

## Freud and Lacan: Imaginary and Symbolic in Architecture

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In his essay “The Unconscious” in 1915, Freud defined metapsychology as the description of a mental process. Freud introduced two metapsychologies. The first, described as topographic, defined mental processes in a triadic landscape of unconscious, preconscious, and conscious. The second, described as structural, defined mental processes in a triadic architecture of *das Es* or the It, *das Ich* or the I, and *das Uber-Ich*, or the over-I. English translators gave these categories the names id, ego and super-ego. The It is the other, what is alien in the psyche. For my purposes here I will focus on the topographical metapsychology, and the definition of the unconscious. The Freudian unconscious should not be seen as “merely the seat of instincts”<sup>1</sup> in the words of Jacques Lacan, Freud’s most important follower. Freud considered *The Interpretation of Dreams*, published in 1900, to be his most important contribution to psychoanalysis. Freud rejected philosophy as a basis for understanding the human mind, and insisted that psychoanalysis is a science. The fact is that psychoanalysis is based on metapsychology, which is a metaphysical philosophy.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the unconscious element of the dream is the latent content or dream thought. The conscious element of the dream is the manifest content, the pictorial imagery in the memory of the dream. The dream image is formed from visual residues, thing presentations or *Sachvorstellungen*, and auditory residues, word presentations or *Wortvorstellungen*. These are combined in a double inscription or *Niederschrift* with a concern for representability or *Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit*. The transition from unconscious to conscious in the process of dream work or *Traumarbeit* is the result of primary processes in the unconscious, which result in distortions in the dream, through condensation or *Verdichtung* and displacement or *Verschiebung*.

All this is clear, but one element of Freud’s description of the transition

from the unconscious to conscious is not, and is the source of much controversy. In *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, published in 1940, Freud summarized his theory: “The process of something becoming conscious is above all linked with the perceptions which our sense organs receive from the external world....But there is an added complication through which internal processes in the ego may also acquire the quality of consciousness. This is the work of the function of speech...” (34–35).<sup>2</sup> In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, once “a dream has become a perception, it is in a position to excite consciousness” (614),<sup>3</sup> but in *The Ego and the Id* in 1923, “How does a thing become conscious?...Through being connected with the word presentations corresponding to it” (12).<sup>4</sup> And “The part played by word-presentations now becomes perfectly clear. By their interposition internal thought-processes are made into perceptions” (16). So only a thought which begins as a mnemonic residue of perception can resurface to consciousness from the preconscious through language, and any thought arising from the unconscious must be transformed into an external perception, through the memory-trace, in order to become conscious.

So which is it? Do unconscious thoughts become conscious through language, or through perception? Lacan tried to solve the problem by suggesting that Freud used the word *Sache* rather than *Ding* for thing-presentation because *Sache* connotes a thing as an eidos while *Ding* connotes a thing as a morphe, thus the *Sachvorstellung*, the visual residue, is already constructed by language, and is not outside of perception.<sup>5</sup> The problem comes down to the distinction between eidos and morphe, at the core of Platonic and Idealist philosophy. Lacan argued that psychoanalysis is opposed to any form of philosophical idealism, because there is no true subject.<sup>6</sup> The very identity of unconscious thought is not resolved in the writings of Freud and Lacan, and it is not taken up in any other psychoanalytic theory.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud gave the name of imagination to the mechanism of the transposition from dream thoughts to dream images, latent content to manifest content, in the concern for representability in the dream. Dreams appear to be irrational, but it is not the unconscious which is irrational, it is the mechanisms of the imagination in the dream work that transpose dream thoughts into dream images. The mechanisms which are irrational are the image-making faculty or the imagination, taking place in the unconscious. As Freud described, “the mental activity which may be described as ‘imagination’” is “liberated from the domination of reason and from any moderating control” (116). Dream imagination “makes use of re-

cent waking memories for its building material,” in mimesis and repetition, and “it erects them into structures bearing not the remotest resemblance to those of waking life.” Dream imagination is “without the power of conceptual speech” and has “no concepts to exercise an attenuating influence,” thus being “obliged to paint what it has to say pictorially.”

Dreams have “no means at their disposal for representing these logical relations between the dream-thoughts” (347), rational unconscious thought, or for representing logical relations between conscious thoughts, the relations created by syntactical rules. Thinking does not occur in the manifest content of the dream. Diachronic sequences, as they are understood in conscious or discursive reason, may be compressed into synchronic events or images, in condensation, or they may be fragmented, or reversed, in displacement. Condensation and displacement, the mechanisms of imagination, are responsible for the fact that dream images do not correspond to conscious reason, and cause the dream to be seen as a distortion of reason, while the dream has no intention of communicating anything.

The principal categories of Lacanian psychoanalysis in the structuring of the psyche are the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. The Imaginary (*imaginaire*) refers to perceived or imagined images in conscious and unconscious thought. The Symbolic (*symbolique*) refers to the signifying order, signifiers, in language, which determine the subject. It is the relation between the Imaginary and Symbolic in conscious and unconscious thought which is the core of Lacanian psychoanalysis. The Real (*réel*) is that which is neither Imaginary nor Symbolic in conscious or unconscious thought, and which is inaccessible to psychoanalysis. It is only proposed as an algebraic concept, as it can not even be conceived, but which exists as an absence in the symbolic order (language) in the same way that the unconscious exists as an absence in conscious thought.

Architecture is always a reflection of the psychological make-up of the human subject, because it involves both form, as it is perceived in various ways, and the organization of form which corresponds to functional necessity, or to conscious reason. The construction of the perceived image, in conscious and unconscious thought, and the role that the image plays in both language and reason, is the subject of both architectural design and Lacanian psychoanalysis. The language of architectural composition is a meta-language in relation to language itself, and shares its basic structure.

