic fear, anger, active sorrow, or psychasthenic fatigue.

To pass now from the subjectivity of intention to the notion of a tendency to aggression is to make the leap from the phenomenology of our experience to metapsychology.

But this leap manifests nothing more than a requirement of thought which, in order to objectify the register of aggressive reactions, and given its inability to seriate this leap in a quantitative variation, must understand it in a formula of equivalence. This is the use we make of it in the notion of *libido*.

The aggressive tendency proves to be fundamental in a certain series of significant states of the personality, namely, the paranoid and paranoiac psychoses.

In my work I have emphasized that one could co-ordinate by their strictly parallel seriation the quality of the aggressive reaction to be expected from a particular form of paranoia with the stage of mental genesis represented by the delusion that is symptomatic of this same form. A relation that appears even more profound when – I have shown this in the case of a curable form, self-punishing paranoia – the aggressive act resolves the delusional construction.

Thus the aggressive reaction is seriated in a continuous manner, from the sudden, unmotivated outburst of the act, through the whole gamut of belligerent forms, to the cold war of interpretative demonstrations, paralleled by imputations of noxiousness which, not to mention the obscure *kakon* to which the paranoid attributes his alienation from all living contact, rising in stages from a motivation based on the register of a highly primitive organicism (poison), to a magical one (evil spells), a telepathic one (influence), a lesional one (physical intrusion), an abusive one (distortion of intention), a dispossessive

one (appropriation of secrets), a profanatory one (violation of intimacy), a juridical one (prejudice), a persecutive one (spying and intimidation), one involving prestige (defamation and attacks on one's honour), and revenge (damage and exploitation).

I have shown that in each case this series, in which we find all the successive envelopes of the biological and social status of the person, retains the original organization of the forms of the ego and of the object, which are also affected by this series in their structure, even to the spatial and temporal categories in which the ego and the object are constituted, experienced as events in a perspective of mirages, as affections with something stereotypical about them that suspends the workings of the ego/object dialectic.

Janet, who demonstrated so admirably the signification of feelings of persecution as phenomenological moments in social behaviour, did not explore their common character, which is precisely that they are constituted by a stagnation of one of these moments, similar in their strangeness to the faces of actors when a film is suddenly stopped in mid-action.

Now, this formal stagnation is akin to the most general structure of human knowledge: that which constitutes the ego and its objects with attributes of permanence, identity, and substantiality, in short, with entities or 'things' that are very different from the *Gestalten* that experience enables us to isolate in the shifting field, stretched in accordance with the lines of animal desire.

In fact, this formal fixation, which introduces a certain rupture of level, a certain discord between man's organization and his *Umwelt*, is the very condition that extends indefinitely his world and his power, by giving his objects their instrumental polyvalence and symbolic polyphony, and also their potential as defensive armour.

What I have called paranoic knowledge is shown, therefore, to correspond in its more or less archaic forms to certain critical moments that mark the history of man's mental genesis, each representing a stage in objectifying identification.

By simple observation we can obtain a glimpse of these different stages in the child's development. A Charlotte Bühler, an Elsa Köhler, and, following in their footsteps, the Chicago School have revealed several levels of significative manifestations; but only the analytic

experience can give them their true value by making it possible to reintegrate the subjective relation into them.

The first level shows us that experience of oneself in the earliest stage of childhood develops, in so far as it refers to one's counterpart, from a situation experienced as undifferentiated. Thus about the age of eight months, we see in these confrontations between children (which, if they are to be fruitful, must be between children whose age differential is no more than two and a half months) those gestures of fictitious actions by which a subject reconducts the imperfect effort of the other's gesture by confusing their distinct application, those synchronies of spectacular captation that are all the more remarkable in that they precede the complete co-ordination of the motor apparatuses that they bring into play.

Thus the aggressivity that is manifested in the retaliations of taps and blows cannot be regarded solely as a playful manifestation of the exercise of strengths and their employment in the mapping of the body. It must be understood in an order of broader co-ordination: one that will subordinate the functions of tonic postures and vegetative tension to a social relativity – in this regard, one might mention Wallon's remarkable work, which has drawn our attention to the prevalence of such a social relativity in the expressive constitution of the human emotions.

Furthermore, I believed myself that I could show that on such occasions the child anticipates on the mental plane the conquest of the functional unity of his own body, which, at that stage, is still incomplete on the plane of voluntary motility.

What we have there is a first captation by the image in which the first stage of the dialectic of identifications can be discerned. It is linked to a *Gestalt* phenomenon, the child's very early perception of the human form, a form which, as we know, holds the child's interest in the first months of life, and even, in the case of the human face, from the tenth day. But what demonstrates the phenomenon of recognition, which involves subjectivity, are the signs of triumphant jubilation and playful discovery that characterize, from the sixth month, the child's encounter with his image in the mirror. This behaviour contrasts strikingly with the indifference shown even by animals that perceive this image, the chimpanzee, for example, when they have tested its objectal vanity, and it becomes even more apparent when one realizes that it

occurs at an age when the child, as far as instrumental intelligence is concerned, is backward in relation to the chimpanzee, which he catches up with only at eleven months.

