

"Meaning indicates the direction
toward which it fails." — Jacques Lacan



LACAN AND MEANING

SEXUATION, DISCOURSE THEORY, AND TOPOLOGY
IN THE AGE OF HERMENEUTICS

WILLIAM J. URBAN

What is the essential nature of meaning?

This book answers by examining interpretive theories from the past and present. It finds that an historical struggle with meaning has been underway since the Reformation, a struggle that reaches crisis proportions in the 20th century. On the one hand, the crisis is mollified by Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology, which argues that we are always already in a meaningful relationship to the objects of the world. On the other hand, the crisis is exacerbated when phenomenology, structuralism, and aesthetic theory directly make meaning into an object of study.

These historical developments culminate with the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, whose non-hermeneutical phenomenology detours a cause of meaning said to be closely linked to the core of subjectivity. Intriguingly, Lacan's work reveals meaning to be sexual in nature. By integrating his notion of sexual difference with his work in discourse theory and topology, this book demonstrates how the subject's struggle with meaning can be suspended.

William J. Urban holds a PhD in Humanities from York University.



“Meaning indicates the direction
toward which it fails.” - Jacques Lacan



Lacan and Meaning

SEXUATION, DISCOURSE THEORY, AND TOPOLOGY
IN THE AGE OF HERMENEUTICS

WILLIAM J. URBAN

What is the essential nature of meaning?

This book answers by examining interpretive theories from the past and present. It finds that an historical struggle with meaning has been underway since the Reformation, a struggle that reaches crisis proportions in the 20th century. On the one hand, this crisis is mollified by Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology, which argues that we are always already in a meaningful relationship to the objects of the world. On the other hand, this crisis is exacerbated when phenomenology, structuralism, and aesthetic theory directly make meaning into an object of study.

These historical developments culminate with the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, whose non-hermeneutical phenomenology delimits a cause of meaning said to be closely linked to the core of subjectivity. Intriguingly, Lacan's work reveals meaning to be sexual in nature. By integrating his notion of sexual difference with his work in discourse theory and topology, this book demonstrates how the subject's struggle with meaning can be suspended.

William J. Urban holds a PhD in Humanities from York University.



LACAN AND MEANING

LACAN AND MEANING

SEXUATION, DISCOURSE THEORY, AND TOPOLOGY
IN THE AGE OF HERMENEUTICS

WILLIAM J. URBAN



NEW YORK

Copyright © 2015 William J. Urban
All rights reserved.

ISBN: 978-1-5303-4550-2

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Part I From the One to the Other: The Historical Struggle with Meaning	7
Chapter 1 Petitions to Meaning	11
1.1 Hermeneutics	12
1.2 Hermeneutical Phenomenology	17
1.3 Hermeneutics (Redux)	23
Chapter 2 Withdrawals from Meaning	31
2.1 Phenomenology	32
2.2 Structuralism	38
2.3 Aesthetic Theory	43
Chapter 3 Lacan on Meaning	51
3.1 Imaginary Lacan	52
3.2 Symbolic Lacan	57
3.3 Real Lacan	66
Part II Sexuation, Discourse Theory and Topology: The Suspension of Meaning	77
Chapter 4 Derivation of the Formulae of Sexuation	81
4.1 The Aristotelian Hermeneutical Circle?	82
4.2 From the Aristotelian to the Lacanian Logical Square	90
4.3 Additional Interpretive Consequences of Sexuation	113
Chapter 5 Sexuated Turns and the Space of Meaning	137
5.1 Counting Nothings in the Land of Nyania	138
5.2 The Breakdown of the Meaning-relation	147
5.3 The Suspension of Meaning	160
Bibliography	187
Index	195

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1:	The <i>Vel</i> of Alienation	68
Figure 3.2:	Separation	69
Figure 3.3:	Retroactive Trajectory of Meaning	72
Figure 3.4:	Definition of a Signifier and the Places of Discourse	72
Figure 3.5:	The Master's and the Analyst's Discourse	73
Figure 3.6:	The Hysteric's and the University Discourse	75
Figure 4.1:	The Classical Aristotelian Logical Square (modified)	84
Figure 4.2:	The Lacanian Logical Square	96
Figure 4.3:	A Hyperbolic Function	111
Figure 5.1:	The Lacanian Logical Square and the Four Discourses (Combined)	148
Figure 5.2:	The Topology of the Lacanian Logical Square	162
Figure 5.3:	The Suspension of Meaning	182

Love can be seen as the answer, but nobody bleeds for the dancer.

—Ronnie James Dio

INTRODUCTION

The end of my labours is come. All that I have written appears to me as so much straw after the things that have been revealed to me.

—St Thomas Aquinas

I mean. These two words are frequently heard today at the beginning of one's speech. So frequently in fact that most people pay them no mind. This phenomenon, however, is quite curious. Whether spoken on TV or radio talk shows, in the halls of academia or in private conversations, these words do not usually flow seamlessly into those which follow. It is much more likely that a brief intervening pause will ensue before a chain of words is abruptly taken up anew. In verbatim transcripts such a pause would be marked with the elliptic '...' to indicate that perhaps a false start has occurred. Or else to indicate that one's turn to speak has arrived. In which case the initial utterance seems to function as part of the pause itself, as a stalling tactic effectively equivalent to the equally ubiquitous *um* and *ah*. Regardless of whatever reading we give this phenomenon, from the perspective of the attentive onlooker the speaker appears momentarily hung up. Almost as if whatever is to be said somehow pends for the speaker who, for his part, is vaguely aware that more time will be needed for a full articulation. Yet the conscientious speaker would also recognize that whatever is to be said has somehow already happened, as if it zoomed ahead on its own and put him in the position of having to play catch-up. Given this wavering between a not yet and a too late, the question immediately arises: what is the essential nature of this entity – commonly called meaning – which simultaneously places the speaking subject both ahead and behind it?

Phrasing the question this way already presupposes that meaning has the status of an object to which the subject may square off. Undeniably scholars long ago had unwavering faith that truthful meaning was embedded within the pages of Scripture and/or the manuscripts of the ancients. But far from being strictly a thing of the past, this continues to be the most natural way of schematizing the relation the subject strikes with the text. While duly compensating for the current ideological climate which eschews notions of truth and essence, it remains the case that today's scholar similarly treats meaning as 'over there.' His task accordingly involves employing interpretive tools to release meaning hidden deep within the recesses of the text.

There is, however, a fundamentally different approach pursued by certain scholars of the humanities. Its origins date back to the beginning of the second quarter of the last century. For these scholars meaning is not so much an object as it is a substance or medium within which the subject is immersed while engaging with texts and other objects. In stark contrast to the older approach which operates as if a gap exists between the subject and meaning, here the subject is deemed to be always already a meaningful subject. Yet this does not imply that the objective quality of meaning is thereby lost. For the claim made by these scholars is that an even greater objectivity is achieved by directing attention to meaning *qua* medium. Indeed these two approaches to meaning are both to be commended for rejecting the commonplace idea that meaning is entirely relative and cannot be understood as objective in any sense.