Like the spoken or written language, the language of architecture combines the image or form with its organization and insertion into a syntax. The

important issues in architectural composition are then the way in which the image or form is experienced and incorporated into language, and the way in which the language or organizational syntax influences how the image or form is experienced. These are issues which can be addressed through Lacanian psychoanalysis. The writing of architecture, the organizational act, can be represented in the trace of the writing, in the sense of a signification which is not immediately present, but which can reveal the inner structure of the writing, that is, specifically, in Lacanian terms, the presence of the unconscious in conscious discourse. The basis of such a dialectic is the relation between the Imaginary and Symbolic, between perception and language. In psychoanalysis the relation is revealed most clearly in the dream, which is the “royal road to the unconscious.”

The trace in the writing of architecture can reveal the intersection of conscious discourse on the part of the unconscious. The impossibility of a representational object or a representational reality is given by the structure of the human psyche in Lacanian psychoanalysis; it is given by the definition of conscious thought in relation to the unconscious, in the complete constitution of the subject. The intersection between the unconscious and conscious discourse results in a variety of effects exhibited by the subject, which are effects that can be incorporated into architecture, such as vacillation and instability, and the presence of scotomata and lacunae, and linguistic features such as catachreses and ellipses. All of these are present in the speaking subject as traces of the presence of an unconscious which is inaccessible to the conscious subject.

The fragmentary and interrupted subject of Lacanian discourse is the subject which reveals the presence of the unconscious in language, in the dialectic of the Imaginary and Symbolic, beginning with the mirror stage, in which the subject is formed in relation to both the images which it perceives and the language in which it is inserted. The Imaginary is seen by Lacan as being prior to the Symbolic in the formation of the psyche. The formation of the Imaginary occurs during what Lacan calls the “mirror stage,” when a child between six and eighteen months old is able to identify itself as the image that it is looking at in a mirror. The role of the Imaginary in the psyche, the formation of conscious and unconscious images, thus involves from the beginning the intervention and participation of the perceiving subject in the world around it; image formation always involves the role of the ego, the self-perception of the subject, which Lacan shows, as opposed to the individual, is determined by the Symbolic, the function of language. The forms

or images which are perceived in architecture are always given to the subject in perception in a Symbolic matrix, which might be seen as the Other of Lacan, the matrix of language and laws into which the subject is inserted, which is unperceived by the subject.

The Imaginary and the Symbolic are always interwoven, but while they are always interwoven, the experience of the mirror stage also constitutes a fundamental disjunction between the two, which can never be overcome, and which causes a disjunction or gap within the subject, as it is constituted by the image and the word. This is the fundamental problem of Lacanian psychoanalysis, which makes it especially important for artistic representation, which is always founded on the dialectic between what is seen and what is thought.

The ego is formed in the Imaginary image of the self in the mirror stage prior to the development of the subject in relation to the Other, which is defined by Lacan as the network of identifications which determine the subject in interpersonal relations. The image of the self formed by the mirror must be reconciled with the image of the self formed in relation to language and other people, which is an impossible reconciliation, and stages a dialectical process, related to the Hegelian dialectic between subjective and objective spirit, or perception and reason, but without resolution. Perception, according to Hegel, as opposed to sense-certainty, “takes what is present to it as a universal” (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 111).<sup>7</sup> The act of perceiving is “the movement of pointing-out” in combination with the movement of the event of the object perceived, as in Zeno’s paradox. Perception is already a dialectic of the Imaginary and Symbolic, the image and the conceptual framework in which the image is perceived. In the movement from subjective to objective spirit, that which is perceived becomes identified with the conceptual process of the perceiving subject, which for Lacan is the identification of the Imaginary and Symbolic as ego-formation and language.

The development of the child in the mirror-stage is the passage from behavior based on object identifications which is not regulated by any kind of conscious logic to the insertion of the subject into the Symbolic Order, language, where the object identifications are reconciled with conceptual structures. The Imaginary, the experience and formation of images, is prior to the Symbolic order, and thus neither depends on the self-identification of the subject as a body, nor on a conceptual or linguistic order. It does not depend on any definition of the subject as the origin of a particular point of view or the determining factor in the conceptual construction of that which is per-

ceived. It is the subject which is determined by the Imaginary, rather than the Imaginary which is determined by the subject, in the same way that it is the subject which is determined by language, rather than the subject which determines language, as Lacan shows in the *glissement* of the signifying chain.

The images of the Imaginary, as experienced by the pre-mirror stage infant, are not subject to a hierarchy or dependent on a particular point of view. They are “visible without their visibility being the result of the act of any particular observer, to be, as it were, always already seen,”<sup>8</sup> in the words of Fredric Jameson. The images are independent of thought as pure perception, but such pure perception cannot be conceptualized, because it is prior to thought. It is thus immediately an *archê*, an originary state prior to differentiation. In that way the Real can be seen to be contained in the Imaginary. Differentiation occurs in the object identification of the mirror stage, in a gestalt projection of the self, still prior to language. Objects in the Imaginary lack the exteriority of specular or symbolic objects; they are only singular, and have no relation to other objects. They are not doubled, so they do not contain alterity or differentiation, which are products of the conceptual order of the Symbolic.

In the mirror stage, objects gain exteriority and alterity, and become invested with the self; beginning with the mirror stage, all perceived objects are seen in relation to the body of the perceiver. The body of the perceiver is thus differentiated from all other bodies or objects in perception, and the distinction between the perceiver and the perceived is established. One goal in Lacan’s concept of the gaze, as a structure of vision, is the dialectical synthesis, or re-unification, of the perceiver and the perceived. The differentiation between the perceiver and the perceived is cemented by language, or the Symbolic order, which absorbs the gestalt object identification of the mirror stage and makes impossible the undifferentiated interiority of the perceived object in the Imaginary. The differentiation is primarily manifest in the contrast between the unity of the image of the body in relation to perception and the multiplicity of perception itself. The unified body image as formed in the mirror stage does not conform to the experience of perception as established in the Imaginary, and it transforms it, in a conflicting manner.

