

Bruce Fink

Alienation and Separation:

Logical Moments of Lacan's

Dialectic of Desire

Introduction

The constitution of the Lacanian subject as "subject of desire" involves two fundamental moments or logical operations: "alienation" and "separation." The formulation of the former entails a thorough reworking of its Hegelian precursor, alienation being reconceptualized on the level of the symbolic instead of that of the imaginary. Lacan's formulation of separation departs radically from the twentieth-century psychological notion which goes by that name - a separation of the child from its mother or from some other "object" of desire. Alienation is essentially the result of the individual's encounter with language: in the best of cases, this encounter engenders the pure possibility of a subject (or the subject as pure possibility) and the stage is set for the second operation; in the worst of cases, the very possibility of subjectivity is ruled out (at least provisionally). Separation comes about through the intervention of what Lacan introduces under the name "object a" (the cause of desire and not its object) - or of the analyst operating as object a - and involves a splitting of the subject (and of the object, as we shall see further on), a splitting of the subject accomplished along the trajectory from the pure possibility of his existence as subject of desire to the impossibilities inherent in his actually constituted desire. Separation implies a change in status from potential desiring subject to desire's subject, but also, in certain circumstances, desire's victim.

These two logical moments are central to Lacan's dialectic and shed light on many of his most important concepts, only a few of which can be touched upon here. An understanding of these operations is absolutely essential in any attempt to comprehend his

78

conception of psychoanalytic practice. I shall preface their elaboration with a few words on Lacan's concept of the subject.¹

The Lacanian Subject

Far from implying some sort of permanent self, soul, spirit, personality or individuality, Lacan's subject must be conceived as something on the order of a temporal pulsation, an intermittent "surging forth" (surgissement, as the French has it) due to particular conjunctures of the signifying chain.² One speaks of the eternal unchanging nature of the repressed, of the timelessness of the unconscious, and yet the more striking indications of this "underside" of consciousness present themselves as fulgurating intrusions, incursions, or encroachments upon everyday life - e. g., slips of the tongue, parapraxes, the forgetting of names, etc. Something makes its appearance at such moments, remaining only long enough to disrupt "business as usual," and its nature seems somehow to be legible in the interruption itself - as if the repressed were declaring itself directly, announcing itself in its fleeting apparition. As if the person were showing "his or her true colors," inadvertently letting on about his or her desire.

The time of the slip seems to correspond to the time of desire, to the meager time allotted or meted out to (the expression of) unconscious desire. Freud's work (his early work in particular) manifests constant attention to hidden desire; Freud indefatigably roots out un- or disavowed desire, desire, the surest sign of a subjectivity which usually goes unnoticed, of a desire which determines the patient's jouissance and which is engendered by his phantasmatic "object relations." This desire is momentarily able to force its way into the open by certain "felicitous" conjunctures of circumstances, constraints, and signifiers - which can at times be reduced to their bare logical essentials (as in "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty", Newsletter of the *Freudian Field*, 4, 1988) presenting us with an effect of subjectification, a "making into subject."³ There is nothing subjective (as opposed to objective) whatsoever about this process, and it should be clearly distinguished from subjectivization - "rendering subjective." Desire and its subject can be characterized in the most general of terms, formalized with the help of the most abstract of concepts, and remain, nonetheless, that which is the most particular and individual of all. Their logicization in no way interferes with their infinite diversity

79

We must resist the temptation to try to freeze and substantify the Lacanian subject. And we should not be misled by certain Buddhist dictums⁴ which might lead us to think that the concept "subject" is introduced only to be once and for all shelved as irreparably mythical or mystical, meriting no ontological status whatsoever, for Lacan constructs a rigorous temporal logic (or a logic of time) in which the subject finds his "place". The radical departure of this construction - whose roots Lacan traces back to Descartes' cogito - from current psychological, philosophical, and "intuitive" notions, accounts for part of that initial difficulty (for Anglo-American readers in particular), a difficulty I hope at least partially to mitigate in the course of the following discussion of the moments of alienation and separation.

ALIENATION

Rather than trace the development of Lacan's concept of alienation throughout his writings - and it is already there in his 1936/49 article on the mirror stage - I will introduce it (following Lacan's glosses in the 1960s and Jacques-Alain Miller's many commentaries thereupon) as a logico-mathematical operation akin to union in symbolic logic, set theory, and Venn diagrams,⁵ juxtaposing it only with Hegel's use of the term.

According to Lacan, Hegel's concept of alienation boils down to a "you and me," an exclusive choice between the two parties, to be decided by their struggle to the death. Using truth tables, this Hegelian form of alienation can be represented as follows:

80

Table 1

X	Y	$X \vee^e Y$	
T	T	F	line 1
T	F	T	line 2
F	T	T	line 3
F	F	F	line 4

Where:

- X designates the proposition "I survive",
- Y designates the proposition "You survive", and
- V designates the "vel", the operation of union. "Vel" in Latin means "or" where it is understood that only one of the two propositions can be true, not both. The superscript "e" designates just this exclusivity. The better known U (for "union") also allows both to be true at the same time.

For those unfamiliar with truth tables, a word of explanation: the left side of truth tables (left of the double vertical line) is always the same - regardless of the propositions and operators employed and provides all of the permutations allowed by ordinary logic.⁶ As both propositions, X and Y, can be either true or false, four combinations are possible: either both propositions are true (line 1), the first is true while the second is false (line 2), the second is true while the first is false (line 3), or both are false (line 4). The righthand column of truth tables tells you which permutations are to be considered acceptable or possible by the operator connecting the two propositions. In Table 1, for example, the top line (T | T | F) shows us that the vel of exclusion does not recognize the possibility of X and Y both being true; and the right-hand column as a whole shows us that this operator rejects the combination whenever X and Y are the same (T | T and F | F), accepting it only when they differ (T | F and F | T). The dotted rectangle highlights the combinations designated as true by the operator.

81

One can juggle the T's and F's in the right-hand column however one likes so as to create other operators - there are 4^2 , thus 16 operators in all, a certain number of which have been defined, named and in circulation for some time. Some are no doubt more interesting than others, depending on the particular project at hand; Lacan found himself obliged to tamper with the most commonly used operators to suit his purposes.

One more method of schematization will be introduced here before taking up the question of Hegelian alienation. Venn diagrams, often employed by Lacan, can be useful in conceptualizing such logico-mathematical operations (see Figure 1). We can dispense with the frame which usually defines the "universe" in question, confining our attention to the circles. Within the circle X, the proposition X is true; outside of it, the proposition is false. Where X and Y overlap, both propositions are true. Shading part of a circle means that that part is accepted by the operator - for example (see Figure 2), where X is true but not Y.

Figure 1

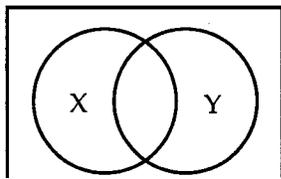
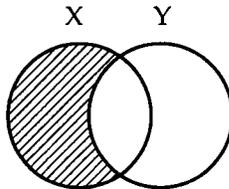


Figure 2



The operation usually known as union - corresponding to a nonexclusive alternative (e.g. or) such as "you or your brother will have to run to the store," where the possibility of both you and your brother running the errand is not excluded - gives rise to the following truth table and Venn diagram:

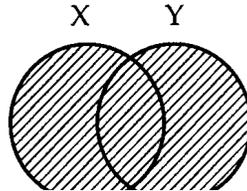
82

Table 2

X	Y	XUY
T	T	T
T	F	T
F	T	T
F	F	F

line 1
line 2
line 3
line 4

Figure 3



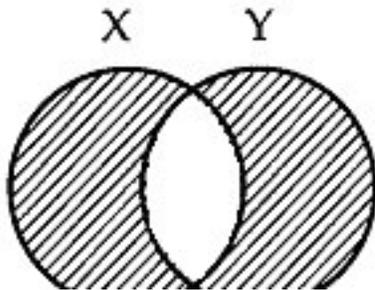
Now according to Lacan, Hegelian alienation corresponds to either the vel of exclusion (presented in Table 1) - which recognizes the possibility of only one of the parties surviving (but either one) - or perhaps to Sheffer's stroke (Table 3) which also recognizes the possibility of neither party surviving. Both of the tables correspond to the following Venn diagram,⁷ a fine representation of the expression "You can't have your cake and eat it too." You can have your cake (X) or you can eat it (Y), but you can't do both - that explains why the joint space is empty: there is no room in logic for such a possibility.