Given these two fundamentally different conceptions of meaning before us today, which is closer to the truth? At first glance the traditional conception appears rather naïve, overlooking how the very pursuit of meaning *qua* object is itself a meaningful project for the subject. Yet the problem with the relatively newer conception is that it downplays the crucial factor of subjectivity in questions of meaning, precisely the factor involuntarily captured whenever meaning shifts from a noun to a verb to which the subject's I is closely (yet not identically) aligned: *I mean*. Of course answering in this fashion is only to critique the one by the other. But it does serve to remind us that when it comes to fundamental questions, the field within which they are raised often appears complete. This is true in the case of meaning, as meaning clearly turns in upon itself. Initially functioning as the subject of a question, it somehow ends up constituting the very field in which this question is entertained. Ultimately the very option before us today is nothing if not a meaningful option. Resigning oneself to this fact places one in the growing company of those scholars favoring the newer conception. From this perspective a vote cast in the older direction is grossly negligent, overlooking how the newer conception enjoys logical precedence despite having arrived much later on the historical scene.

There are consequences to our increasing acknowledgment of this precedence. Generally speaking, it is largely because meaning is now conceivable as an *a priori* substance within which the subject always already dwells that today we are everywhere swamped with meaning, overburdened with it, weighed down by it. Where once scholarship in the humanities aimed for singular points of truth without losing sight of the universal, it has become increasingly *verboten* to even raise such questions let alone strive for them. It seems that only a further dissemination of meaning will now do, a condition easily met by simply declaring that a new context has been discovered for such and such a textual object and then proceeding to interpret accordingly. The overall result has been a proliferation of interpretive scholarship from almost every conceivable angle. But more is not necessarily better and unfortunately much of the scholarship

pursued along these lines has amounted to little more than self-indulgent displays of how *I mean*.

If it is agreed that the newly revealed *a priori* dimension to meaning makes it impossible to revert to an earlier time when meaning could be treated simply as an external object and further that this has undesirably led to today's tendency to celebrate the overproduction of meaning, how is one to proceed? Do the conceptions of meaning *qua* object and meaning *qua* medium form our ultimate horizon? It is the contention of the present study that there is a 'beyond' to this horizon and that historically the first explorations of this beyond-of-meaning roughly date from the origin of the newer conception of meaning. It is further contended that this exploration culminates in the thought of Jacques Lacan whose late work delimits a radical possibility. This possibility does not concern a hitherto unknown third conception of meaning. Nor does it require us to necessarily disagree that these two conceptions of meaning completely exhaust the field of meaningful possibilities. Rather, what Lacan makes possible is *the suspension of the very field of meaning itself*. Motivated by the belief that breaking free of meaning is a truthful event for the subject, this study offers a demonstration of how this is theoretically accomplished.

A general introduction to the two parts of this study is as follows. More detailed introductions with breakdowns of chapters and sections will be found at the beginning of each part and each chapter.

Part I serves in three main capacities. Firstly, it functions as a review of historical thought on meaning. As meaning is not an established scholarly discipline, the approach has been to select and discuss leading scholars of both the past and present who have significantly theorized on the subject. They have been organized into the established scholarly disciplines of hermeneutics, phenomenology, structuralism and aesthetic theory. Secondly, the review of existing scholarship provides a rationale for the Lacanian undertaking of Part II which directly addresses the problematic of Part I. For the review reveals that an historical struggle with meaning has been underway since the Reformation and reaches near crisis proportions in the 20th century. This struggle is particularly evident in hermeneutics. It is during its long history that the two conceptions of meaning come at odds. But as hermeneuts do not address the very space of meaning itself, they can only resolve this struggle in meaningful ways. Phenomenologists, structuralists and aesthetic theorists fare much better as they take up this space for examination. Yet they do so rather indirectly and thus also fail to address the crucial dimension at stake. It is Lacan who first breaches the dimension in question. Through his delimitation of the nonsensical *objet a*, he successfully identifies the very cause of meaning. But there has been little attempt in Lacanian psychoanalysis to leverage such insight for the expressed purpose of systematically theorizing how the subject's hermeneutical pursuit of meaning is effectively suspended whenever *objet a* is truthfully encountered. By directly addressing the space of meaning via topology in Part II, this deficit is

thereby corrected. Its development can accordingly be viewed as a response to and outcome of the historical struggle with meaning. Lastly, the review is additionally designed to position the reader to best appreciate the proposed re-conception of meaningful space. Important terminology, concepts and theoretical schemas are introduced as they arise during the review of historical scholarship. Their initial discussion within this limited context nevertheless provides an adequate foundation for understanding the subsequent part of the study which submits these elements to more intensive analysis and development.

Part II forms the *work* of the present study. As a psychoanalyst Lacan is not primarily a theorist of meaning. But the modest number of incidental statements he does make throughout the three periods of his career in no way prevents one from picking up this fallen fruit and articulating three corresponding Lacanian theories of meaning. This articulation is made in Chapter 3 of Part I. What is additionally developed in Part II is a highly structured model that attempts to capture an approach to meaning that is faithful to the subversive efforts of Lacan's third period. Imagine a square with two sides where one side harbors the hermeneutical circle of meaning while the other its potential suspension point. Just such a square is rigorously constructed over the course of two chapters from three major building blocks: Lacan's four formulae of sexuation, his theory of the four discourses and his work in topology. These three components of late-Lacan's work are amalgamated and taken in directions which deviate from the way they were originally presented and from the way they are usually exploited today. Fittingly, these chapters primarily focus on Lacan's texts from the early 1970s where he endeavors to inscribe the psychoanalytic notion of sexual difference into logical notation. Particularly relevant are those texts where this notion is articulated in unexpected ways, as in the case of *L'étourdit* where this is done via the manipulation of topological figures. Also pertinent to this undertaking is Aristotle's *Organon*, which is examined in some detail as Lacan originally derived his formulae of sexuation by supplementing the Aristotelian logical system with modern logic. As well, the recent commentaries by Guy Le Gaufey and Christian Fierens are critical to this undertaking and are at times taken up quite closely.