The new image of perception in the mirror stage results in the projection of the self into that which is perceived, that is, the ego, which is found in the dream image and fantasy, phantasm, or hallucination as well. As a result of that projection, the subject is also self-perceived as fragmented, or the opposite of that which is formed by the mirror stage; the self-perception of the

fragmentation of the subject is the result of the insertion of the subject into the Symbolic, and the conflicts arising between the Imaginary and Symbolic. In the Symbolic, the subject sees its gestalt image as a defense against that fragmentation, and thus the differentiation between the perceiver and perceived is preserved. According to Lacan in *Écrits, A Selection*, “the *mirror stage* is a drama whose internal dynamic shifts from insufficiency to anticipation—a drama that, for its subject, caught in the mirage of spatial identification, vehiculates a whole series of fantasies which range from a fragmented image of the body to what we will term an orthopedic form of its unity, and to that ultimate assumption of the armature of an alienating identity [ego], whose rigid structure will mark the subject’s entire mental development.”<sup>9</sup> The interiority of the object in perception is no longer reconcilable with the exteriority of the object, as the interiority of the subject is no longer reconcilable with the exteriority of the specular image. “Thus the rupture of the circle in which *Innenwelt* and *Umwelt* are united generates that inexhaustible attempt to square it in which we reap the ego,” which is the Lacanian dialectic.

The split between the object and the type-form in architecture corresponds to a split between the Imaginary ego and the Symbolic in the subject, between sense experience and language. The division of the object from itself is the division of the subject from itself, a subject which reinforces its identity in the Symbolic (language, type-form) by perpetuating its identity with the other (object) by which it is objectified in the Symbolic. The dialectic of object and type-form in architecture is the dialectic of the Imaginary and Symbolic in the divided subject which cannot find its identity in the mutually perpetuating and nullifying construct of language in being.

The Symbolic order, language, constitutes a self-alienation of the subject in the disjunction between the perceiver and the perceived, and in the disjunction between the ego of the subject, formed in the specular image, and the experience of perception. Such self-alienation re-introduces the Hegelian conception of the self-alienation of reason in consciousness into the definition of language in the formation of the subject from structural linguistics. In the *Phenomenology*, “desire and the self-certainty obtained in its gratification, are conditioned by the object, for self-certainty comes from superseding this other: in order that the supersession take place, there must be this other” (175). The self-certainty of reason, the ego, comes from its identification with the object in perception, as a result of mirror-stage development, posterior to the Imaginary. The other is the absence of the object in perception,

thus the absence of reason. It is not possible for reason to exist to itself in consciousness without the perceived presence of non-reason, because of the complicity of the Imaginary and Symbolic.

According to Johann Gottlieb Fichte in *The Science of Knowledge*, “the self posits itself as determined by the not-self.”<sup>10</sup> This can be seen to occur in mirror-stage development, in the disjunction between experience and identity, and is solidified in language. According to Hegel, in that reason in perception is given to self-consciousness as a double negative, the negation of a negation, as for Lacan, reason in self-consciousness cannot overcome the other; the Symbolic subject in language cannot overcome the Imaginary subject in its identification prior to language. The self-alienation of reason in being continually reproduces the other, the Imaginary, in that it might be overcome by reason. The continuous process of reproduction is desire. As reason returns to itself from the other in the dialectic, it discovers itself as simultaneously “absolute negativity” and “infinite self-affirmation,” as described by Hegel. Reason (Symbolic) is seen as the self-affirmation of absolute negativity (Imaginary), the perpetuation of the externality of language in the void of being which language creates, which is given by the mirror-stage transformation in object identification prior to the acquisition of language, and which is given by both the arbitrary nature of the relation between signifier and signified in language in structural linguistics, and the resistance of the signified to the signifier in the science of the letter of Lacan.

According to Lacan in *Seminar I*, “if we must define that moment in which man becomes human, we would say that it is at that instant when, as minimally as you like, he enters into a symbolic relationship.”<sup>11</sup> The subject is formed when language is gained, and the subject is defined in the beginning as self-alienation, the self-alienation of reason as given by language, as manifest in the representation of architecture. The subject has no relation with the Imaginary, because there is no subject in the Imaginary, only a perceiving individual, but the Imaginary is absorbed into the constitution of the subject, as the other of reason in language. The Imaginary is seen as a kind of lost synthesis, or lost totality, which is the object of desire in reason to rediscover, as formulated by Hegel. The disjunction or self-alienation of the subject is preserved in language use, and in architectural representation. The subject is divided when it enters into language in the form of a representative pronoun. As in any sign, the signifier resists the signified from crossing the bar of signification.

The signifier “I,” *das Ich*, becomes representative of or a substitute for



the subject, while the subject disappears under the bar. The substitutive nature of the signifier is reinforced by its participation in the signifying chain. The subject is excluded from the signifying chain at that point that it is represented in it, as the signifier represents the subject for another signifier. The subject is thus divided in language, and is represented by its own absence, which is the elided signified, which is the presence of the unconscious. The subject is defined by language, which at the same time assures its non-being, thus resulting in the Hegelian dialectic of desire in reason. The presence of the unconscious as absence in conscious thought is also given by language, and so for Lacan the unconscious is constituted by language as well. The distinction between *la langue* and *la parole* is the distinction between the unconscious and conscious subject, and the structure of its division. The unconscious appears through the primary repression of language.

As the subject is inserted into language, it is inserted into the Other, which is the shared system of laws, customs, beliefs, etc. which language produces, and which further alienates the subject from itself, as that which is both produced by those laws and excluded from them. If the unconscious is structured by language, according to Lacan, then the unconscious is the discourse of the Other, as *la langue* of language, the underlying matrix of expression. The subject is subverted in its subordination to the signifier in language, which is a function of the Other, which is the discourse of the unconscious. It is the unconscious, as absence in the signifying chain of language, to which the subject is subverted, the subject as it is known to itself as represented in language.