Figure 3

X	Y	X Y
T	T	F
T	F	T
F	T	T
F	F	T

line 1
line 2
line 3
line 4

Figure 4



The stakes are rather different in Lacan's alienation. His operator (Va) excludes the possibility of X being true:

X	Y	X v ^a Y	
T	T	F	line 1
T	F	F	line 2
F	T	T	line 3
F	F	T	line 4

X is so inexorably false that Y is forced to give up that part of its "being true" which coincides with X - this is clearly seen in Figure 5:

Figure 5



Lacan's classic example of his "vel of alienation" is the mugger's threat: "Your money or your life!" (Sem. XI, p. 212).⁹ If X is your' money and Y is your life, what's clear from the outset is that your money is a good as gone. Should you be so foolhardy as to try to hold onto your money, your trustworthy mugger will unburden you of your life, proceeding, no doubt, to unburden you of your money as well shortly thereafter. (And even if he doesn't, you won't be around to spend it). You'll thus, no doubt, be more prudent and hand over your wallet or purse; but you'll nonetheless suffer a restriction of your enjoyment, as a life in this world without money is not much of a life - thus Y's shrinkage. Uncertainty only really

remains around the question of whether you'll struggle with him and thus perhaps get yourself killed in the bargain.¹⁰

The picture is even more dismal, however, as the parties to the vel of alienation that concern us here are not your money and your life, but the subject and the Other, the subject being assigned the always already lost position (that of money in the previous example, which you had no choice but to lose). In Hegel's alienation, the subject and the other were on more equal terms (regardless of class differences). In Lacan's version, the sides are by no means even: in his confrontation with the Other, the subject immediately drops out of the picture. If alienation is the necessary "first step" in acceding to subjectivity, we must take into account that this step involves choosing one's own disappearance.¹¹

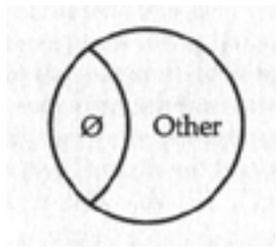
Lacan's concept of the subject as "manque-à-être" is useful here: the subject fails to come forth as a someone, a particular being; in the most radical sense, he is not: he has no being. Prior to the onset of alienation there was not the slightest question of his being: "it's the subject himself who is not there to begin with" (*Sém. XIV, La Logique du fantasme*, Nov. 16, 1966); afterwards his being is strictly potential. *Alienation gives rise to a pure possibility of being*, a status which points to the place where one expected to find a subject, a place which nevertheless remains empty. Alienation engenders, in a sense, a place in which it is clear that there is, as of yet, no subject: a place where something is conspicuously lacking. The subject's first guise is this very lack itself.

Lack in Lacan has, to a certain extent, an ontological status¹² - it is the first step beyond nothingness. To qualify something as empty is to use a spatial metaphor implying that it could alternatively be full, that it has some sort of existence above and beyond its being full or empty. A metaphor often used by Lacan is that of something *qui manque à sa place*, which is out of place, not where it should be or usually is, i. e. is missing. Now for something to be missing, it must first have been present and localized; it must have had a place. And something only has a place within an ordered system - space-time coordinates or a Dewey decimal book classification, for example i.e. within some sort of symbolic structure.

Alienation represents the instituting of the symbolic order which must be realized anew for each new subject - and the subject's assignation of a place therein. A place he does not "hold" as of yet, but a place designated for him, and for him alone. When Lacan says (in Sem. XI) that the subject's being is eclipsed by meaning, that the subject here slips under the signifier, it is in part

because the subject is completely submerged by language, his only trace being a place-marker or place-holder in the symbolic order.

Figure 6



J.-A. Miller suggests that the process of alienation yields the subject that as empty set $\{\emptyset\}$, i.e. a *set* which has no elements, is a symbol which transforms nothingness into something by marking or representing it. Set theory generates its whole domain on the basis of this one symbol, and a certain number of axioms. Lacan's subject, analogously, is grounded in the naming of the void. It is the signifier which founds him, and ironically it is the signifier in Lacan's system that is endowed with substance, not the subject. The signifier is what wields optic clout, wresting being from the real that it marks.¹³ What it brings into being, however, is in no sense substantial or material; Lacan thus inverts the usual notion of the materiality of human beings and the immateriality of language.

The empty set as the subject's place-holder within the symbolic order is not unrelated to the subject's proper name. That name, for example, is a signifier which often precedes his birth, inscribing him in the symbolic; the subject disappears behind it, in a sense, but must assume it (in the French sense of assuming responsibility for it, taking it upon himself). *A priori* this name has nothing to do with the subject; it is as foreign to him as any other signifier. But in time this signifier - more perhaps than any other - will go to the root of his being and become inextricably tied to his subjectivity. It will become the signifier of his very absence as subject, standing in for him.

This inauguration of the subject - the subject of the unconscious - is correlative to Freud's *Urverdrängung* (primal repression). In Freud's unconscious we find the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* - literally the representative of the (re)presentation or idea, usually translated

87

as "ideational representative". It is the psychical representative of the *Trieb* or drive. For Freud, it is mental representatives of the drive (and not simple perceptions or affects¹⁴) which are repressed. But Freud never really precisely determined the status of those representatives. The unconscious is constituted through

a *primal repression*, a first phase of repression, which consists in the psychical (ideational) representative of the drive (*Trieb*) being denied entrance into the conscious. With this a *fixation* is established; the representative in question persists unaltered from then onwards and the drive (*Trieb*) remains attached to it (Freud, "Repression", *SE, Vol. XIV, p. 148*, translation modified).

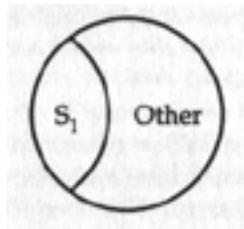
Primal repression creates the nucleus of the unconscious, with which other representatives of representations establish connections which may eventually lead to their being drawn into the unconscious.

Lacan proposes that we equate these representatives with signifiers (with all that entails from a linguistic point of view), and that repression leads to the creation of the unconscious on the basis of a coupled pair of signifiers: the "unary signifier" which he represents as S_1 , and the "binary signifier" S_2 (Sem. XI, p. 199). The unary signifier is what is repressed in primal repression, and is closely related to what Freud calls *ein einziger Zug*,¹⁶ a single, unique, or unary trait or feature (unary in the sense of its oneness). Lacan interprets it as that which, instituting the unconscious, primordially attaches the subject to the Other; he also considers it to be the inaugural point of the Ego-Ideal.¹⁷

This unary signifier occupies a very important place in the Lacanian conceptual framework, and only a few of its glosses can be taken up here. Being a signifier, it can be situated - just as we situated the empty set earlier on - within the Other. The Other being the "battery" of signifiers or set of all signifiers, S_1 represents the subject (of the unconscious) for all the other signifiers. S_1 is the signifying chain's point of origin and the *sine qua non* of the constitution of the subject as subject.¹⁸ Lacking this fundamental mooring, the other signifiers (designated as a whole by S_2) - to the extent that they are even assimilated without ever giving rise to meaning.

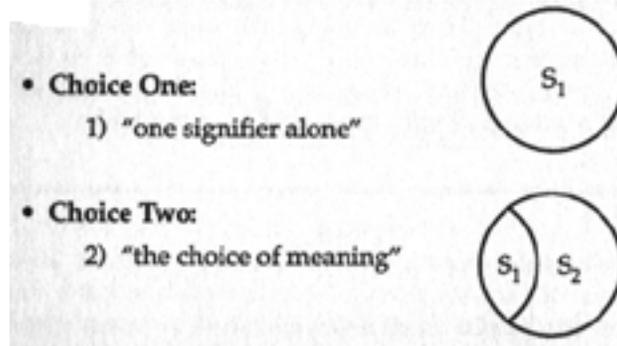
88

Figure 7



Returning for a moment to the forced choice constituted by this union or vel of alienation, one may, following J.-A. Miller,¹⁹ represent the two choices logically allowed here in a rather different way than in Fig. 6 above:

Figure 8



"The first choice is, in a certain sense, already ruled out when one begins an analysis." It represents what Lacan calls "petrification" (in the sense of turning to stone, cf. *Ecrits*, p. 841), and "supports the somewhat confused idea of autism . . . [which implies] petrification through the signifier of non-moaning. The therapist's whole effort, in such cases, consists in trying to bring about an alienation."²⁰

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

89

only in the Other's circle or "field" where we find S_2 . The autistic child's blockage at S_1 means that neither the subject nor the Other can come into existence - they are either engendered contemporaneously or not at all.

We may also speak, in the case of choice two above, of the constitution of the subject as \bar{S} - barred S - the subject marked by the signifier but at the same time excluded (barred) from the set of all signifiers. The Other can also be seen to have succumbed to the bar during alienation in that a part of its circle is chipped away the part "containing" \emptyset (or, alternatively, S_1 or S).

These notions and terminological distinctions will be quite useful in the discussion of our second important operation - separation - to which we now turn.

SEPARATION

Alienation is essentially characterized by a "forced" choice which rules out being for the subject, instituting instead the symbolic order. Separation gives rise to being, but that being is of an eminently evanescent and elusive ilk. While alienation is based on a very special sort of either/or, separation is based on a neither/nor which can be represented with the following truth table:

Table 5

S	O	$S \wedge O$	
T	T	F	line 1
T	F	F	line 2
F	T	F	line 3
F	F	T	line 4

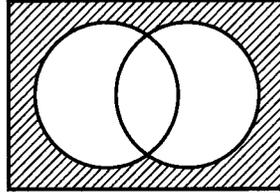
The operator here (\wedge) was defined by Sheffer,²¹ and Lacan gives it an orientation (\blacktriangledown) complementary to that of the vel of alienation (\blacktriangleright), the two together making up Lacan's losange (or

90

diamond) which figures prominently in his mathemes of the drive ($S \diamond D$) and of phantasy ($S \diamond a$).

As Table 5 shows, separation recognizes only the situation in which both S and O are false - a paradoxical result, at first blush, as the subject is supposed to be rewarded here with being. Constructing a Venn Diagram corresponding to this truth table (in the same way in which we constructed the others), we get Figure 9 below. The subject's being must thus come, in a sense, from "outside," from something other than the subject and the Other. The fact that Lacan points to intersection as underlying this operator intersection generally picking out the overlapping area in which both propositions are true - seems to be in flagrant contradiction with the apparent "external" origin or source of the subject's being.