While it is true that the development of Part II is very much positioned as a response to and outcome of the historical struggle with meaning, it should also be appreciated how it nevertheless dictates to a large extent the employment and understanding of those scholarly disciplines actually reviewed in Part I. Concisely said, while it may be the case that Part I begets Part II, the latter embodies the entire trajectory which led up to it. Despite how this gives the impression that the present study is a self-enclosed field entirely removed from any and all factors of subjectivity, this is simply not the case. Even here the subject counts. However, this is not to be understood merely in terms of textual style or any other discernible marks found in the text bearing authorial voice. For an author maintains such imaginary presence in the mind of the reader

whether he indulges in or refrains from, say, the use of the first-person narrative; indeed this is true with even the most abstract of mathematical texts. Rather, the subject factors into the text at the very point which eludes it. In other words, the very fact that the textual field appears to be self-enclosed is what ultimately holds the author responsible for the success or failure of his work. The present study endeavors to articulate that a possibility like this arises only because a point exists such that when occupied by the subject, it effectively suspends the very field presumed to be self-enclosed.

PART I

FROM THE ONE TO THE OTHER: THE HISTORICAL STRUGGLE WITH MEANING

The introduction should neither restrict itself to following the historical development of hermeneutics, nor should it ignore that development and try to draft a contemporary hermeneutics ex nihilo... Thus, the path which recommends itself is a combination of the historical and systematic methods.

—Peter Szondi

As the topic of meaning is closely associated with the discipline of hermeneutics, Szondi's words would not be too damaged if 'hermeneutics' was replaced with 'the theory of meaning.' This citation could then initially serve as the guiding principle of Part I which endeavors to follow the historical trajectory of our understanding of meaning but in a systematic manner. Quite appropriately, the long established tradition of hermeneutical theory is first taken up, as it expressly advises the scholar of meaning to examine historical forms of thought. This advice takes on important new life once the historical trajectory passes through the much younger discipline of phenomenology. But this is only the case in its specifically hermeneutical form. For phenomenology also pursues an independent course, advising the scholar that great insight is to be had by considering how meaning is constructed. The same is true with structuralist lines of thought, which hold the signifying mechanisms of language to be at least equal in importance to the hermeneutical phenomenological presupposition that meaning be accounted for by attending to historical context. However, as the historical trajectory additionally passes through contemporary aesthetic theory, and then fatally through Lacanian psychoanalysis, it finds forms of thought contemplating the (im)possibility of drafting a theory of meaning *ex nihilo*. So while Part I in a first move does follow Szondi's recommendation to combine historical understanding with systematic methodologies in its effort to review historical theories of meaning, it finds that the path of this trajectory ends up at the very point excluded from his advised course of action. The non-hermeneutical phenomenological project undertaken in Part II endeavors to position itself precisely within this excluded space to more forcefully express

how the endpoint arrived at in Part I paradoxically is both produced by and the causal force of this trajectory.

While each chapter is already introduced separately and includes frequent breaks from the analysis to (re)assess the investigation as it proceeds, for convenience a schematic breakdown of each chapter by section listing the major theorists discussed is as follows.

The initial chapter 'Petitions to Meaning' is devoted to hermeneutics and is the most obvious place to begin a discussion of historical theories of meaning. While this term designates all significant works in textual exegesis from before the Reformation up to the close of the 19th century as well as many works of the 20th century, its constant re-theorization of textual approaches is already symptomatic of the fact that something about meaning does not sit right. Section 1.1 begins with Flacius' 16th century Protestant challenge to the longstanding exegetical strategies of the Roman Catholic Church, to quickly move into the 18th century with Johann Martin Chladenius and Friedrich Ast who first articulates the hermeneutical circle. It then turns to consider the formidable influence that Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottlieb Fichte had on Friedrich Schleiermacher, whose general hermeneutical model was later extended by Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Gustav Droysen and Philip August Boeckh. Friedrich Nietzsche's prophetic work is then examined before culminating the discussion of classical thought on meaning with Wilhelm Dilthey. Section 1.2 opens with Martin Heidegger's ontological turn to hermeneutics. The resulting hermeneutical phenomenological approach not only profoundly changed the way Scripture could be read, as testified by the Protestant thought of Rudolf Bultmann and Gerhard Ebeling, but secular texts as well once it became widely known through Hans-Georg Gadamer. Section 1.3 identifies the major dissenters from hermeneutical phenomenology of the 1960s–70s, inclusive of Emilio Betti, E. D. Hirsch Jr., Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas. Despite defenses made by the likes of Richard E. Palmer and Gadamer himself, these four men criticize the abandonment of interpretive methodology. The chapter concludes with Paul Ricoeur who argues that issues of methodology aside, the Heideggerian approach rightly takes logical precedence over traditional hermeneutical interpretive strategies.

Chapter 2 investigates various 'Withdrawals from Meaning.' Generally speaking, these disciplines make meaning an object of study rather than seek meanings for objects. Section 2.1 recounts the manner in which Edmund Husserl's phenomenology breaks from the 19th century psychologistic conception of meaning, as well as from the commonsensical conception made popular by the logician Gottlob Frege. Roman Ingarden mobilizes the Husserlian account of meaning constitution to establish phenomenological aesthetics. This later influences Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss of the Constance School of reception theory, as well as Georges Poulet of the Geneva School of phenomenological criticism. Section 2.2 considers the meaningless

mechanical operations of linguistic systems explored by structuralism as forming a limit to the hermeneutical pursuit of meaning. The classical structuralist thought of Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson is first discussed. Jacques Derrida's deconstructive logic is then articulated, along with the semiology of Michel Foucault and the work in intellectual history conducted by Dominick LaCapra and Hayden V. White. Section 2.3 examines contemporary aesthetic theory for its exploration of sensible and nonsensical forces proving disruptive to the meaningful experience of art. It begins by taking up the diverse thought of Walter Benjamin, Jean Baudrillard and Alain Badiou in their efforts to demarcate truth and creativity from meaning in Scripture and poetry. The remainder of the section argues that the aesthetic theories of Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Rancière, Gilles Deleuze and Jean-Luc Nancy can be fruitfully understood against the logic of the Kantian sublime.

Chapter 3 conducts an intensive interrogation of 'Lacan on Meaning.' It holds psychoanalysis to be a privileged discipline not so much for having gone beyond Chapters 1 and 2, but rather for embodying the entire historical trajectory traced out therein. This can already be seen in Sigmund Freud's approach to dream interpretation. Much more strikingly with Lacan, at the theoretical and methodological levels psychoanalysis can be read as hermeneutical phenomenological or as structuralist. But at its most radical it also reveals a non-hermeneutical phenomenological dimension. This reading makes explicit what remains implicit in aesthetic theory. It permits a new articulation of how meaning is produced, as it aligns the cause of meaning to the core of subjectivity. The cause of meaning and subjectivity is precisely the *nihilo* from which a non-hermeneutical phenomenological approach to meaning could spring – the very subject of Part II. Section 3.1 begins exploring Lacan's multi-leveled methodological approach by first examining papers written in the earlier, Heideggerian-inspired period of his career. Section 3.2 similarly takes up papers from his briefer middle period which has popularly earned him the (erroneous) label of post-structuralist. Section 3.3 considers how Lacan's final two decades offer a more direct confrontation with Heideggerian thought by focusing on two key seminars from that period.