The dialectic of architecture as building and architecture as idea is the dialectic of the Imaginary and Symbolic in the subject. “What defines architecture is the continuous dislocation of dwelling, in other words, to dislocate what in fact locates....So for architecture to be, it must resist what it must in fact do. In order to be, it must always resist being,” as described by Peter Eisenman.<sup>12</sup> As Schelling expressed in *The Philosophy of Art*, architecture can only express an idea as in language when its forms become independent of their function in self-contradiction. Architecture must be “simultaneously becoming independent of itself,” and it must be a “free imitation of itself” (*The Philosophy of Art*, § 107).<sup>13</sup> As soon as architecture “attains through appearance both actuality and utility without intending these *as* utility and as actuality,” as soon as the division is made between the Symbolic and the Imaginary, then it is “free and independent art.” Architecture is able to discover its identity, as subject, in the distinction between the Imaginary and Symbol-

ic, in the distinction between object and type-form, and in the distinction between its presence as form and its Other.

The concept of the Other is inherited by Lacan from the structural anthropology of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who sees society as “an ensemble of symbolic systems, in the first rank of which would be language, marriage-rules, economic relations, art, science, religion,”<sup>14</sup> placing importance on interpersonal relations in the definition of the subject in society. Lévi-Strauss concludes that “symbols are more real than what they symbolize” and “the signifier precedes and determines the signified” (“Introduction à l’Oeuvre de Marcel Mauss” in Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et Anthropologie*, p. xxxii); social life, and therefore the subject, are determined by a system of rules, namely the social signifiers. Lévi-Strauss’ theory corresponds to the structural linguistics of Saussure in that, in *Totemism*, the “systems do not consist of a sequence of one-to-one relations between terms (human groups and natural species), but rather of two parallel series of *differences* between terms,” in the words of Peter Dews in *Logics of Disintegration* (p. 75).

The Other (language, law, systems of rules) assumes predominance over nature and instinct in human behavior, as reflected in architecture. Lacan reflects the position of Lévi-Strauss when he writes in “The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis”: “The primordial Law is therefore that which in regulating marriage ties superimposes the kingdom of culture on that of a nature abandoned to the law of mating.... This law, then, is clearly revealed as identical with an order of language.”<sup>15</sup> The primordial law is no longer a myth of origin, but language itself. For Lacan, though, the Symbolic order is ultimately irreducible to human experience; the subject is found to be alienated within it, while it is being caused by it. The human being is left with no subjectivity, in the inaccessibility of the linguistic order of the Other in unconscious thought. In *Seminar II*, language is “constituted in such a way as to found us in the Other, while radically preventing us from understanding him.”<sup>16</sup>

The so-called L-schema of Lacan is a diagram which represents the resulting quadrature of the subject: the ego, the unconscious subject, the Other, and the other (as in the other person, or object in perception). The relation between the subject as ego and the other is an Imaginary relation, a relation of unmediated identification in conscious desire, but that relation, in the quadrature of the subject, is determined by the relation between the unconscious subject and the Other, or language, as the surface aspect of the experience of architecture might be determined by the deep aspect. In a profound

way, individual conscious activity is shown to be determined by predetermined unconscious activity, and the subject is shown to be a product of language. The desiring relation of the ego to the other is seen as *parole*, or enunciation, individual speech in language, which is propelled by the ego as representative of the subject in language, in the use of the pronoun as signifier. *Parole* is intersected by *langue* in language in the same way that the conscious desire of the speaking subject as ego is intersected by the discourse of the Other in the unconscious.

The ego projects itself onto the other in desire, and it seeks a reinforcement of itself in a response from the other. In *Écrits, A Selection*, the “subject always imposes on the other in the radical diversity of modes of relation, which range from the invocation of speech to the most immediate sympathy, an imaginary form which bears the seal, or the superimposed seals, of the experiences of powerlessness through which this form was modeled in the subject: and this form is nothing other than the ego.”<sup>17</sup> Beyond the identification of the projection of the ego as representative of the subject in language, it is impossible to know what the significance of the desire of the ego for the other is for the subject, or for any definition of human behavior. The ego is an Imaginary ego, the product of the specular image of the body, but the Imaginary has been stripped of its effect by the Symbolic, by the reformulation and *Spaltung* of the subject through insertion in the mirror experience and the Symbolic order.

The resistance of the ego to the unconscious is the resistance of the signifier to the signified. It is also impossible for the ego to know what the other is, because the other is already constituted by the Symbolic. A relation between two individuals is predicated on the impossibility of them knowing each other in terms other than how they are constituted in the Other. Relationships are mutual reinforcements of egos, reinforcements of the representation by the subject of itself in language, a representation which is false and misleading in relation to the full constitution of the individual. In that perspective, relationships between individuals are based on dissimulation, concealment, deceit, and individuals are separated from each other by the wall of language.

In *Seminar II* of Lacan, the reality of the subject is thus not in the ego, but in the unconscious, and “in the unconscious, excluded from the system of the ego, the subject speaks.”<sup>18</sup> The reality of the subject in the unconscious exceeds the reality of the subject as ego in conscious thought: “If this *I*,” or ego, “is in fact presented to us as a kind of immediate given in the act of re-

flection by which consciousness grasps itself as transparent to itself,” which was the case for Hegel, and even for Freud, according to Lacan, “for all that, nothing indicates that the whole of this reality...would be exhausted by this” (p. 6). The reality beyond language in conscious thought is given by the absences in language, the holes or scotomata, which reveal the existence of language as a comprehensive system of knowledge to be a mirage. Language appears to be so by necessity, otherwise it could not function as representation.

Language is complicit with both consciousness and perception in its representation of the subject as ego, in its totality as that which is represented by language. As Lacan expresses in “Agressivity and Psychoanalysis,” the “theoretical difficulties encountered by Freud seem to me in fact to derive from the mirage of objectification, inherited from classical psychology constituted by the idea of the *perception/consciousness* system,” in which “Freud seems suddenly to fail to recognize the existence of everything that the ego neglects, scotomizes, misconstrues in the sensations that make it react to reality, everything that it ignores, exhausts, and binds in the significations that it receives from language...” (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 22). This is “a surprising *méconnaissance* [misconstruction] on the part of the man who succeeded by the power of his dialectic in forcing back the limits of the unconscious.” The *méconnaissance* is surprising to Lacan because it is Freud himself who draws attention to those misconstructions and scotomata, in the form of jokes, puns, glossolalia, neologisms, slips of the tongue, etc.