Figure 9



I shall attempt to resolve this apparent contradiction in the course of the next few pages. Consider for the moment, however, the importance of topological forms and surfaces such as the Möbius Strip and the Klein Bottle in Lacan's work, which problematize concepts such as front, back, inside, and outside. In claiming an intersection-type filiation for this operator, Lacan focuses attention on the structure of the central Tune. I will examine that structure further on in discussing the surface Lacan called the "interior eight"²² whose structure is very similar to that involved in separation; this should shed light on the analyst's role in psychoanalytic practice.

DESIRE AND LACK

One of the essential ideas involved in separation seems clear enough: that of a juxtaposition, overlapping, or coincidence of two

91

lacks. This is not to be confused with a lack of lack, a situation in which lack is lacking! Consider the following passage from *Séminaire X, Angoisse* ("Anxiety"):

What provokes anxiety? Contrary to what people say, it is neither the rhythm nor the alternation of the mother's presence-absence. What proves this is that the child indulges in repeating presence-absence games: security of presence is found in the possibility of absence. What is most anxiety producing for the child is when the relationship through which he comes to be - on the basis of lack which makes him desire - is most perturbed: when there is no possibility of lack, when his mother is constantly on his back . . . (December 5, 1962).

This example fails to conform to our model of separation, for the negatives here (the lacks) both apply to the same term - the mother, i.e. the field of the Other (Lacan often uses Other and mother interchangeably in such contexts). The Other must show some sign of incompleteness, fallibility, or deficiency for alienation to be fully realized and for the subject to come to be as S; in other words, the Other must submit to the bar as well in order for us to witness the subject's advent. The mother, in the above example, monopolizes the field: it is not clear whether her circle has been encroached upon and decompleted through an encounter with another circle.

In separation we start from an Other who has had to give up that sliver in which S was so hopelessly false: we start from a barred Other. The subject has - to change metaphors somewhat while referring to the same diagrams (Figures 6 and 7) - already gained a foothold within the Other: he has lodged his lack of being in that "place" where the Other was lacking. The two lacks produced in the operation of alienation are excavated, explored, aligned and conjoined in separation. Their precise limits are determined and taken into account.

The child attaches himself to what is, in a certain sense, indecipherable in what his mother says. He is interested in that certain something which lies in the interval between her words; he tries to read between the lines to decipher why: she says X, but why is she telling me that? what does she want from me? what does she want in general? Children's endless why's are not, to Lacan's mind, the sign of an insatiable curiosity as to how things work, but rather a concern with where they figure in - what place they hold, what importance they have to their parents. They are concerned to secure (themselves) a place, to try to be the object of their parents' desire

92

- to occupy that between-the-lines "space" where desire shows its face. Lacan at times refers to this "space" or interval in discourse (between the unary and the binary signifiers S₁ and S₂) as enunciation itself: not that which is enunciated, but rather the very enunciating itself, the act of speaking in which the voice figures prominently. The voice, in its impossible-to-freeze movement and its non-specularizability and intangibility, is always lost to the subject, but nevertheless leaves traces and desire in its wake.

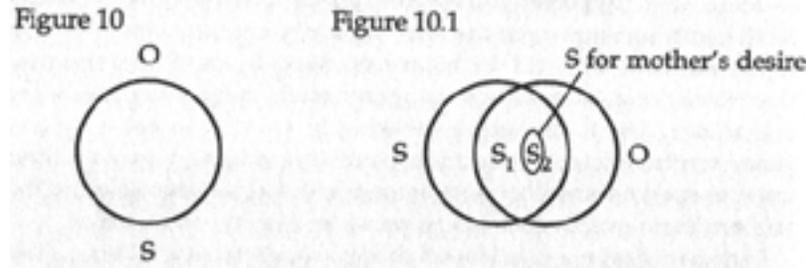
Lack and desire are, as I said earlier, coextensive for Lacan. The subject devotes himself to filling up the whole of his mother's lack, her whole space of desire; he wants to be everything to her, her beall and end-all. He sets himself the task of excavating the site of her desire, of aligning himself with her every whim and fancy Her wish is his command, her desire his demand.²³ His desire is born in complete subordination to hers: "le désir de l'homme, c'est le désir de l'Autre" Lacan reiterates again and again. Taking the "de" as a subjective genitive²⁴ for the moment, the

following translations are possible here: "man's desire is the Other's desire," "man's desire is the same as the Other's desire", and "man desires what the Other desires," all of which convey part of the meaning. For man not only desires what the Other desires, but he desires it in the same way; i.e., his desire is structured exactly like the Other's. Man learns to desire as an other, as though he were someone else.²⁵

What is posited here is tantamount to a total superimposition of the mother's lack and the child's, which is to say that their beings as constituted by desire - completely coincide (see Figure 10 below). Alternatively we could say that insofar as they are constituted by the signifying chain, both S₁ and S₂ line up in the tune of their intersection (see Figure 10.1 below). This, however, must be recognized as a chimerical, unrealizable moment. For the fact is that, try as he might, the subject can rarely completely monopolize the space of the mother's desire. He is rarely her only interest; if nothing else there is at least the father, and (where the father is absent) at the very least, the Father's Name which figures at times in what she says, i.e. in her discourse. The Father's Name functions as a signifier of the mother's desire which goes beyond the child. We can thus only rarely situate both S₁ and S₂ (S₂ here considered as signifier of the mother's desire) in the intersection between the subject and the Other. The two slivers can thus never entirely overlap - the subject is prevented or barred from holding at least part of that space.

93

Figure 10



Separation may be seen here as involving an attempt by the subject to make these two lacks thoroughly coincide, that attempt being abruptly thwarted.

Object a: the Other's Desire

Whereas alienation forces the speaking subject to make sense, to situate his discourse in the realm of meaning (thus constituting a sort of "symbolic castration", i.e. castration in the symbolic register), in the 'second' operation the subject is separated from the register of meaning, from the signifying chain as such; but while he is not separated from the Other as language, he is not separated from the Other as desire. It is in his attempt to grasp what remains essentially undecipherable in the Other's desire - what Lacan call the X, the variable, or better, the unknown - that the subject is confronted with the cause of his desire. This cause is, on the one hand, the Other's desire (based on lack) for the subject - and here we see the flipside of Lacan's dictum "*le désir de l'homme, c'est le désir de l'Autré*", which we can translate here as, for example, "man's desire is for the Other to desire him" and "man desires the Other's desire for him." His desire's cause can here take the form of someone's voice, or of a look someone gives him. But its cause can, on the other hand, originate in that part of the Other's desire which seems to have nothing to do with the subject in question, which takes her away from him (physically or otherwise), which leads her to give those precious looks to others.

In a sense we can say that it is the very fact that the mother desires which the child finds desirable. In *Seminaire VIII, Transference*, Lacan points to Agathon's fascination with a certain something in Socrates which Plato (in the *Symposium*) terms an $\alpha\psi\alpha\lambda\upsilon\alpha$:

94

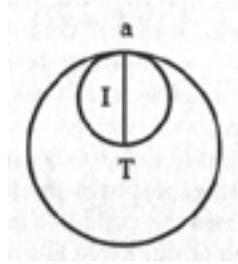
a precious, shiny, gleaming something which is shown by Lacan to be Socrates' desire itself, Socrates' desiring or desirousness. This highly valued "agalma" - inspiring desire in its detectors - can serve us here as a first approach to what Lacan introduces as *objet petit a*, an object which causes desire.

The second formulation of Lacan's dictum, involving man's desire to be desired by the Other, exposes the Other's desire as object a. The mother's desire causes the child to desire; but her desire almost always goes beyond the child: there is something about her desire which escapes him, which is beyond his control. A strict identity between his desire and hers cannot be maintained; her desire's independence from this creates a rift between them, a gap in which her desire - unfathomable to the child - begins to function in a new way. I suggested earlier that alienation engenders the pure possibility or place of a desiring subject. It is only here, as the mother's desire begins to function as object a, that we can strictly speaking consider the child to desire. Lacan distinguishes between demand and desire in asserting that one always demands the same thing, viz. love; whereas desire is structurally speaking unsatisfiable, caused as it is by an object it cannot attain or obtain for it is "lost."²⁶

The first approximate gloss on separation - which will have to be filled out further along - is that of a rift introduced in the hypothetical mother-child unity (cf. Figure 10) with the advent of object a.²⁷ Demand gives way to the "wild-goose chase" named desire; and though in one sense the child desires in exactly the same way as its mother (he identifies with her at the point of his Ego-Ideal), the cause of his desire is not the same as hers; its cause is differently configured. The former aspect involves the register of wanting to be loved by the Other - of thus conforming oneself to the Other's standards - the latter of desire proper (point a in Figure 11).²⁸

95

Figure 11

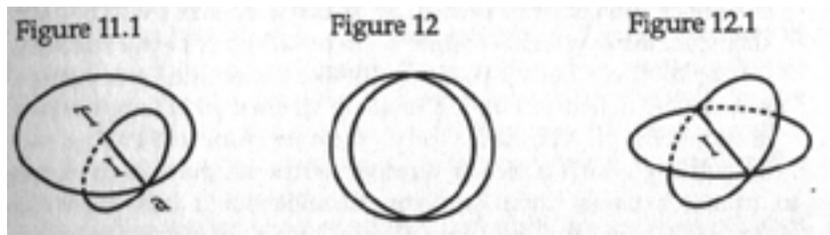


Thus part of what is at stake in separation is keeping these two points separate. Lacan's view of analytic work with neurotics can, in a sense, be summed up as a refusal on the analyst's part to allow a collapsing or superimposition of his desire and that of his patients, a refusal of this type of identification between analyst and patient - the analyst positioning himself as cause (to be dispensed with at the end of analysis) of the patient's desire. He acts so as to confront the patient with the patient's own desire rather than conforming the patient's desire to his own. Lacan locates these two distinct points at opposite ends of the same axis of identification (I) in his "interior eight" schema, suggesting that the analyst's gymnastic feat consists in keeping these two points separate, keeping them from collapsing into each other and the circle from closing in upon itself.