If an introduction is itself a hermeneutical exercise that establishes the horizon of the whole before the parts are analyzed, the same could be said of titles which similarly establish the space within which the text moves. This implies that a title may not be understandable until sometime after the content of the text it signifies has been reviewed. And sometimes not even then. Such is the present case where the subtitle of Part I 'The Historical Struggle with Meaning' is readily understandable but its title 'From the One to the Other' is not, as the reader must first work through Part II before its meaning can be retroactively established.

CHAPTER 1

PETITIONS TO MEANING

Every where the greater joy is ushered in by the greater pain. What means this, O Lord my God...? What means this, that this portion of things thus ebbs and flows alternately displeased and reconciled?...Woe is me!

But let me be united in Thee, O Lord, with those and delight myself in Thee, with them that feed on Thy truth, in the largeness of charity, and let us approach together unto the words of Thy book, and seek in them for Thy meaning, through the meaning of Thy servant, by whose pen Thou hast dispensed them.

—Saint Augustine

The subject always has the option of appealing to authority whenever confronted by troubling phenomena. And when it comes to the big questions, it appears that only the biggest authorities will do. An exemplary case is had with the *Confessions* where St Augustine repeatedly aims his soul-searching questions at the authority of all authorities: God. This is as one might expect of a text written just prior to the fall of Rome in an age where, for centuries to come, the religious sphere will attract the greatest share of earnest supplicants. What must not be overlooked, however, is how this text is rather unique in having made direct appeals to God during a time when the vast majority did so through an authoritative intermediary: the Roman Catholic Church. The activity of this earthly institution effectively filled a need for a Heavenly response and throughout the medieval period it exercised monopolistic control over how His Word should be understood – that is, until the Reformation suddenly tabled a new option. For the first time it was now widely acceptable to sidestep all intermediaries in the quest for the truthful meaning of Scripture. As will be seen in the final chapter, Lacan's work on hysterical discourse nearly sixteen hundred years later demonstrates that such impassioned pleas cannot result in any deep insight, for the appealing subject is shown to be thoroughly barred from that object of meaning which comes to occupy the place of truth. Yet far from being an activity of the distant past, authoritative appeals are still being made today under various guises. In this initial chapter we examine some theories of meaning which closely cling to their religious origins, the most consequential of which is hermeneutical phenomenology with its supplication to the meaning of being.

Section 1.1 sketches the classical period of hermeneutical thought from its initial appearance during the Reformation to the close of the 19th century. Highlighted are the religious, philosophical and historical roots of the hermeneutical circle of meaning. Section 1.2 focuses on Heidegger's hermeneutical phenomenology which comes to dominate 20th century hermeneutical theory, especially after Gadamer popularized the approach in 1960. Section 1.3 recounts significant attempts in the 1960s–70s to break the newly ontologized hermeneutical circle by returning to the epistemological framework of the previous century. At stake in the debates which ensued is methodology *as such*, whether hermeneutics may be classically deployed as an interpretive tool to appropriate textual meaning, or whether its conscious use should altogether be abandoned for the meaning of the being of understanding.

1.1 Hermeneutics

[E]verything that is no longer immediately situated in a world...is estranged from its original meaning and depends on the unlocking and mediating spirit that we, like the Greeks, name after Hermes: the messenger of the gods.

—Hans-Georg Gadamer

Much of the work aiming to re-introduce or further advance hermeneutical theory in the forty-five years since Palmer first introduced hermeneutics to the English-speaking world begins with what now seems an obligatory discussion of the term itself. In their opening pages we learn how the word hermeneutics carries an obvious relation to the wing-footed Hermes as its etymological roots lie with the Greek verb *hermēneuein* and noun *hermēneia*, generally translated as ‘to interpret’ and ‘interpretation’ by way of the Latin *interpretatio*. Although today this etymological connection to Hermes is questioned, the associative link is still valuable as a heuristic device to illustrate the complexities of interpretation. For Hermes’ task was anything but simple. In order to transmit the messages of the gods to the mortals, he had to be fully conversant in both idioms. Never a mere verbatim announcement, each expressed delivery of what the gods had to say effectively involved intertwining levels of explanation and translation in order to render their words intelligible. So while the aim of hermeneutical interpretation suggested here – to bring that which is strange and unfamiliar to meaningful understanding – may appear to be straightforward, exactly how this is accomplished proves much more difficult to grasp. In the following discussions this methodological question is approached not by way of the history of the term itself but rather through what this term has come to designate.

It is with good reason that the term usually evokes the religious sphere in most people’s minds. For it is there that interpretation first reached a level of self-awareness so as to differentiate critical explanation and analysis of texts (exegesis) from the rules, methods and theory governing it (hermeneutics). Yet

as long as the Church remained unchallenged, the impetus to develop rules for textual exegesis was virtually nonexistent. For centuries the meaning of Scripture was intuitively assessed on four levels: the literal, the allegorical, the tropological, and the eschatological. But for Protestant Reformers like Flacius, thinking in terms of these four levels did not involve exegetical work (which, etymologically speaking, aims to 'bring out' the meaning of the text) but rather simply produced eisegesis (whereby meaning is 'read into' the text). In 1567 Flacius publishes his *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae*, effectively a system of rules abstracted from the traditional exegetical practices the Counter-Reformation would unwaveringly reaffirm. Central to the *Clavis* are two groundbreaking principals to be understood from a point of view which takes Scripture as both perspicuous and self-sufficient. The first asserts the basic intelligibility and non-contradictory nature of Scripture. The second forcefully re-asserts the thinking of the Reformers *en masse* regarding the internal coherence and continuity of Scripture. With these principles Flacius argued that an ambiguous passage was not an invitation to impose an external interpretation to render it intelligible. Rather, it was to be read in light of the whole within which it is found. Moreover, for the first time there was formal acknowledgment *that* textual ambiguities exist. Granted at this time the failure to comprehend was not deemed to be due to a resisting textual object, but rather as lying with the interpreter in the form of ignorance of the proper rules of exegesis. Yet this is also a positive first, for it subtly brings a subjective element into the discussion of interpretive technique, if only in a negative sense as a deficiency to be overcome.