Lacan describes the constitution of the ego in language in the essay “The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious.” The diachronic differentiation of signifiers, the *glissement* in the signifying chain in language, the “vector of enunciation,” is intersected by the relation between the elided subject in signification, the signified, and the ego ideal, or the identification of the ego with the Other. This relation is predicated by the Other, the network of signifiers in which the subject is able to form an identity. The point at which the elided subject is identified is the point at which the line of the relation between elided subject and ideal ego is intersected by the vector of enunciation, which occurs retroactively in the signifying chain, in anticipation of signification. “The diachronic function of this anchoring point is to be found in the sentence, even if the sentence completes its signification only with its last term, each term being anticipated in the construction of the others, and, inversely, sealing their meaning by its retroactive effect” (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 303).

The anchoring point of Lacan is the *point de capiton*, in the metaphoric chain, the point at which the bar between the signifier and signified is crossed. The vector of the relation between the elided or barred subject and the ego ideal is an Imaginary vector in the L-schema, a vector rooted in the unconscious, in image identification prior to language, so the crossing of the bar, which is a mythical crossing, occurs along the Imaginary vector. Every act of speech must be supported by a self-conception of the subject in the insertion of the subject into language as ideal ego, but the conception of the subject can never be realized; it is always an expectation, and the subject can only identify itself after the fact of enunciation. “This is a retroversion effect by which the subject becomes at each stage what he was before and announces himself—he will have been—only in the future perfect tense,” according to Lacan (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 306).

This makes it impossible for the subject to recognize itself in language as other than ideal ego, because the subject is in part the elided subject in the *glissement* of signifiers, and only occurs as absence after the fact. “At this point the ambiguity of a failure to recognize [*méconnaissance*] that is essential to knowing myself (*un méconnaître essentiel au me connaître*) is introduced. For, in this ‘rear view’ (*retrovisée*), all that the subject can be certain of is the anticipated image coming to meet him that he catches of himself in his mirror,” the Imaginary vector between the elided subject and the ideal ego, which announces the absence of the subject in language, in crossing the bar between signifier and signified, but bars the subject from its own absence (the unconscious), in not being able to cross the bar at the same time, as in metaphor.

In the absence of the elided subject in language and the barring of it to itself, “it should be noted that a clue may be found in the clear alienation that leaves to the subject the favor of stumbling upon the question of its essence [unconscious], in that he cannot fail to recognize that what he desires,” in the vector of enunciation, along which the desire of the ego for the other flows, “presents itself to him as what he does not want, the form assumed by the negation in which the *méconnaissance* of which he himself is unaware is inserted in a very strange way—a *méconnaissance* by which he transfers the permanence of his desire to an ego that is nevertheless intermittent, and, inversely, protects himself from his desire by attributing to it these very intermittences.” The vector of enunciation intersects with the vector of the relation between the elided subject and the ego ideal, and the result is that in the *glissement* the elided subject cannot be present except at the one moment

of retroactive presence which is connected to the Imaginary, so that otherwise the elided subject can only be represented in the signifier as ego, intermittently in the diachronic process of the signifying chain, and the intermittence itself guarantees the perpetual absence of the elided subject.

The trace in architecture is a presence; it is an index of prior and subsequent movements, and is thus closer to the *point de capiton* of Lacan in the *glissement* of the signifying chain. It is in fact that point at which the retroactive signification of the composition is made present, and the point at which the subject disappears, and the point at which the architectural unconscious is made possible, in its disruption and displacement of the conscious discourse of the architecture. The trace in architecture is actually a form of absence, because it “signifies an action that is in process.” It is the point of absence of the process, the object in place in Zeno’s paradox which makes the motion of the object impossible. It is the point of intersection between the Imaginary and Symbolic, between the object and the idea, which is the location of the subject, which is an impossible location.

The ego of Lacan is formed as a necessary replacement for the elided subject in the structure of language. “Thus the founding drama of the ego...is repeated in miniature as the imaginary dimension of every act of enunciation” (*Logics of Disintegration*, p. 99), in the words of Peter Dews. The subject is divided in language, between conscious and unconscious, signified and signifier, Imaginary and Symbolic, and the result is “the moment of a ‘fading’ or eclipse of the subject that is closely bound up with the *Spaltung* or splitting that it suffers from its subordination to the signifier,” as described by Lacan (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 313). The subject cannot be adequately represented by signifiers in language; non-being cannot be adequately represented by being. It is only in the gap between signifiers, the hole, that the subject is revealed. “It follows that the place of the ‘inter-said’ (*inter-dit*), which is the ‘intra-said’ (*intra-dit*) of a between-two-subjects, is the very place in which the transparency of the classical subject is divided and passes through the effects of ‘fading’ that specify the Freudian subject by its occultation by an even purer signifier...” (p. 299).

The unconscious is found in the space between two subjects, in the space between two signifiers. It is in the gap that the mirage of the ego is revealed as representation, and the unconscious comes forward in the non-being of the subject in representation. The structure of the subject is one of discontinuity; the subject is never always present in language as being, and never always present as non-being. Absence and presence come and go in the *glissement*

of signifiers in language; they are interwoven in an irresoluble dialectic. Absence is made present in the gaps and scotomata, and “these effects lead us to the frontiers at which slips of the tongue and witticisms, in their collusion, become confused, even where elision is so much the more allusive in tracking down presence to its lair...” Freud did not conceive of this relation of the ego to the unconscious in language because he did not have the benefit of Structural Linguistics, the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson, according to Lacan. “‘Geneva 1910’ and ‘Petrograd 1920’ suffice to explain why Freud lacked this particular tool” (p. 298). Lacanian psychoanalysis is predicated on the correspondence between the Freudian unconscious and the concept of the signifier in structural linguistics, a correspondence which corrects a “defect of history” in the progress of the science of the letter. “But this defect of history makes all the more instructive the fact that the mechanisms described by Freud which are those of ‘the primary process’, in which the unconscious assumes its role, correspond exactly to the functions that this school believes determines the most radical aspects of the effects of language, namely metaphor and metonymy,” that is, “the signifier’s effects of substitution and combination on the respectively synchronic and diachronic dimensions in which they appear in discourse.”