The Real

Let us take a closer look at the interior eight for a moment (Figure 11). It is drawn with a single uninterrupted line which crosses itself but once. Invisible, however, in this schema is the fact that the line pierces at point "T" the surface constituted by the 'outer' circle, creating a flap on the underside seen head on, we get Figure 11.1:

96



The 'interior' circle is, in fact, in a different plane altogether, intersecting the 'outer' circle along the line I. Now we can preserve most of the same properties of this figure by extending the line of intersection I down to the opposite side of the "outer" circle (fig. 12). In this way we recreate our intersecting circles from Figure 9, providing a visual support (Figure 12.1) for the heterogeneity of the circles (S and O) and their overlap.

They intersect (following the usually accepted meaning of the term) along the line I alone, and a line - while having well-defined geometrical properties has no area, i.e. does not constitute a surface. It functions as a boundary, limit, or edge, and here we can associate it with the border between the symbolic and the real the symbolic being represented by the horizontal plane constituted by the two "intersecting" circles, the real by the oblique plane constituted by the two flaps. The real - in the form of object a intervenes in or intersects the symbolic, interpolating a heterogeneous or anomalous element into the symbolic order.²⁹

The confrontation or coming into contact of two orders (the subject and the Other), engendering the symbolic register, cannot help (in most cases) but give rise to another register: the real. The real does not introduce a higher or meta-language with which to correct the paradoxes arising in ordinary and mathematical (or formalized) languages; it is the inconsistency of language itself, language as inhabited and ridden by desire.

We are forced here to conceptualize an odd sort of between space, a space which seems intimately tied to both but which is completely controlled by neither, its operatively escaping them. Consider in this connection what Lacan says about one of the objects a:

97

the breast, this object which must certainly be defined as being that something which - while stuck or tacked onto the surface [of the mother's body], parasitically like a placenta - remains something which can be legitimately claimed to belong to the child's body (S. XIV, *La logique du fantasme*, June 14, 1967).

Something which is clearly attached to the mother's body seems to transit between them, indistinguishable for a time from the child's own body and yet controlled by him only insofar as he can control his mother or recall the breast through hallucination. The breast becomes a source of

pleasure "*hors corps*," outside the body; we are led to conceptualize here a type of pleasure which is of the body but not localized anywhere on the surface or within the confines of the body.

The other as field (or otherness, as we might call it here) may here be seen to break down into the barred Other (\bar{A}) - language as essentially untotalizable and inconsistent - and object *a*. This splitting of the Other is one facet of what Lacan has in mind when he says that separation corresponds to "what Freud called *Ichspaltung* or splitting of the subject" (literally, "splitting of the I", usually translated as "splitting of the ego"). For Lacan goes on to say that, in the article entitled "*Ichspaltung*," Freud founds this process "on a splitting not of the subject but of the object" (*Ecrits*, p. 842). Freud's text is indeed striking in that it makes but a single reference to a "rift" in the I (or ego), whereas it clearly emphasizes *two* objects: the mother's body and the male child's penis.

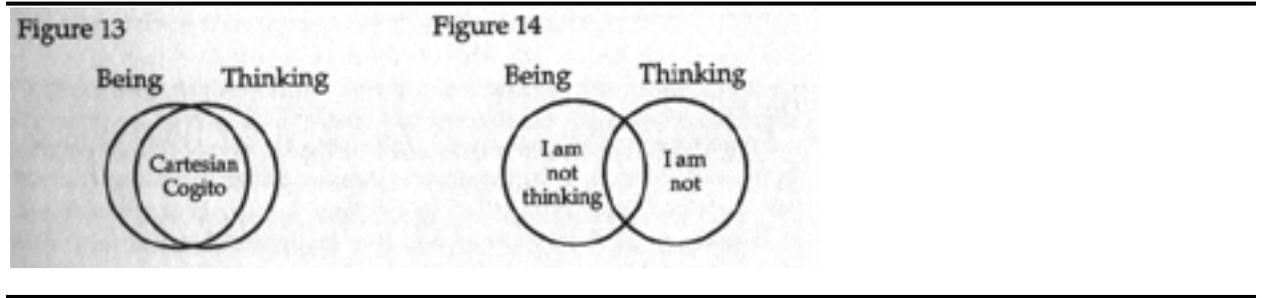
While the penis has not yet been mentioned here in this connection, it is clear that it is closely related to object *a*. This is perhaps best seen in the case of fetishism (and the latter is, in fact, directly mentioned by Freud in this same article) in which both the mother's body and the male child's penis seem to be stripped or divested of their phallic dimensions, while something else, a fetish object for example, is cathected in their stead. Lacan explicitly uses " φ " ("the gap designated as the phallus' function . . . in the castration complex") and *a* ("the object which obturates this gap," *Scilicet*, Vol. 1, p. 23) as two different notations for closely related functions. We shall return to this split in the Other or object further along.

ALIENATION REVISITED

It is not within the scope of this paper to develop the multifarious links between castration, the phallus, and object *a* as they enter into

Lacan's 1964 formulation of alienation and separation. Such a project would have but an historical interest, as Lacan continues to rethink their links in subsequent seminars. He eventually leaves separation as operator aside and reconceptualizes the field on the basis of a slightly different version of alienation. He proposes what we might term a "split" in the subject correlative to the split in the Other briefly discussed above.

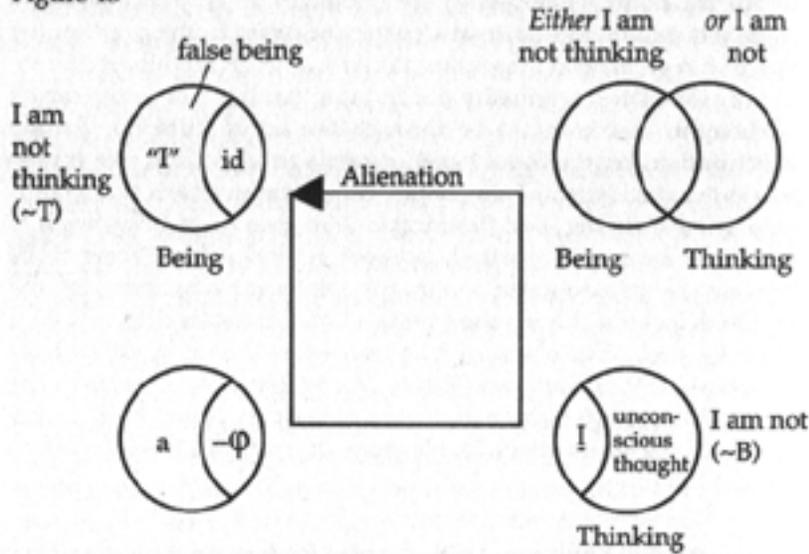
To outline the problem's context very briefly, Lacan takes off from Descartes' notion of the subject embodied in the formula *cogito ergo sum*, and locates the Cartesian subject or *cogito* in the overlapping space of two circles representing thinking and being (Figure 13); for Lacan, Descartes' originality lies in his situating man as the *subject* of thought, as coming to be through the act of thinking. Freud's contribution, on the other hand, consists in exploding this framework: his elucidation of the unconscious demonstrates that man is *subjected to* thinking, that thinking in man goes on unbeknownst to him, and in a way which he cannot control. Man seems to be thought - by language - in the continual movement of the signifying chain. Lacan thus recasts the Cartesian dictum into a bipartite exclusion, a sort of Kierkegaardian either/or: either I am not thinking³⁰ or I am not (Figure 14); he preserves, however, the "central" position (which is always already excluded by the very terms of the alternative) of his non- or anti-Cartesian *cogito* or subject.



Lacan proceeds to execute a forced choice, i.e. an alienation, upon these two new terms, which we may consider to be the precise opposites (or, more strictly speaking, contradictories) of X and Y (or S and O) of our earliest schemas. The only solution acceptable to the operator is "I am not thinking" (Figure 15), and

the circle of being loses something which was essential to the circle of thinking which Lacan designates as the *Es* or *ça*, literally the "it," but technically speaking, the id. Being is accorded or engendered here, but at a certain cost, as usual. Excluded here is what is "not I": everything which, in discourse, is "not I, i.e. the whole rest of the [grammatical] structure" (S. XIV, January 11, 1967).

Figure 15



Das Es

Freud's term "Es", borrowed, following G. Groddeck's example, from Nietzsche, is a third person singular neuter pronoun equivalent to *ça* in French and to "it" in English. Lacan's concept of the id is based, as is Freud's,³¹ upon the impersonal nature of this pronoun seen in such expressions as "it's raining," "it's snowing", etc. Freud describes the id as follows:

It is the obscure inaccessible part of our personality; the little we know about it we have learnt from the study of dream-work and the formation of neurotic symptoms, and most of that is of a negative character, and can only be described as being all that the ego is not (*The New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, Norton, N. Y. 1933, p. 103; slightly modified in *SE*, XXII, p. 73).