The importance of this 16th century challenge to the authoritative readings of Scripture by the Church should not be underestimated. Indeed with it the first great crisis of meaning arrives: biblical exegesis, once unified under the discourse of a single master, fragments into a multiplicity of techniques increasingly governed by guidelines and provisional rules. Within a few centuries a sizable and de-centered body of Scriptural signification accumulates. Yet it is important to note that the intentions of theologians to universalize textual theory from the particularities of exegetical practice actually only extended to biblical texts. Likewise, the universal aspirations which concurrently developed on a lesser scale amongst jurists and philologists remained inside their respective hermeneutical spheres. A case in point concerns the Enlightenment pedagogue Chladenius. His dogmatic faith in the universal rules of reason drove him to exclude Scripture as well as any text not deemed to be a reasonable discourse or writing, as the very title of his 1742 work suggests. The philologist Ast can also be singled out for the select attention he bestows on the texts of antiquity as most expressive of the original unity of *Geist*. In general, these failures to seize on a truly universal textual strategy prior to the 19th century do not illustrate the empty intentions of theorists so much as their inability to grasp universality as a regulative ideal. For such an ideal is operative only at the exclusion of its full realization. It will be up to the Protestant theologian and preacher

Schleiermacher to leverage the transcendental idealism of Kantian epistemology to combine biblical, juridical and philological hermeneutics into one general form.

Indeed the formidable influence of German Idealism on the Romantic project is readily palpable from Schleiermacher onward. With the advent of Kantian transcendental subjectivity, the possibility of taking responsibility for the manner in which a text is grasped opens up in a way which fully breaks from all previous thinking. Operational here is a new notion of subjectivity which cautions against conceiving an object as independently existing such that our knowledge of it requires appropriately conforming our thinking to it; rather, it is the object itself that must now be conceived as conforming to our thinking. Yet the relation between the subject and the totality of its objects never comes off without a hitch. No doubt attributable to his study of Fichte, Schleiermacher's work bears witness to a foreign nature to the other which, hermeneutically speaking, condemns the interpreter to asymptotic approaches to the totality of meaning. So when Schleiermacher absorbs the pedagogical practice of explanation by a new notion of understanding broad enough to encompass any text and not just Scripture, this is not a simple overcoming of the dialectic between two externally opposed activities. Rather, what is revealed is an internal obstacle, the Fichtean *Anstoß*, whose presence compels him to identify two moments *within* the understanding. On the one hand understanding is the understanding of speech taken from language as rule-bound, yielding up meaning from the linguistic elements of the text as set against its broader grammatical context. Here the individual is 'subject to' language. On the other hand is the understanding of speech as a fact in the thinking individual who freely submits language to his own purposes. Here is the 'subject of' language. As neither moment further reduces to the other, Schleiermacher's definition of hermeneutics as the art of understanding is apt. Particularly so for the parallel drawn with the Kantian notion of aesthetic judgment, whereby rules subsuming particulars under universals similarly exist alongside an absence of rules for the application of those rules.

The historical impact of Schleiermacher's transcendental turn to hermeneutics is difficult to overstate. To be sure his work is often positioned as a touchstone of sorts for debates over interpretive methodology, where a dividing line is drawn according to which moment of understanding is deemed dominant. This is natural enough given that Schleiermacher's own career appears divided, suggesting that he himself made similar choices. Broadly speaking, if the obscurity of understanding is read as indexing the finite horizon of language, Schleiermacher's earlier focus on approaching linguistic limits through grammatical interpretation is celebrated. But if this obscurity is more liberally read as inviting assertions of individuality, the focus would instead turn to his later emphasis on the more 'subjective' psychological interpretation. Not yet the psychologism of the late 19th century whereby meaning is naïvely

explained by the structures of the human psyche, such interpretation attempts to divine the creative process so that the original experience represented by the text rises again as an event for the interpreter. However, these readings come at a cost. They conveniently overlook how Schleiermacher, in both his early and late work, insisted on the equality between the two moments of the understanding which he took pains to set into dialectical relation. This was a development of that reciprocal relation Ast first articulated between the particular and the universal: not only does the part derive its meaning from the whole (as Flacius discovered), but the meaning of the whole must be sought through the level of the part. In a word, Schleiermacher's understanding is his own version of this seemingly endless, inescapable circle – the famous hermeneutical circle – whose obscure turn is lost precisely when reduced to only one of its moments. In the latter half of the 20th century Lacan will bring this obscurity to greater light. But only after this circle has become as all-encompassing as possible.

The scope of hermeneutics certainly takes on greater universality when Humboldt and Droysen rearticulate Schleiermacher's double-faceted notion of understanding as the very foundation for understanding the historical world. Again, a debt is owed to Kant whose notions riddle the texts of these Romantics. Through discussions of the sensible intuitions of time and space, of manifolds and of the faculty of imagination, they manage to double the hermeneutical circle outside itself: while the historian certainly plays his part, hermeneutically grasping the meaning of a particular event in a whole synthesized through the power of his imagination, he only does so within the overall historical trajectory of the noumenal Idea, a Necessity said to lurk behind all contingently linked events. This may give the impression that these men no longer feel there is such a thing as objective history, especially given Droysen's belief that all origins are relative. But this would be going too far, for they more simply recognize its inaccessibility. Yet this epistemological failure is not as disastrous as it would have been in previous centuries. For Romantic hermeneutics the investigation of historical phenomena cannot but bear the interpreter's subjective imprint, conditioned as he himself is by the forces and events of the historical past. Thus in a curious twist what is originally thought to be the object of investigation gives way to the true object, namely, these latter forces and events that shape the historian's investigative practice. Recognizing this lends to an otherwise subjectively-appropriated historical understanding an objectivity entirely unimaginable to thinkers prior to the Kantian turn. What further suggests itself is how it is no historical accident that interpretive knowledge was discovered to move in an endless circle only after Kant theorized the conditions of the possible experience of objects. For it was precisely that theorization which first made it possible to articulate the hermeneutical circle as the objective condition of understanding itself.

For its part, what Romanticism adds to the German Idealist break with the Enlightenment is a new notion of language. In the hermeneutics of Chladenius,

language was conceived as a neutral means of transferring the meaning of a historical event from one individual to another. But in the post-critical Romantic period Humboldt conceives language in its circularity, as that which binds society while also being a product of society. The hermeneutical circle now takes a linguistic turn, weaving particular speakers into the universal tissues of language through the very same act which spins out its signifying thread. This circle extends its reach with the mid-19th century revival of philology by Boeckh. His comprehensive interpretive schema demonstrates that within the greater linguistic circle lie many smaller circles.

Yet as Nietzsche will make clear at the close of the 19th century, these Romantic expansions to the hermeneutical circle did not actually produce meanings without constraint. Given that the substance of his challenge to the hermeneutical tradition will be ignored for decades, this confirms yet one more tradition in which Nietzsche could be said to have 'come too early.' For his work makes it apparent that those scholars discussed up to now, from Flacius to Boeckh, so busied themselves with formulating rules and entire methodologies that they never once stopped to seriously question an operative presupposition they held, namely, the finitude of meaning produced by their hermeneutical circles. Hermeneutics prior to the 20th century could of course hold *interpretation* to be an endless endeavor. After all, a particular interpreter's hermeneutical training could always be improved upon, just as the conditions of understanding could always be re-theorized towards greater inclusivity. Yet faith that a self-contained meaning existed and could be partially (if not wholly) grasped never wavered. In stark contrast, Nietzsche professed that there exists an infinity of meaning due to an infinity of interpretations derived from an infinity of perspectives. With meaning everywhere, it was at once nowhere. But far from a reason for despair, this creates an opportunity. For the ability to endure such fragmentation and disquietude is a sign of strength and a cause for celebration.