What I have called the *mirror stage* is interesting in that it manifests the affective dynamism by which the subject originally identifies himself with the visual *Gestalt* of his own body: in relation to the still very profound lack of co-ordination of his own motility, it represents an ideal unity, a salutary *imago*; it is invested with all the original distress resulting from the child's intra-organic and relational discordance during the first six months, when he bears the signs, neurological and humoral, of a physiological natal prematuration.

It is this captation by the *imago* of the human form, rather than an *Einfühlung* the absence of which is made abundantly clear in early infancy, which, between the ages of six months and two and a half years, dominates the entire dialectic of the child's behaviour in the presence of his similars. During the whole of this period, one will record the emotional reactions and the articulated evidences of a normal transitivism. The child who strikes another says that he has been struck; the child who sees another fall, cries. Similarly, it is by means of an identification with the other than he sees the whole gamut of reactions of bearing and display, whose structural ambivalence is clearly revealed in his behaviour, the slave being identified with the despot, the actor with the spectator, the seduced with the seducer.

There is a sort of structural crossroads here to which we must accommodate our thinking if we are to understand the nature of aggressivity in man and its relation with the formalism of his ego and his objects. It is in this erotic relation, in which the human individual fixes upon himself an image that alienates him from himself, that are to be found the energy and the form on which this organization of the passions that he will call his ego is based.

This form will crystallize in the subject's internal conflictual tension, which determines the awakening of his desire for the object of the other's desire: here the primordial coming together (*concours*) is precipitated into aggressive competitiveness (*concurrence*), from which develops the triad of others, the ego and the object, which, spanning the space of specular communion, is inscribed there according to a formalism proper to itself that so dominates the affective *Einfühlung* that

a child of that age may mistake the identity of the most familiar people if they appear in an entirely different context.

But if the ego appears to be marked from its very origin by this aggressive relativity – in which minds lacking in objectivity might recognize the emotional erections caused in an animal solicited, incidentally, in the course of its experimental conditioning, by a desire – how can one not conceive that each great instinctual metamorphosis in the life of the individual will once again challenge its delimitation, composed as it is of a conjunction of the subject's history and the unthinkable innateness of his desire?

This is why, except at a limit that even the greatest geniuses have never been able to approach, man's ego can never be reduced to his experienced identity; and in the depressive disruptions of the experienced reverses of inferiority, it engenders essentially the mortal negations that fix it in its formalism. 'I am nothing of what happens to me. You are nothing of value.'

And the two moments, when the subject denies himself and when he charges the other, become confused, and one discovers in him that paranoiac structure of the ego that finds its analogue in the fundamental negations described by Freud as the three delusions of jealousy, erotomania, and interpretation. It is the especial delusion of the misanthropic '*belle âme*', throwing back on to the world the disorder of which his being is composed.

Subjective experience must be fully enabled to recognize the central nucleus of ambivalent aggressivity, which in the present stage of our culture is given to us under the dominant species of *resentment*, even in its earliest aspects in the child. Thus, because he lived at a similar time, without having to suffer from a behaviourist resistance in the sense that we ourselves do, St Augustin foreshadowed psychoanalysis when he expressed such behaviour in the following exemplary image: '*Vidi ego et expertus sum zelantem parvulum: nondum loquebatur et intuebatur pallidus amaro aspectu conlactaneum suum*' (I have seen with my own eyes and known very well an infant in the grip of jealousy: he could not yet speak, and already he observed his foster-brother, pale and with an envenomed stare). Thus, with the *infans* (pre-verbal) stage of early childhood, the situation of spectacular absorption is permanently tied: the child observed, the emotional reaction (pale), and this reactivation of images of primordial

frustration (with an envenomed stare) that are the psychical and somatic co-ordinates of original aggressivity.

Only Melanie Klein, working on the child at the very limit of the appearance of language, dared to project subjective experience back to that earlier period when observation enables us nevertheless to affirm its dimension, in the simple fact for example that a child who does not speak reacts differently to punishment or brutality.

Through her we know the function of the imaginary primordial enclosure formed by the *imago* of the mother's body; through her we have the cartography, drawn by the children's own hands, of the mother's internal empire, the historical atlas of the intestinal divisions in which the *imagos* of the father and brothers (real or virtual), in which the voracious aggression of the subject himself, dispute their deleterious dominance over her sacred regions. We know, too, the persistence in the subject of this shadow of the *bad internal objects*, linked with some accidental *association* (to use a term that we should accept in the organic sense that it assumes in our experience, as opposed to the abstract sense that it retains in Humean ideology). Hence we can understand by what structural means the re-evocation of certain imaginary *personae*, the reproduction of certain situational inferiorities may *disconcert* in the most strictly predictable way the adult's voluntary functions: namely, their fragmenting effect on the *imago* of the original identification.

By showing us the primordiality of the 'depressive position', the extreme archaism of the subjectification of a *kakon*, Melanie Klein pushes back the limits within which we can see the subjective function of identification operate, and in particular enables us to situate as perfectly original the first formation of the superego.

But it is of particular importance to define the orbit within which, as far as our theoretical reflexion is concerned, are ordered the relations – by no means all elucidated – of guilt tension, oral noxiousness, hypochondriacal fixation, even that primordial masochism that we exclude from our field of study, in order to isolate the notion of an aggressivity linked to the narcissistic relation and to the structures of systematic *méconnaissance* and objectification that characterize the formation of the ego.

To the *Urbild* of this formation, alienating as it is by virtue of its capacity to render extraneous, corresponds a peculiar satisfaction