100

Lacan thus describes the id in almost the same terms as Freud saying that it is all that the "I" is not, though quite deliberately replacing ego here by "I." Freud continues:

It seems, indeed, as if the energy of [the id's] instinctual impulses [drives] is in a different condition from that in which it is found in the other regions of the mind. It must be far more fluid and more capable of being discharged, for otherwise we should not have those displacements and condensations, which are so characteristic of the id and which are so completely independent of the qualities of what is cathected. (In the ego we should call it an idea.) (*Ibid*, p. 105; *SE*, XXII, p. 75)

Recalling Lacan's assimilation of displacement and condensation with metonymy and metaphor (respectively) - the latter two being, according to Lacan, the two fundamental tropes or modes of signifying activity (cf. "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious", *Ecrits*, trasp. pps. 146-78) - we begin to see why Lacan takes the id as the seat of grammatical structure. For symptoms, dreams, and slips are all, Freud demonstrates, constructed on the basis of these two mechanisms (outlined in *The Interpretation of Dreams*); the id is thus, already in Freud's work, the site in which linguistic sliding takes place along these two "axes," along which drives are able to transform themselves and discharge in a way which is "completely independent of the qualities of what is cathected". Lacan's move here is to equate "all the rest of the structure" with Freud's *Es*, which Freud also considers to be a "caldron" of "untamed passions" obeying the pleasure principle, knowing neither time, negation, nor contradiction.

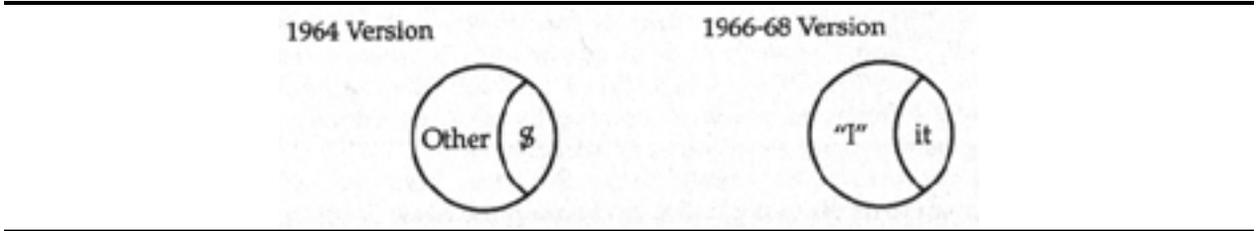
I will not attempt to entirely justify this move here; we will simply point to an obvious parallel: in choosing the name *Es* (it) for his agency, Freud underlines our essentially passive behavior in life, the way "we are 'lived' by unknown and uncontrollable forces" (*SE*, XIX, p. 23); similarly, modern linguistics points to how people are "lived" by language, how language lives through us. Since for Freud parts of both the ego and the superego are unconscious, the id does not constitute all of the unconscious; it is merely a subset of it (and the repressed is but a subset of the id). If, as Lacan takes great pains to show, "the unconscious is structured like a language" - then the id too is structured like a language; it is the incomplete, never closed, and untotizable structure of language itself, in which I as subject is everywhere supposed but excluded: the signifiers represent the subject to each other, but the subject as such

101

has no one signifier (or set of signifiers) which represent him directly or present him.³² To return to the schema at hand (Figure 15), alienation leads here to the exclusion of the whole of grammar, and "I" (which remains in the chipped circle) can thus obviously have no real independent function or significance. Being is therefore emptied here of all but the emptiest of forms an "I" which is but a shadow of itself, unable to convoke the first person singular, lacking any context or grammar in which to operate. The

"I" cannot function as signifier - i. e. cannot represent a subject for another signifier - as it stands alone. Lacan speaks here of the subject's "false-being" (S. XV, January 10, 1968), and suggests that "one is never more solid in one's being than when one isn't thinking."

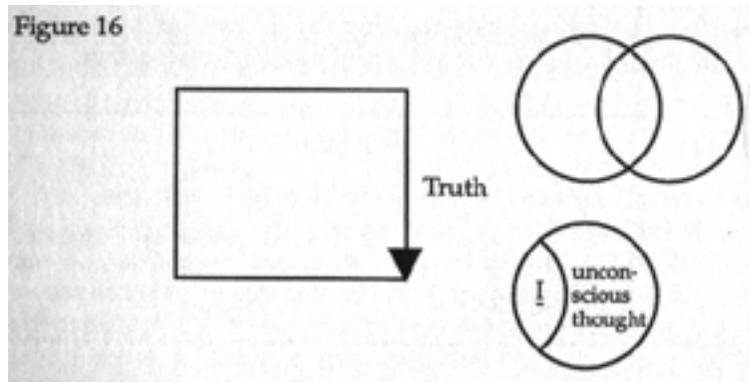
This is obviously closely related to the above-mentioned moment of primal repression, i.e. of the institution of S_1 "one signifier and one signifier alone," and of the subject as S . While the earlier (1964) version of alienation emphasized the *eclipsing of the subject by the Other* ("the whole rest of the structure"), the later version emphasizes the coming to be of the subject as mark, isolated signifier, or barred subject.



Graphically speaking, one might be inclined to regard the two versions as exact opposites, one including what the other excludes (the small sliver to the right representing that which is excluded, as it were, from within). Nevertheless, my sense is that this reversal can be viewed as primarily indicative of a change in focus or emphasis.

UNCONSCIOUS THOUGHT

The other circle which interests us here is the one in the bottom right hand corner (Figure 16), a product of another forced choice, but brought about in this case by analytic action. Analysis pushes the patient into the position of sacrificing his being in favor of unconscious thought. Though I may not always be explicitly present in the dream text, it is implicated everywhere therein. And as we see in Freud's 1919 article 'A child is being beaten,' I is often excluded from fantasies which are available to consciousness, and yet when one reconstructs the various formulas leading to them, I is ubiquitous and absolutely crucial to their meaning. In other words, thinking here takes place on a level which excludes I, excludes any subjective assumption of these thoughts (as in the signifying chain in the postface to Lacan's "Seminar on the Purloined Letter").

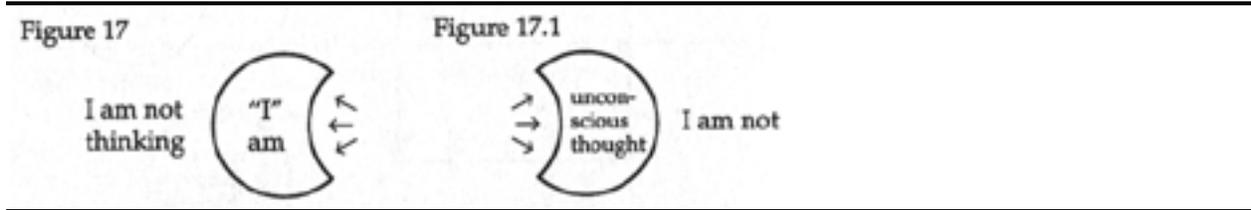


Whereas formerly - in the first forced choice outlined here alienation led to an eclipse of being "behind" meaning (language as Other) engendering the subject as empty set $\{\emptyset\}$, in this revised form of alienation meaning slips "behind" being as this latter comes to the fore in the empty guise of "I" (Figure 16). The choice presented here is, at one point, recast by Lacan as that of an "either I am nothing but this mark" (which we can posit here to be the empty set or "I") "or I am not this mark" (S. XV January 10, 1968). Which boils down to "either I am this mark or I am not at all": to choose being is to opt to be nothing but a mark, that upon which

the entire symbolic order is built. It would be incorrect to say that \emptyset does not designate anything - it designates nothing, subject as nothing.

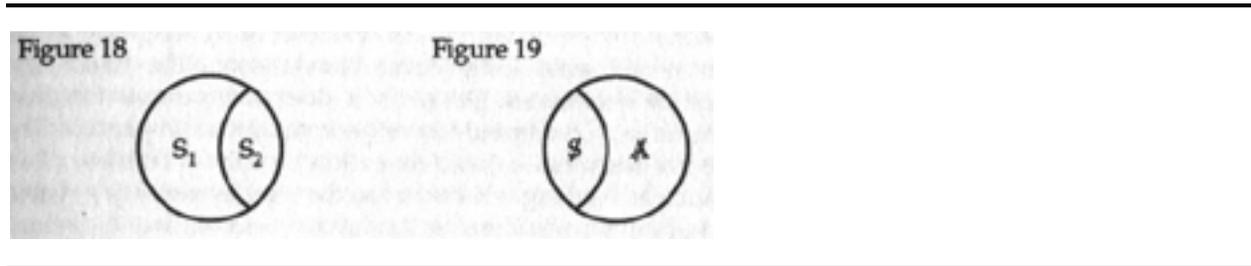
What seems clear here is that the end result of both versions of alienation is the subject as empty or as simple marker, the disappearance of the subject behind meaning being emphasized in the 1964 gloss and his appearance as mark being emphasized in 1966 through 1967. The latter gloss underlines the subject's exclusion from language and meaning along the line of suture indicated by the arrows in Figure 17 - the "I" here having nothing to assume. And the "second" operation in this schematization, that of truth (in Figure 16), highlights the fact that I as castrated subject is hermetically sealed off from what must be assumed, viz. unconscious thought (cf. Figure 17.1). These two opposing circles, contradictories in

relation to the logical square, are in a sense the flipsides of one and the same coin, the warp and the woof of the same fabric: "I" sutures language/structure, and the structure working alone sutures "L." The fabric holds together, as it were, in spite of the impossibility of locating the subject in any particular stitch.