The ideal ego, as opposed to the ego, is a product of the mirror stage, formed from the image or *imago* which the infant sees in the mirror, prior to the infant’s insertion into language, the Symbolic, or the Other. The ideal ego is thus an Imaginary ego (*moi*) as opposed to the ego ideal of the speaking subject (*je*). The ego ideal is the primordial form of the speaking ego; it is a subjective ego “before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it in the universal [the concept], its function as subject” (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 2), as Lacan describes in “The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience.” The objectification of the subject in language, in the universal, is the Hegelian transition from the subjective to the objective, which is enacted through perception.

Perception is differentiated from sense-certainty by Hegel in that perception “takes what is present to it as a universal” (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 111). The specular *imago* of the infant is not taken as a universal, because the infant does not have the use of language, so the image is of the subjective subject, as defined by its interiority, as opposed to the objective subject, as defined by its exteriority, its representation in language between signifiers. For Hegel, the differentiated particulars given by perception in reason, which

are products of the dialectic between the universal and particular, Symbolic and Imaginary, are an “essence-less by-play” (687) of self-conscious spirit, the subjective ego ideal, in the same way that for Lacan the participation of the ego in language, as representative of the subject, is an essence-less by-play in the play of differences in the signifying chain. In the *Phenomenology*, “the determinations of this substance are only attributes which do not obtain to self-subsistence” in the same way that the ego as subject in language is an attribute which cannot prevent the disappearance of the subject.

The variable forms of appearance in sense-perception are for Hegel indeterminate and insubstantial, adornments of reality, as in the luminous embroidered veil of Plato in the *Republic* (514), the curtain-wall hanging next to the cave separating the prisoners from a burning fire, which acts as a veil between the finite and the infinite, between the sensible and the intelligible, or for Hegel, between the particular and universal, and for Lacan, between the Imaginary and Symbolic. In the *Phenomenology*, the proliferation of differentiated forms, vanishing shapes in perception, is the “reeling, unconstrained life” (688) of being-for-self, objective spirit, as it would be for ego, signifier, in language. The being-for-self of objects in perception as solidified in the universal, in language, is the negative antithesis of the consciousness of spirit, or the interiority of the ego ideal. Through language, according to Hegel, spirit descends into externality, as for Lacan the Imaginary subject becomes the objectified subject of the Symbolic. Hegel would describe the objectified subject as ego in language as nothing other than the self-confirmation of reason in its negation of the other, what is other to it; it is for Lacan the self-confirmation of conscious thought in its negation of the other, what is other to it, which is the unconscious.

The ideal ego (*Ideal-Ich*, Imaginary) is a form which “situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone,” according to Lacan (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 2). It 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.” When the subject is subsumed into language the Imaginary becomes inaccessible, except in glimpses, which approach the unconscious in language, as presence in absence, but cannot accede to it.

The specular image of the infant is in contrast to prior sense-experience already, before it is conceptualized in the Symbolic, which constitutes an organic discord in the infant as well as an inorganic one. The form of the body



is fixed in the mirror by the infant “in contrast with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him,” movements which are precluded by the structure of language. The movements are constituted by phantoms, phantasms, hallucinations, dreams—the products of mental mechanisms outside of language. The subjective, Imaginary state has none of the completion and inclusiveness of the Symbolic state of the subject; it is ambiguous, self-contradictory, given to a logic other than that of conscious reason. As Freud showed, much of the Imaginary is preserved in the construction of dreams, but as Lacan points out, the Symbolic is always present in dreams, as a product of the immersion of the subject in the Other. Nevertheless, traces of the primordial Imaginary ideal ego are present in dream forms.

The *imago*, the Imaginary image previous to the intersection with the Symbolic, is present in conscious experience as those “veiled faces it is our privilege to see in outline in our daily experience and in the penumbra of symbolic efficacy” (p. 3), that is, as phantoms, shadows, residue of conscious experience, present as absence, as the unconscious in language. The mirror image is the “threshold of the visible world,” because it is the self-image of the body, the ideal ego of the subject, which preserves a remnant of the subject to itself in the conscious experience of perception which organizes the visible world. In architecture, the *imago*, the pre-Symbolic image of object identification, is present as a fragment and a vestige in relation to the Symbolic matrix of conscious reason, in the same way that the *imago* is present in the dream, as a vestige of a mental state prior to consciousness. The composition displays a splitting, a dehiscence, between the Symbolic and the Imaginary, between the world of sense experience and the world ordered by conscious thought, as it is manifest in the subject.

The organic discord in the infant is a sign of an “organic insufficiency in his natural reality” (p. 4), as described by Lacan, as the concept of nature is given in the Symbolic. The relation of the subject to nature is, as a result of the self-consciousness brought about by the specular identification, “altered by a certain dehiscence at the heart of the organism, a primordial discord betrayed by the signs of uneasiness and motor un-coordination of the neo-natal months.” Many organic forms in nature, nuts for example, or pods or anthers (the pollen sac in the stamen in a flower; the release of the pollen, the male sex cells of the flower, is connected with the blooming of the flower [*anthêros*]), have seams built into them to allow for a natural dehiscence, or splitting apart. The formation of the subject is profoundly influence by the primordial dehiscence, and its effect is principally seen in the mirror stage,

where, “caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of fantasies that extends from a fragmented body” is transformed into a “totality that I shall call orthopedic,” which assumes the role of the “armor of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject’s entire mental development.”