Prior hermeneutical thinkers were incapable of embracing such a conception. From Nietzsche's perspective, their hermeneutical rules ultimately had the design to mitigate and convert the strange, unusual and questionable into things which no longer prove disturbing. He effectively viewed the entire trajectory of hermeneutical thought symptomatically, as a patchwork of strategies designed to pacify its thinkers in the face of the disturbing infinity of meaning. However, Nietzsche does not seem to fully identify with the troubling dimension he opens up in hermeneutical thought, and so fails to uncover its ontological conditions. In other words, he lacks a specific concept of this disturbance as a resistance point to the hermeneutical pursuit. *That* he recognizes a disturbance is commendable. Yet it seems that disturbances to the easy appropriation of meaning only register in his philosophy on the subjective level, that is, *as disturbing to the subject*. Left unaddressed is disturbance in its objective mode. This would otherwise permit the alternative view that the hermeneutical

tradition has been propelled through the centuries by an unsettling presence dwelling within the very field of meaning itself.

In contrast to Nietzschean perspectivism and its allowance for a multiplicity of hermeneutical circles, Dilthey is thoroughly in line with traditional approaches that confine meaning within monolithic circular turns. In fact, by considering life itself to be the ultimate horizon for thought, he effectively expands the hermeneutical circle to its classical limits. This circle he places at the foundation of his newly conceived human sciences. Once again Kant leaves his mark, as Dilthey's project notably includes a draft for a Critique of Historical Reason. This draft even comes complete with its own set of historical categories of which meaning is the most basic. As per the Romantics, meaning is what the understanding seeks in an artwork or a text when set into dialectic with larger historical processes. However, Dilthey additionally considers such objects as so many ways the human race communicates, endures its artistic creations and generally objectifies its spirit in social formations. In other words, these objects are public expressions of lived experiences and so embody nothing short of the socio-historical world itself. Their examination thus offers a glimpse at the unity and connectedness of a person, an artwork or a text in its overall life-relationship. Accordingly, Diltheyan understanding turns in an effort to establish a universal law or ordering system which could subsume particular objects to the spiritual meaning of the whole life-nexus. It now appears the path initiated by the Protestant Reformers has been brought to its natural conclusion. For it is difficult to imagine how the hermeneutical circle might be further widened. With the 20th century poised to give birth to new disciplines which will increasingly place this hermeneutical stance into defensive posture, Dilthey may be said to stand at the closure of classical thought on meaning.

1.2 Hermeneutical Phenomenology

[H]ermeneutics, used as an adjunct word to 'phenomenology,' does not have its usual meaning, methodology of interpretation, but means the interpretation itself.

—Martin Heidegger

What Heidegger accomplishes in the last century is an order of magnitude greater than what Schleiermacher accomplishes in his own. Indeed if the history of hermeneutics was plotted on a linear graph, with Heidegger the line would take an irreversible turn, or else break outright to begin again in another direction. This break can be precisely dated to the 1927 publication of *Being and Time*, a revolutionary work which effectively announces the arrival of hermeneutical phenomenology. This new interpretive approach was destined to attract scores of faithful adherents, including the early-Lacan himself. For it forcefully discloses the problem with treating meaning as if external to the subject. From Heidegger's perspective, the classical had done just that, only

ever making a *use* of the hermeneutical circle in their inquiries into the mysteries of life, history and the Will of God. In sharp contrast to its calculated exploitation, his work resituates the field of meaning as always already enveloping the inquiring subject.

Heidegger's earlier studies in Christian theology and interpretive theory allow him to direct his attack on hermeneutics with pinpoint accuracy. Striking at the heart of the tradition, he argues how understanding is not to be recovered in the mode of knowledge but in the mode of being. That is, instead of making inquiries into the epistemological conditions for understanding, as had been done in the previous century, an ontological reversal is to take place. What is to be sought instead is the being of that finite being – what Heidegger calls *Dasein* [being-there] – which consists of and exists through understanding. The primordial being belonging to *Dasein* is found by interrogating the three 'fore-structures' of understanding, introduced in sections 31–4 of *Being and Time*. To illustrate these with a concrete example, consider a text such as *Antigone*. Heidegger's point is that we could never interpret *Antigone* in a neutral and abstract fashion, since we always already carry with us a certain involvement with such a task. Our levels of knowledge of Greek language and literature, for instance, form part of our fore-having of this text. We also interpret from a particular point of view, our fore-sight, which might include a Lacanian disposition compelling us to treat *Antigone* as embodying a sublime ethical lesson. Finally, our familiarity of Sophocles and his other works form part of our fore-conception, a conceptual reservoir held in advance of any interpretation.

This path Heidegger proceeds down clearly departs from the classical. What they held as two distinct moments is now flattened into one, since interpretation can contribute to understanding only what has already been understood. However, this sets up a potential problem. Do not the fore-structure premises presuppose what appears in the conclusion, so that a vicious circle is thereby created? Heidegger's famous solution is to simply recognize how we are always already involved in the circle within which meaning comes to stand. So the decisive task is not to get out of it, but rather to get into it properly. In practical terms, the interpreter should not allow chance or popular conceptions to dictate the fore-structures. We should not simply accept Lacan's word but see for ourselves if *Antigone* does indeed open up a new dimension of ethicality. To use more precise Heideggerian terminology, rather than 'seeing' we should instead 'hear' or 'listen' to what *Antigone* has to say. This is what constitutes the authentic openness of *Dasein* for its own most possibility of being.

It should also be clear how Heidegger abandons any notion of a subject (Kantian or otherwise) who actively extracts meaning from external objects. The analysis of, say, the apophantic propositional form of 'Subject is Predicate' by an abstract I is deemed derivative of the existential-hermeneutical context of the circular being of *Dasein* involved in interpreting and understanding texts. In

other words, there is no need for exegetical technique to release meanings confined to the contents of particular judgments. For such meanings are secondary to the primordial meaning enveloping the very activity of textual interpretation. With the nature of interpretation now defined on hermeneutical grounds, the interpretive approach suddenly becomes the thing itself. This is why the fundamental question raised on the opening page of *Being and Time* does not simply concern being. Significantly, this question concerns the *meaning* of being.