Alienation as described in 1964 is never thus re-analyzed in exactly the same way, its import being subdivided into two separate operations: (1) the 1966-67 operation of alienation which we may depict as in Figure 18 (S1 and S being equally appropriate inscriptions in the left-hand side of the circle, S2 representing the whole rest of the signifying chain); and (2) the operation of truth (Refer back to Figure 16), which we can schematize as in Figure 19, for the unconscious is, in Lacan's words, the discourse of the Other. What distinguishes the operation of truth from the 1964 version of alienation, as depicted in Figures 6 and 7 above, is that the former assumes the existence of the unconscious (involving both

and secondary repression) whereas the latter inaugurates it through primal repression alone.



EXCURSUS ON LOGICAL EXCLUSION

I have, up until now, been using the notion of exclusion (along with Euler circles representing relations of logical exclusion) as though it were perfectly clear what were at stake. Let us back up here a moment and examine the concept of logical exclusion a bit more closely.

The exclusion of something - be it element, medium, or something else far less easily pinned down or named - from a system can be qualified as logical in a variety of circumstances. Classical symbolic logic, for example, is based upon the axiomatic law of noncontradiction and thus excludes *in principia* the possibility of A not being equal to itself (it thus excludes the proposition $A = \bar{A}$). Language, to take another example, defined (let us suppose) as a system specifying what it subsumes - viz. all signifiers (a lexicon) and all grammatical rules (a syntax), includes neither voice nor writing, these latter two introducing *different*, though hardly independent, orders or registers.³³ Logical exclusion should thus not be confused with Lacan's concept of foreclosure; for foreclosure involves the rejection of one or more of one order's elements from that same order, creating a hole in its fabric - which may fundamentally change or destroy the fabric. (Lacan's classic example of this process is the foreclosure of the Father's Name, involving the ejection of something from the symbolic which, in fact, reappears in the real).³⁴

But while logical exclusion concerns the exclusion of something from a particular order, that something is not chosen at random; we

aren't worried here about the exclusion of the register of taste from that of language in the same way as that of voice. For voice is - for those who are not deaf - absolutely essential to language's operativity. It constitutes one of language's most important mediums. Without voice or writing (of whatever sort), language as we know it would most likely never have arisen. (The hand sign language of deaf-mutes, using as it does the same letters and signifiers as our own, would have been equally unthinkable). The exclusion of such indispensable conditions of the possibility of an order (such as language) leads not to the total inoperativity of that order, but to a radical reduction of its field. If we - beings characterized by the faculty of speech cannot be in language, then the kind of being we can attain is hardly that attributed to man by most of Western thought. And if we cannot but think without subjective assumption of what is thought (and this is perhaps universally the case according to Lacan's account of the nature of thought), then thinking is certainly not what it's cut out to be, remaining light-years from the "ideal" or "fuller" status designated by Freud's *soil Ich werden*. Unconscious thought must needs be brought into meaning by a process which hypnotism could not provide, short-circuiting the agent as it does.

Excluded in such cases is that which subtends³⁵ the field, that which founds the possibility of every single element in the field and the interrelations amongst elements. Such "subtenders" are central to the field despite their status as outsiders. Under "normal" conditions, the field and that which subtends it constantly "interact"; we speak of internal exclusion when what is in this sense central is shut off from its usual

contact. While never having been inscribed in the field, it nonetheless disrupts its functioning. A forced choice, such as that involved in both forms of alienation (those described in 1964 and 1967), always leads to internal exclusion.

It would be interesting to explore another aspect of a logic of exclusion here that illustrated in Gödel's theorems. For these latter prove that every consistent, axiomatized field is by nature incomplete, and that every complete, axiomatized field is inconsistent. Approximately speaking, regardless of the care taken in choosing the axioms for a field, one will always be able to constructing well-formulated theorems which can neither be proved nor disproved on the basis of these axioms, their truth or falsehood remaining undecidable. These axiomatized fields are

106

thus structurally untotalizable - as is Lacan's Other, for the set of all signifiers does not exist.³⁶

The importance of a concept like that of exclusion in psychoanalysis should not be underestimated. Edouard Pichon, analyst and grammarian, helped push back the frontiers of the traditional concept of negation by subtly distinguishing a whole panoply of possible negating functions in French grammar.³⁷ Freud himself introduced a variety of terms invoking negation (e.g. *Uerneinung*, *Verleugnung*, *Uerwerfung*, etc.) which Lacan -with Jean Hyppolite's help at one point - isolated and refined (cf. *Ecrits*, *S. I, S. III*). The concept of exclusion is obviously closely related to that of negation, and it should come as no surprise that psychoanalytic reflection leads us to further refine our understanding of it. Whereas traditional logic can be said to be primarily concerned with the question of inclusion,³⁸ a psychoanalytic logic would perhaps focus on exclusion.

SEPARATION: THE SPLIT BETWEEN THE ID AND I

Let us return now to the question of separation. As we have seen, the subject (excluded from meaning and from being more than a marker) is split in a sense between the id - the whole of grammar - and I, a split which is homologous to that of the Other between the barred Other and object a (*A* being correlated with the id, and a with I- i.e. with the question of desire). The I here, for Lacan, is intimately related to the subject of the unconscious, a subject who has succumbed to the blow of castration (*S*) - who has assumed his castration. And he often emphasizes how the analysand, at the end of analysis, should identify - not by any means with the analyst's ego, but rather - with the object a as cause of desire. The terminus, so to speak, of Lacan's logical square here, i.e. the circle in the bottom left-hand corner (Figure 15), retranscribes neither of the original circles (of thinking or being), the subject as object a emerging as a new separate field complete with its own logical structure of exclusion.

Let us try to then vindicate Lacan's claim, mentioned earlier, that separation is akin to Freud's *Ichspaltung* (cf. *Ecrits*, p. 842) on the basis of the split of the Other into *A1* and *a*, and of that brought about between the id and I, the subject of the unconscious.

107

ICH versus DAS ICH

We have already found more than a vague precedent for a distinction between the id and I in Freud's work in his account of the id as a subset of the unconscious. Let us turn here to an investigation of the divergence of Lacan's I from Freud's *Ich* (translated "ego," but literally: "I").

The fate of Freud's *Ich* in what has come to be known as "Ego Psychology" is well known: the ego is taken to be the center of the personality, regulating the "individual's interactions" with the "outside world," superego demands and id impulses; it is also considered to be the point to which the analyst applies his lever. Conforming the patient's weak ego to the analyst's strong one is seen as the road to psychic health.

It is a bit too easy to claim that ego-psychologists have misread Freud, for one can certainly find passages in Freud's work which lend credence to their point of view. And to assert that Lacan remains closer in spirit to Freud than other theoreticians ultimately necessitates extensive textual justification as well, and the problem is precisely that the text cannot always settle the matter; i.e. it cuts both ways: it allows, in fact, of a variety of interpretations. Lacan provides a punctuation, as it were, of Freud's texts which stresses certain elements and de-emphasizes others (or leaves them aside). His reasons for doing so either stand or fall on their own merit.

To put it rather schematically, Lacan operates a split between *das Ich* and *Ich*, between the ego as entity or object-like agency and I as speaking subject and as hypothetical subject of unconscious desire. This move is motivated by a certain sliding of meaning³⁹ in Freud's text itself between the one and the other.

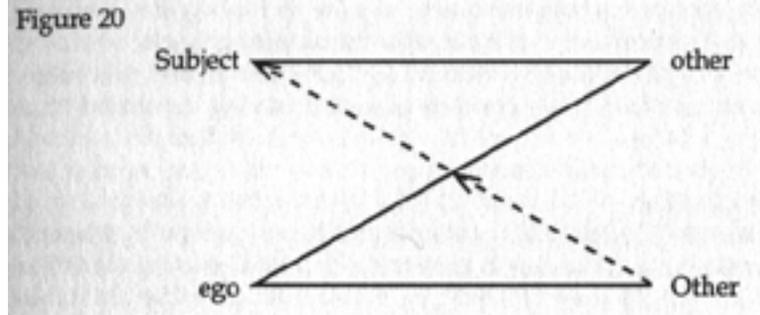
Consider the following from *The Ego and the Id*:

The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface. [The editor's footnote, apparently approved of by Freud, continues]... It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body, besides, as we have seen above, representing the superficies of the mental apparatus (*SE, XIX, p. 26*).

The reader familiar with Lacan's mirror stage⁴⁰ will easily see how Freud's ego as mental representation of the body's surface corresponds to Lacan's totalizing body image assumed by what he calls "I" at an early point in his work. The ego as totalized body image becomes, however, in the course of Lacan's subsequent work, relegated to the status of object, as a relatively fixed, unchanging,

108

and above all non-acting thing (agency would be too subjectified a category for it). Note the distinctly different positions of the ego and the subject in Lacan's 1955-56 Z diagram (known as "Schema L" and slightly adapted here for clarity).