Lacan sees the strategy of the quadrature of the subject as a way of breaking out of the fixing of an alienating identity. The alienating identity is sustained by the formation of the ego as signifier in language; the gestalt body image perceived in the mirror stage is the visual equivalent of the ego in language, although that has not been formulated yet, but its formulation develops from the specular image identification, the fixing of a point of view in the visual experience, a fixed point of reference, as well as a totalizing and inclusive body image of the self, in contrast to the unconscious self. The quadrature of the subject is also a means of breaking out of the Hegelian dialectic of the subjective and objective, “the circle of the *Innenwelt* into the *Umwelt*,” given the introduction of the study of the tropic mechanisms of language.

The formation of the *I*, the Imaginary ideal ego in the Symbolic, is symbolized in dreams by a fortress or a stadium, representing its alienating armor. The fortress protects against natural instincts, which threaten the mechanisms of the desire of the subject as constituted by the formation of the ego in language in relation to the other. The subject is constituted by a struggle between the organic and the inorganic. It is the natural instinct of all life to return to the inorganic, according to Wilhelm Worringer, and so the artificial self-construction of the subject in language can be seen as a natural instinct of reason to resist instinct and seek the inorganic. According to Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*, “the morphological law of inorganic nature still echoes like a dim memory in our human organism...every differentiation of organized matter, every development of its most primitive form, is accompanied by a tension, by a longing to revert to this most primitive form.”<sup>19</sup> This is manifest in the process of abstraction in reason, and in geometrical abstraction in the visual arts. “The urge to abstraction finds its beauty in the life-denying inorganic, in the crystalline or, in general terms, in all abstract law and necessity” (p. 4). The geometrical form is seen as the “morphological law of crystalline-inorganic matter” (p. 34).

For Sigmund Freud, “the aim of all life is death,” a reversion to a prior state of inorganic matter. Consciousness itself is seen as a form of life in the psyche which arose from a prior state and which contains an instinct of self-

negation. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the “attributes of life were at some time evoked in inanimate matter by the action of a force of whose nature we can form no conception,” according to Freud. “It may perhaps have been a process similar in type to that which later caused the development of consciousness in a particular stratum of living matter. The tension which then arose in what had hitherto been an inanimate substance endeavored to cancel itself out. In this way the first instinct came into being: the instinct to return to the inanimate state.”<sup>20</sup>

As Lacan puts it, “to the *Urbild* of this formation, alienating as it is by virtue of its capacity to render extraneous, corresponds a peculiar satisfaction deriving from the integration of an original organic disarray, a satisfaction that must be conceived in the dimension of a vital dehiscence that is constitutive of man...” (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 21). There is a desire in reason to preserve the dehiscence, to preserve the impossibility of the reconciliation of the organic and inorganic, the Imaginary and Symbolic, in the desire for the inorganic. Such a desire in reason “makes unthinkable the idea of an environment that is preformed for him, a ‘negative’ libido that enables the Heraclitean notion of discord, which the Ephesian believed to be prior to harmony, to shine once more.” Reason preserves the disjunction between the *Innenwelt* and *Umwelt*, the Imaginary and the Symbolic (the preformed environment), and thus preserves the Imaginary prior to the Symbolic, which is characterized by fragmentation, disruption, ambiguity, and the impossibility of inclusiveness.

The art form which best expresses the dehiscence between the organic and inorganic in reason is architecture, because architectural forms can never contain any quality of the organic or subjective, of the *Innenwelt* of the Imaginary, in the way that poetry or painting can, for example, because architectural forms are always governed by the necessity of function and physical causality. Architecture is purely objective, purely particular. The only way that architecture can achieve the representation of the universal is by representing that which is other to itself in its form, in the same way that conscious reason can only define itself in relation to its other, the absence of reason, for Hegel, and the unconscious, the traces of the Imaginary.

Architecture, in order to be art, must enact the disjunction between the objective and subjective, between the organic and inorganic, which is constitutive of the human subject. Architecture must present the possibility of the precedence of the inorganic to the organic, the crystalline to the organism, and thus it must present the organic as the essence of the inorganic, the sub-

jective as the essence of the objective, the Imaginary as the essence of the Symbolic, the unconscious as the essence of conscious thought. In order to be art, architecture must represent the presence of the unconscious, in its absence, in language. Architectural forms can only be imitations of organic forms in abstraction, which is the formulation of the inorganic within reason; they can never be organic themselves. Architecture always already contains the absence of the organic, as does reason, and in order to be art it must represent the presence of the absence of the organic, the presence of the absence of the unconscious.

It is not by the function of the perception-consciousness system that the ego is formed in the Symbolic, by the function of the self-consciousness of the infant in the mirror stage as a product of perception, because the infant is not yet experiencing perception, as perception is a function of the Symbolic, but by the function of *méconnaissance*, and the function of the mirage of consciousness, which is given by perception in the Symbolic, the self-certainty of the Cartesian *cogito*. The self-certainty of consciousness in the *cogito* prevents the subject from seeing itself as other than the objectified ego in language, and so “this ‘I’ who, in order to admit its facticity to existential criticism, opposes its irreducible inertia of pretenses and *méconnaissances* to the concrete problematic of the realization of the subject...” (p. 15), as Lacan puts it. Such is necessary for the subject to function in the Other, in society as seen as the Symbolic order. The presence of the unconscious is kept as an absence by reason in language.

In its self-definition the Symbolic is self-alienating, as inherited from the ideal ego of the mirror stage, where the specular image immediately presents an other to the self, as the self which is not the self, and the part of the self which is absent from the self. This experience is objectified, as described, in language, and defines the formation of the ego in language, and the relation between the subject and the other. The form of the specular image in the mirror stage “will crystallize in the subject’s internal conflictual tension, which determines the awakening of his desire for the object of the other’s desire...” (p. 19). The desire of the other, as seen in the L-schema, the quadrature of the subject, is the result of the identification of the Symbolic with the other, the search for self-reinforcement, self-reification in the presence of non-being, in intersection between the unconscious subject and the Other, an intersection which crystallizes the Imaginary disjunction between the subject and the double of the subject in the mirror, the primordial dehiscence between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt* which the L-schema is designed to re-

veal and contextualize.