However, since the term hermeneutics connotes proceeding along methodological lines, it presupposes a gap between the subject and the thing – a problem the ontologization of the hermeneutical circle was intended to overcome. It is therefore not surprising that Heidegger refrains from using this term for the remainder of his career, with the single exception of his 1954 dialogue with a Japanese. There it comes to light how presentations of the hermeneutical circle turn it into an object of use and so must be avoided. In order to dissolve the last remnant of abstract subjectivity, Heidegger now speaks of authentic dialogue to allow for a showing of the thing to take place. Evidently, circular turns still occur between the message and the message-bearer of the thing in dialogue – we are just not to speak of them. More precisely, we *cannot* speak of them, since the presence of the thing is only graspable during its sway of usage. This is readily confirmed by the experience of the well-intentioned reader who hears what a difficult text like *Being and Time* has to say while actively engaged with it, but is often at a loss as to what was just read once it is set aside.

While Heidegger begins covering over the religious roots of hermeneutical phenomenology soon after *Being and Time*, these roots are re-exposed when Protestant theologians like Bultmann and Ebeling employ the new interpretive approach on Scripture. The practical advantage to examining work with an exclusive textual focus is that it helps bring elements into view which might otherwise languish in the realm of high theory. But more importantly, their work stands as a superb testament to the break hermeneutical phenomenology makes with past approaches which ‘apply’ abstract interpretive frameworks ‘onto’ textual objects. For this new approach actually ‘instantiates’ itself through the text in question, thoroughly entangling textual elements with the understanding, and thus the being, of the interpreter. This is certainly the case with these theologians, whose faith in the redeeming message of Scripture is inseparable from their reading of it. The suspicion that interpreters often stumble over themselves while interpreting is here amply confirmed and, moreover, justified as the proper way to proceed.

Consider, for instance, how Bultmann fleshes out the temporality of understanding as the cumulative wisdom of Protestant theology. From his standpoint, the entire Reformation itself was a global refusal to allow the fore-structures of understanding to be guided by anything other than the light cast by

Scripture. With the later development of historical understanding by the Romantics, theological scholars could begin to draw links between textual matters of Scripture and causal forces of past religious events. But these scholars were only shown to be fully entwined with these matters and forces when Heidegger further articulated the meaningful dimension of *Dasein*. What Bultmann's work highlights is how this dimension is not just oriented to the past. Yes, when interpreters approach texts alive with questions, these are, in a way, always already understood. But there is an additional temporal component to consider. For such questioning also presupposes a dimension of *Dasein* that is future-oriented. Here is an anticipatory gesture for meaningful answers, but one which does not rule out the fact that some questions seem to go unanswered. Such is the case with Scripture. Many questions posed to it will only ever meet with those open-ended questions already embedded in the texts themselves. Certainly questions concerning the meaning of the historical life and death of Jesus Christ would fit this bill, as they directly map onto those eschatological questions surrounding *parousia* – the Second Coming.

This absence of a readymade response ultimately compels the interpreter to answer his own questions from the array of meaningful possibilities disclosed by his actual life-context. Thus, consistent with its Protestant origins, the hermeneutical phenomenological approach does not yield to authoritative readings of the particular claims of Scripture. Rather, in light of these claims, it confronts its practitioner with having to take responsibility for the past as *his* past and for the future as *his* future. Bultmann likens the approach to Kant's categorical imperative which similarly expresses the need to take responsibility for oneself. Yet his suggestion that the Kantian law of practical reason is but the Idealist version of an original Christian ethicality is telling. It reveals how the pure freedom to self-determine only ever services the meaningful claims of Scripture (even if this results in a confession of unfaith). In other words, since autonomy is not deemed a simple attribute of the will but rather a Divine Gift, the meaningfulness of Scripture will always permeate its presuppositionless reading. Nevertheless, Bultmann contends that this approach is an autonomous textual strategy, a belief shared by his student Ebeling.

But there is an important difference between Bultmann and Ebeling. While the former instantiates an approach to Scripture as per *Being and Time*, Ebeling's own effort derives from Heidegger's later turn toward language and dialogue. The result is his so-called New Hermeneutic, a project held as the proper heir to the Reformation. For Ebeling feels that the once promising principles of perspicuity and self-sufficiency gave way to a disastrous orthodoxy which identifies the Scriptural text and the word of God without distinction. What was thereby lost is the original Protestant insight into how Scripture possesses *claritas*, its own illuminating power. In order to let it shine once again, the interpreter must refrain from reading Scripture in isolation as if it were silent. Rather, it must be heard as if spoken aloud, much like what occurs during a

sermon. Generally speaking, the verbalized word is an event through which the text becomes proclamation. And hermeneutical phenomenology as ‘word-event theology’ is to facilitate this proclamation by allowing the Scriptural word to open up, mediate and bring something to understanding.

Again, this amounts to stepping into the circle of understanding correctly. In Ebeling’s own formulation, proper understanding is not understanding *of* language, but understanding *through* language. Anything short of this would objectify linguistic elements and hinder the word-event; the interpreter would then require guidelines to proceed, as philologists in previous centuries had required. But by treating language *qua* medium, such hindrances are thoroughly removed. Here nothing could guide the interpreter as he takes soundings of his understanding. Only the echo of his inquiries would be heard returning from its ground. In the end, this confronts the interpreter with having to make his own decisions on just how to proceed. Yet if this configuration opens a radical abyss of subjective freedom similar to that seen with Bultmann, it is just as quickly filled with the same petition to the theological beyond. For Ebeling is quite clear that God’s word serves as the ultimate ground of understanding. This is confirmed by anyone bearing witness to the *kerygma* during the sermon, whose word transforms the past proclamation that has taken place into proclamation that takes place, in the *hic et nunc*.

Despite the adaptability of Bultmann’s existential theology and Ebeling’s New Hermeneutic for the analysis of any text, their overtly Protestant concerns virtually ensured the new approach they put into play would remain in relative obscurity. These men argued that not only did hermeneutical phenomenology originally arise with Christian thought, but that it was most at home with the New Testament. While secular scholars could perhaps live with these religious roots, they obviously could not abide being limited to the religious sphere. Nor could the first architect of hermeneutical phenomenology be counted on to popularize his own revolutionary approach. Heidegger’s *Being and Time* was simply impenetrable to anyone unwilling to devote to it serious study. Compounding matters, a hermeneutic of *Dasein* no longer strictly guided his subsequent work. Thus it would take an event of some magnitude to put hermeneutical phenomenology on the map. From the benefit of hindsight over half a century later, that event was Gadamer’s 1960 publication of *Truth and Method*. This landmark work made Heidegger’s crossing of hermeneutics with phenomenology widely accessible to scholars in the human sciences. This is not to imply that all so easily converted to the new faith. An account of the divisive reception of *Truth and Method* will be made in the following section. But first the Gadamerian understanding of meaning is introduced.