Freud often describes the ego - as in the above-cited passage without any reference whatsoever to subjectivity. On another occasion he writes:

... the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes ... [the ego] contains the history of those object choices (*SE*, XIX, p. 29).

Freud endows the ego here with object-like properties, to such an extent that it becomes something of a substitute object for the id it virtually replaces the id's lost or abandoned objects.

Consider now a key passage in which the meaning of the *Ich* slides somewhat in respect to the meanings presented above. It comes at the end of the 31st lecture of Freud's *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis; Wo Es war, Boll Ich werden*.⁴¹

This formula constitutes a veritable leitmotif of Lacan's work as he translates and retranslates this Presocratic-like gnomic. The gist of his numerous glosses is that of a morally dictated movement from the impersonal "it" form, and not the id per se - Freud says neither *das Es* nor *das Ich* here as he usually does when designating the agencies of the id and the ego - to the I. I must become I where "it" was or reigned. I must come to be, must assume its place, that place where "it" was (*Ecrits*, pps. 416-8, 524, 670, 801-2, 816, and 864-5). The I here in question seems clearly to require an element of subjectivity: I (not merely as grammatical shifter but as subject of

109

enunciation)⁴² must "take over," must "assume command" where only impersonal natural forces were previously

Returning to the notion of the ego as a sedimentation of lost or abandoned objects, let us reread this passage using Lacan's concept of object. Lost objects are objects which caused the subject to desire. The subject is, in a sense, subjected to them, manipulated by them, these objects *a* having something of a life of their own; we see here, in other words, a sort of reversal of the classic subject-active/objectpassive relationship. By introjecting these lost objects, the subject comes to occupy the position of cause; having reinstated these cathected objects "within himself," he becomes desirable to the id; i.e. he becomes, in a sense, cause of his own desire, as well as of that of others.

One of analysis' goals, according to Lacan, is to bring about "a repositioning of the ego as subject in this *a* that I was for the Other's desire" (*S*, XII, June 16, 1965), i.e. to reorient the subject (as object/cause of the Other's desire), to bring about subjectivization where the patient functions as object *a*, as cause of the Other's desire. The patient, submitted or subjected to the Other's desire (while causing it, unbeknownst to himself), must become subject of his own desire. This is the "last" moment represented in Figure 15, the movement from the circle in the bottom right-hand corner to that in the bottom left (to which we will return momentarily in discussing the traversing of the fundamental fantasy); it indicates a sort of predominance, albeit temporary, and even no more than momentary, of "subjectness" over "objectness."

The sentence immediately following upon Freud's *Wo Es war, Boll Ich werden*, "It is a work of culture - not unlike the draining of the Zuider Zee" (*SE*, XXII, p. 80), introduces the notion of a sort of moral responsibility or social/cultural ideal. Lacan retains the Freudian force of this ideal, but does not seem to believe in the possibility of its realization: I can never simply be or exist; it was going to be, would have been, or even had been just a moment before. We find traces of subjectivization, but can never hold on to the subject or freeze it at any particular moment in time. Subjectivization can be more or less forced to take place given the right logical constraints (cf. "Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certitude," *Newsletter of the Freudian Field*, 4, 1988), and even localized in or pinned to a particular act. Notwithstanding, one can never, as it were, hold the subject in the palm of one's hand.

At a relatively early date, Lacan conceived of "it" and I as occupying a "place of being" ("*un lieu d'être*," *Ecrits*, p. 417), but this

110

notion seems to require modification on the basis of his subsequent developments. For I, Lacan's *subject* of unconscious desire never comes to be in the circle of being (being only arising as completely split off from language, grammar and meaning). Rather, it finds its place along the borders common to the middle Tune and the circles of being and thinking - the subject remaining something of a border function, having no real surface or area to call its own, existing as the site of an intersection between worlds or registers.

Must we conclude from the preceding discussion of Lacan's reformulation of the subject's dialectical advent in 1966-67 that the notion of separation is no longer of any use to us? I would submit that we can situate the separation of I from "it" in the subdivided operations of alienation and truth (cf. figure 15), and that we find the result of separation - the end product of a neither/nor - in the bottom left-hand corner of the same

figure. The latter can be associated with the operations of sublimation and transference which "lead" to it, but that in and of itself would be ample matter for another paper.

SEPARATION IN ANALYTIC PRACTICE

Separation, I would sustain, is operative in Lacanian psychoanalytic practice, one of its most important guises being the "scansion" or "cut" of the analytic session. Whereas the patient pushes himself to force dreams and fantasies into words, to find meaning hidden in his parapraxes, to weave a fabric of meaning through his discourse - submitting thereby to alienation, to the fading of his being; the analyst's cut, punctuating and/or ending the session, throws the subject back into non-meaning. The analyst's emphasis upon a particular element of the patient's discourse does not so much seal any one meaning as throw the element open to a plethora of possible interpretations. When Lacan says that interpretation is "oracular speech," this opening up is part of what he has in mind. Such speech, like the interruption of the session itself, temporarily stops the patient's meaning-making; its effects are obviously brought back into meaning in part by the patient afterwards, but it has an operativity or effectivity which goes beyond these attempts to entirely reconstitute its meaning (or recuperate it into meaning).

The cut - representative in many ways of the whole of Lacanian analysis aims not at changing the subject's understanding of something (about his past, his desire, his fantasy, or what have

111

you), the essence of *connaissance* (understanding or knowledge) being *méconnaissance* (an almost deliberate misunderstanding); it aims rather at the question of truth, of bringing the subject face to face with the truth of his existence - that existence being characterized by the absence and impossibility of sexual relationships. Lacan does not sustain that people do not engage in sexual activity, but rather that there is no possible place for or inscription of a relationship between the sexes - as there is no recognition of the difference between the sexes - in the unconscious.⁴³

Fantasy is precisely that which tries to fill the vacuum or cover over the absence of this inscription. Lacan's late introduction of the notion that "there is no such thing as a sexual relationship" (*il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*) covers much of the same ground as that of the subject's *Spaltung*, or *Entzweiung* (distension, split, asunder) as Lacan terms it at the end of S. XII (*Problèmes cruciaux pour la psychanalyse*):

fantasy, is no other than this conjunction of the subject's *Entzweiung* with object *a*, thanks to which a fallacious completeness is able to cover over what the real's impossibility involves" (June 16, 1965).

La traversée - the traversing, transversal, crossing, or flip-flopping - of the fundamental fantasy is presented as the result of the analyst's action in the course of analysis in pushing the patient ever closer to a truth - that there is no such thing as a sexual relationship, that there is no possible *relation* between the sexes which is beyond knowledge and meaning. The traversing involves a "repositioning of the ego as subject in this *a* which I was for the Other's desire" (*ibid*), i.e. a repositioning of the subject as object *a* in relationship to the Other.

Fall 1986

Notes

1. I have since devoted a whole article to a discussion of "The Lacanian Subject" (*Analysis*, V 3, 1991), and it will be one of the main focuses of my forthcoming book on "Subject, Structure, and Science."

2. This is but one of the various schematizations of the subject we will come across, all of which have a certain "local" validity in the Lacanian opus; the different glosses are not meant to be exclusive alternatives. They should rather be maintained side by side whenever they do not seem entirely compatible.

112

3. It is as logical a process as one could ask for, and a good deal of Lacan's project is specifically devoted to a logicization and mathematicization of subjectification.

4. For example, "the unconscious cause must be defined neither as being nor as *off8v*, a non-being" (S XI, p. 117).

5. The discussion which follows is largely based on my reading undoubtedly flawed at times - of Lacan's Seminars XI (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*), XIV (*The Logic of Fantasy*), and XV (*The Analytic Act*), "Position of the Unconscious" (*Ecrits*, pps. 829-850), and of J.-A. Miller's classes given on March 9th, 16th, and 23rd, 1983 and on November 21st and 28th, 1984. I acknowledge here my debt to Miller's weekly course, "Orientation lacanienne," given under the auspices of the University of Paris VIII.

Note that Alan Sheridan mistakenly translates Lacan's settheoretical term *réunion* (union) as "joining."

6. Ordinary logic excludes the possibility of a proposition being both true and false, and refuses to classify numerous statements as propositions at all, considering them to be neither true nor false.

7. Their suppressed difference can be seen only with the help of the frame.

Table 1 then gives:

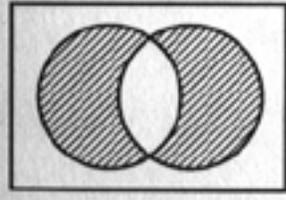
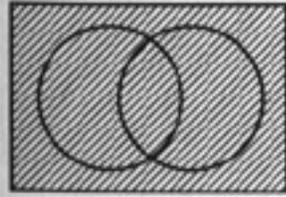


Table 2 gives:



113

8. One can find discussion of Sheffer's stroke in G.J. Massey, *Understanding Symbolic Logic*, Harper and Row, New York, 1970 (pps. 49-51) and in Hilbert and Ackermann, *Mathematical Logic*, Chelsea Pub. Co., New York 1950 (pps. 11 and 29).

9. All translations of Lacan here are my own; all references are to the French editions of Lacan's work, unless otherwise indicated by *trans*.