Sigmund Freud suggested the dialectic of the Imaginary and Symbolic in his formulation of the perception-consciousness system in *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, *The Ego and the Id*, and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. That which is accessible to conscious thought in the unconscious is what Freud calls the *preconscious*, that which is capable of becoming conscious. That which becomes conscious, from the preconscious, is not sustained in consciousness, but is rather only temporary and fleeting. There is no such thing as a permanent duration of consciousness or conscious thought; it is periodic, undulating, sporadic. The Freudian unconscious is revealed diachronically in conscious thought.

Conscious thoughts are given to the subject by perception. In *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, “the process of something becoming conscious is above all linked with the perceptions which our sense organs receive from the external world.”<sup>21</sup> This is a quality of the Imaginary, as occurs in the mirror stage. The consciousness of the infant to itself is given by perception; consciousness is a construct, as is reason, of perception. But Freud continues, “there is an added complication through which internal processes in the ego may also acquire the quality of consciousness. This is the work of the function of speech, which brings material in the ego into a firm connection with mnemonic residues of visual, but more particularly of auditory, perceptions” (pp. 34–35). From the beginning the ego is seen as being split—there is an ego given by perception in consciousness (rooted in the Imaginary, as it were), and an ego given by language, rooted in the Symbolic. In consciousness the two egos are indistinguishable, as language is a product of perception, and works in conjunction with perception to actualize consciousness. Consciousness occurs through both thought and perception, and Freud calls the device which distinguishes between the two “reality-testing.” Such a device is intended to distinguish between actual perception and dreams, fantasies and hallucinations, but the distinctions are not always readily apparent.

In *The Ego and the Id*, the ego is defined as the organization of mental processes, and the unconscious is defined as that which is repressed in consciousness. Consciousness is attached to the ego; in the mirror stage it is a necessary basis for the ego, and in the Imaginary the ego becomes a necessary basis for consciousness. The difference between the Imaginary and the Symbolic is in the relationship to consciousness; the Symbolic is the unconscious, or that part of the unconscious available in the preconscious, which is brought to the conscious level through perception in the Imaginary. The Im-

aginary is a function of the conscious ego, which is created by reason in language. The Symbolic, while it is the externalization of the subject, is that which affects the subject from within language. As the subject develops in language, unconscious thought becomes dominated by the stimuli of language as opposed to visual stimuli, and the Imaginary becomes indistinguishable from the Symbolic to conscious thought. The Imaginary is repressed in the unconscious, except as its presence is made known as absence in the gaps in consciousness.

The goal of psychoanalysis, for Freud, is to fill in those gaps in consciousness in order to have access to unconscious processes. In *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, “we have discovered technical methods of filling up the gaps in the phenomena of our consciousness, and we make use of those methods just as a physicist makes use of experiment. In this manner we infer a number of processes which are in themselves ‘unknowable’ and interpolate them in those that are conscious to us” (p. 83). As for Lacan, the unconscious is inaccessible, and can only be known in absence, in the gaps in consciousness. The gaps in the phenomena of consciousness can be seen as the holes and scotomata of Lacan, “everything that the ego neglects, scotomizes, misconstrues in the sensations that make it react to reality, everything that it ignores, exhausts, and binds in the significations that it receives from language” (*Écrits, A Selection*, p. 22).

It was Freud’s failure, according to Lacan, that he did not recognize the holes and scotomata in reason itself, in the perception-consciousness system, as it is given by language, as opposed to consciousness alone, given its connection with language and perception. The concept of the unconscious is the same for both Freud and Lacan, though, as that which is unknowable, and revealed in absence, and the science of discovering the principles of the unconscious is the same for Freud as any other science, the subject of which is reality, which “will always remain ‘unknowable,’” but which is reconstructed through scientific hypothesis. As in psychoanalysis, “the yield brought to life in scientific work from our primary sense perceptions will consist in an insight into connections and dependent relations which are present in the external world,” which can be “reliably produced or reflected in the internal world of our thought and a knowledge of which enables us to ‘understand’ something in the external world, to foresee it and possibly to alter it” (*An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 83). As for Lacan, there is a primordial disjunction between reason and that which is perceived, and it is that disjunction which becomes the basis of exploration in Lacanian psychoanalysis,

through the methodology of the science of the letter, as formulated in the dialectic of the Imaginary and Symbolic.

The disjunction between reason and that which is perceived is certainly present in the Platonic Idea, and is a basic tenet of metaphysics, refined through the psychoanalytic science. For Freud, “the data of conscious self-perception, which alone were at its disposal, have proved in every respect inadequate to fathom the profusion and complexity of the processes of the mind, to reveal their interconnections and so to recognize the determinants of their disturbances” (p. 82). Lacan’s project is to widen the framework of conscious self-perception as much as possible, through the study of the functions of language as the mechanism of conscious self-perception itself, thus revealing the limitations of the framework at the same time, and of understanding unconscious processes through those very limitations. Freud continues, “in our science as in the others the problem is the same: behind the attributes (qualities) of the object under examination which are presented directly to our perception, we have to discover something else which is more independent of the particular receptive capacity of our sense organs and which approximates more closely to what may be supposed to be the real state of affairs.”

Lacan’s revision of this position in psychoanalysis, which is based in metaphysical philosophy, is that, despite the disjunction between reason and that which is perceived, which is maintained by Lacan, that “something else” which we discover, independent of sense perception, is equally deceptive, because it is given by conscious reason, which is a product of perception in relation to language, and it is very limited in its ability to approximate a real state of affairs. The real state of affairs in psychoanalysis is found in between reason and reality, in the interaction between the two, and in between perception and consciousness, in which is revealed the possibility of the unconscious. That which is in between perception and consciousness is that which defines and differentiates the Imaginary and the Symbolic, which can be revealed in architecture.

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17. Jacques Lacan, *Ecrits* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966), p. 346, quoted in Peter Dews, *Logics of Disintegration*, p. 78.
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