10. In other words, of whether you'll choose line 3 or line 4 of Table 4. Strictly speaking, line 4 is not representable in Venn diagrams stripped of their frames, and Figure 5 thus cannot effectively discriminate between Table 4 above and the following:

Table 4.1

X	Y	$X \vee a' Y$	
T	T	F	line 1
T	F	F	line 2
F	T	T	line 3
F	F	F	line 4

The complete Venn diagram corresponding to Table 4 is:

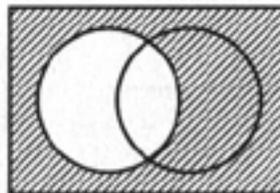


Figure A

while that corresponding to Table 4.1 is:

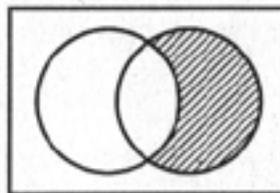


Figure B

114

These completed figures help us understand why Lacan speaks of a choice (albeit forced) in Figure 5 - the choice in fact is that between the shaded chipped circle Y and the shaded area outside of both circles in Figure A. (In Figure B, corresponding not to Lacan's veil of alienation, but to some other hypothetical operator, there is not even a theoretical choice to be made.) In exactly what sense the choice can be said to be forced will be discussed further on.

11. Thus though the choice is said by Lacan to be "forced," it is forced only insofar as "becoming a subject" is on the agenda. One could make out a case for the claim that in psychosis neither the subject nor the Other is selected (i.e. the predicament is that of line 4 of Table 4).

12. Akin to that assigned {m} in set theory.

13. Lacan is hardly jesting when he speaks of the "kilograms of signifiers of language around us" (in the form of books, etc. - cf. S IX, *Identification*, January 10, 1962). The signifier, to this mind, is that which par excellence is substantial/material. The various objects *a* are also considered to be substantial, which seems at first rather paradoxical for at least the voice, the gaze, and the nothing (*le rien* - *Ecrits*, trapp., p. 315).

14. Guilt is the one exception Freud makes, allowing as he does for unconscious feelings of guilt. It seems, however, more consistent to speak of unconscious thoughts which are associated with (not unconscious) guilt feelings.

15. *Trieb* in the Standard Edition is usually treated just like *Instinkt* (instinct), but Lacan translates it into French as "*pulsion*" and into English as "drive" (as in "death-drive").

16. Cf. Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Chapter 7, "Identification," SE, XVIII.

17. This point is developed at length in the last two months of Lacan's S VIII, *Transference*.

18. Let us recall that the space occupied by S1 in Figure 7 corresponds, referring back to Figure 5, to that part of circle Y which drops out, being excluded in the course of alienation. S1 the unary signifier, though constituting the condition of possibility of the signifying chain and of the production of meaning, is logically excluded from the set of all signifiers. It subtends and sustains them, and yet it can never appear amongst them. It thus seems that the "battery of signifiers" contains - loosely speaking - a heterogeneous element. J.-A Miller qualifies this element's relation to the set of all signifiers as one of "internal exclusion" (cf. also S

115

VII, *Ethics*, p. 122, where Lacan uses the expressions "excluded interior" and "excluded on the inside").

On internal exclusion, see the section "Excursus on Exclusion" below. In Lacan's work one finds at least two different glosses concerning the status of the unary signifier, one of which would lead us to think that S1 can never present itself, being a signifier in name alone and differing radically in nature from other signifiers (all the S2's). In this version, S1 is merely assumed to exist, though one cannot but assume it to exist if one wants to understand the functioning of the rest of the structure (like the Lacanian subject, S1 on this reading, is only produced retroactively). In another gloss on the unary signifier, the (hierarchical) position of a signifier takes precedence over its nature, its position determining it as an S1 or an S2. In this case, any signifier whatsoever can come to occupy the place of position of S1 and command the whole of the structure, and there can even be a proliferation of unary signifiers (though they can only constitute a series and not a true chain).

Here I am mainly interested in the first, and primarily logical, notion of S1 and its problematic status in relation to the Other: set O. (The positional notion is discussed in my article "The Lacanian Subject," op. cit.). One could say that S1 is part of O though it cannot be counted as an element therein (just as the empty set is a part of every set, according to set theory; one one would have to explore here the "empty" or "full" nature of S1 and S2 in terms of the set-theoretical concepts of "parts" - which can be empty, the void constituting a part of every set - and "elements" - which can be empty, the void constituting a part of every set - and "elements" - which can never be empty, every element of a set being itself a set). Not being a signifier like the others, S1 would be excluded from a strict enumeration of O's elements, but would emerge or insist, in a certain sense, when operators are applied to the sets O and S.

19. From his course "Orientation lacanienne," 1984-85.

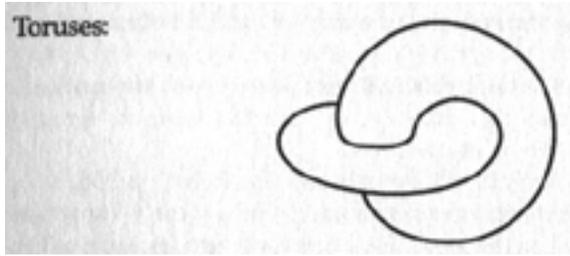
20. J.-A. Miller, "Orientation lacanienne," 1984-85.

21. The symbol originally attributed to this "non-disjunction" operator was a downward-point arrow (\sim). Cf. Massey, op. cit.

22. The interior eight first appears, to the best of my knowledge, in Lacan's S IX, *Identification*, and reappears frequently in his subsequent work; the English reader can find it on p. 271 of Sheridan's translation of S XI, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Norton, N.Y., 1977.

116

23. Lacan exemplifies the intrication of demand and desire with two intertwined toruses in S IX, *Identification*, where a circle drawn around the tube-like surface of one torus (the circle of demand) coincides with the smallest circle around the central void in the other (the circle of desire).



24. cf. "Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire," *Ecrits*, p. 814.

25. This implies alienation - in the more usual sense of the term - at the very heart of separation.

26. This object was, in fact, never "had"; like Freud's lost object (discussed in his *Project for a Scientific Psychology*), it is phantasmatic; it is not this or that breast; it is a breast one can never find in reality, its only existence being hallucinatory. The various objects *a* - the voice, look, breast, feces, and "nothing" - are irremediably lost objects which elicit desire.

27. One cannot help but be reminded here of the father's role in the break-up of the mother-child dyad. I have mentioned the introduction of a third element, but that element is in fact always already there, structuring the apparent privacy of the initial relationship. The infant experiences an intrusion from the outside, an intrusion - effectuated by what one can variously characterize as the father, the Father's Name, the phallus, and object *a* - ousting him from the lune of his intersection with his mother, impeding the kind of total overlap depicted in Figures 10 and 10.1

The intrusion may take the form of a prohibition of his monopoly rights to his mother, which forces his interest to seek beyond her the source of the prohibition, the source of his mother's fascination - her boyfriend, lover, husband, family, neighbors, state, law

117

religion, God: something which may be totally undefinable and yet quintessentially fascinating.

28. The former corresponds to identification at the crossroads of the imaginary and the symbolic, the latter with identification in the real.

29. An element whose status is akin to that of the catalogue of all catalogues which don't include themselves; for if such a catalogue lists itself inside its covers then it should not, and if it does not then it, in effect, should.

30. The adding of these two negatives, like the use of negation in certain other formulas in Lacan's work, is what leads to a radical reordering of the system in question.

31. Cf. *The Ego and the Id*, French edition: Payot, p. 236.

32. If the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* as signifier is what is repressed, the id is the set of all signifiers minus one, and also includes all the laws of grammar that structure those signifiers like a language.

33. Voice must, of course, be introduced to account for different meanings of words which are spelled alike, and for differences in meaning of the same expressions pronounced in different ways (e. g. angrily, sadly, etc.); writing, analogously, must, for example, be introduced in the case of homonyms.

34. This is something of a simplification as the Father's Name is perhaps always something of a border function, structurally situated on the border between the symbolic and the real, and not simply in the symbolic.

35. Holding or propping it up, as it were, from below.

36. It would be fruitful to examine the importance of logical exclusion in Lacan's dictums, *il n'y a point d'Autre* (there is no Other), *il n'y a pas d'Autre de l'Autre* (there is no Other of the Other or, alternatively, the Other has no Other), *ni de vrai sur le vrai* (nor truth about the truth), *ni du transfert du transfert* (nor transference of the transference) (S XV, November 29, 1967).

37. Cf. Damourette and Pichon, *Des mots à la pensée*, 7 volumes, especially Vol. 1; Vol. 6 is useful in understanding Lacan's distinction between the statement's subject and the subject of enunciation.

38. Cf. Robert Blanché, *La logique et son histoire*, Armand Colin, Paris, 1970, p. 209.

39. This is attested to by Bruno Bettelheim in his "retranslazioni" of Freud's terms (in *Freud and Man's Soul*, Vintage Books, N.Y., 1982) which has certain affinities with Lacan's work here.

40. Expounded in 1936 and 1949, cf. *Ecrits*, trans., pps. 1-7.

118

41. *Gesammelte Werke* (Frankfurt am main, S. Fischer Verlag, 1940), XV, p. 86; *SE, XXII, p. 80*.

42. Lacan uses 1 here instead of "I," as the latter, following usual punctuation procedure, points to the letter or word itself - what Jakobson calls the shifter (a personal pronoun such as I, you, he, etc.). Lacan's aim here is to convoke the subject who says 1.

43. Lacan expresses something of the same point in S XV when he says that "there is no possible realization of the subject as 'sexuated' element or partner in what is imagined to be unification in the sexual act" (January 17, 1968).