Roughly speaking, this understanding is Heidegger’s own made user-friendly. Gadamer does of course supplement the work of his former teacher in novel ways. Yet these largely serve a clarifying function, in line with his particular talent for translating demanding theory into terminology, concepts,

and issues already familiar to most scholars. For instance, he collectively designates the fore-structures of understanding simply as prejudices – a term at once suggestive of the need for testing. In historical terms, it calls into question the two extremes of our inherited past, from the Enlightenment's too easy rejection of the authority of tradition in the name of reason, to the Romantic reversal which blindly embraces tradition. He urges us to instead seek the (middle) ground to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate prejudices, a rational ground where the authority of tradition is rightly acknowledged as harboring legitimate prejudices. So in light of Lacan's preeminent scholarly reputation, perhaps it is only fitting to acknowledge his judgment of *Antigone* as superior to ours and accordingly grant it precedence. Doubly so when considering how this ancient text has been passed down to us through the centuries, quite possibly for the very lesson Lacan says it bestows. In general, Gadamer contends that classic texts of tradition are as likely a source for legitimate prejudices as persons occupying positions of authority when they exercise their unique expertise.

But it seems a user-friendly Heidegger is a Heidegger slightly misunderstood. For Gadamer tends to subsume the future-orientation of understanding to its past-orientation. The net result is that the abyss of freedom glimpsed in both Bultmann's and Ebeling's Protestant recovery of Heidegger thoroughly fails to make even the briefest of appearances. Again, no fault can be found with Gadamer's presentation skills. In explaining the process of understanding, he begins with the past temporal component: tradition is what establishes our sphere of possible meaning, and thus its horizon delimits the frontier of our inherited set of prejudices. Here Heidegger's term horizon is strategically deployed to suggest how this set is not a static or permanent precondition, but can contract through the exclusion of a subset of prejudices, or else expand to encompass a larger set. This implies a capacity on our part to participate in tradition and change its prejudices, a capacity put into play whenever we endeavor to understand a product of tradition, like a classic text. In so doing, we project the text's horizon and attendant prejudices within our inherited horizon. The two horizons are thus initially out-of-synch. But through the procedure of testing prejudices, they can be fine-tuned until fused together. With this fusion of horizons, complete understanding of the text's subject matter has been achieved.

The problem with this otherwise elegant explanation is how the entire process of reaching understanding is conceived from within an orientation to the past. In fact, Gadamer expressly formulates the anticipated completion of this process as a Heideggerian fore-conception. This is symptomatic of his general tendency to collapse the two temporal components of understanding into one, thus annulling their inherent tension. In contrast, Heidegger, Bultmann and Ebeling minimally maintain this tension as an opening up of space for self-determination, actualized through meaningful appeals to the (religious) thing. But by presupposing no such tension, this space is always already steeped with

meaning. Accordingly, Gadamer's account of the hermeneutical circle is more justifiably critiqued as involving a vicious turn, having been effectively confined to a field of pre-given meanings. It is therefore not surprising that he overwhelmingly speaks of *Dasein* in historical terms, as an interpretive consciousness both affected and effected by history.

Perhaps if Gadamer had more fully conceived the anticipatory gesture of understanding as future-oriented, he would have been relieved of his often repeated worry that *Truth and Method* had come 'too late' and was thus superfluous in its theoretical attempts. He might have then foreseen how his work would unsettle the wider interpretive community previously unexposed to its methodology. Or more precisely, its lack of methodology. For the title was intended to be ironic and might read instead 'Truth, not Method' to better accord with its hermeneutical phenomenological concern for truth conveyed in modes of experience unverifiable through methodological procedures. In a community with a centuries-old tradition of developing hermeneutical techniques, this simply would not do. Understandably then, the 1960s–70s would witness a series of debates regarding matters of fundamental importance to interpretive theory – a fact which confirms that far from arriving too late, *Truth and Method* appears to have arrived just in time.

1.3 Hermeneutics (Redux)

Now, by what right do I return to a pre-Heideggerian naïveté and allow it?

—E. D. Hirsch Jr.

After 1960 it became increasingly difficult to carry on as if the Heideggerian turn had not been made. Of course, the individual practitioner could continue using traditional hermeneutical techniques blissfully unaware of the alternative. But for the theorist, the existence of hermeneutical phenomenology was now an undeniable fact. Moreover, it appeared unavoidable: lying at the presuppositional level of traditional techniques, it seemed to necessarily factor into the future progress of interpretive theory itself. Not all were entirely convinced, however, and the interpretive community would accordingly divide into two groups. One group came to unabashedly embrace hermeneutical phenomenology. They eagerly sought to expand its ontological approach into additional fields, much like what Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Gaston Bachelard, Jean-Paul Sartre and Lacan had already done in France years earlier. The other group sought instead to champion the tradition's epistemological foundations as established in the 19th century. Yet not exclusively, for they would later come to make important concessions to Heideggerian thought. An examination of this latter group proves the most rewarding, especially in its earliest days when such concessions were largely absent. In the end, the issues they highlight ultimately argue against their wholesale efforts to turn back the clock prior to Heidegger.

The first concerted response to hermeneutical phenomenology is a booklet published by Betti just two years after *Truth and Method*. It is also the most visceral. In it, Betti takes Heidegger, Bultmann, Ebeling and especially Gadamer to task for having dispensed with the classical notion of an interpreter externally opposed to objects of meaning. The subject-object schema is elemental to any methodological framework, and by arguing against its use these men are said to threaten the very legitimacy and objectivity of interpretation itself. To combat this threat, Betti provides hermeneutical canon designed to return interpreters to the glory days of Dilthey where the objects of the human sciences were understood to be on par with those of the natural sciences. His proposal effectively reactivates an abstract subjectivity. As Gadamer perspicuously noted, Dilthey's efforts to achieve scientifically valid knowledge of historical objectifications required him to subtract his consciousness from the historical flux. Given this impossibility, his project of modeling the human on the natural sciences was fatally flawed. On this ground Heidegger would build his own approach, completely abandoning the subject-object schema for the meaning of its surrounding ontological envelope. Yet Betti doubts whether this truly delivers on its promise of greater objectivity. Does it not instead lead interpretation into a hopeless relativism, where the object at stake is itself fatally overshadowed by the subject?

Betti locates the problem of subjectivism with hermeneutical phenomenology's failure to distinguish interpretation from understanding. This makes the hermeneutical circle appear unbreakable. Accordingly, the theoretical work Heidegger et al. undertake has nowhere else to turn but to descriptions of consciousness engaged in interpretive activity. Using Kantian terms, Betti reproaches these men for merely addressing the *quaestio facti*, when the true task before the theorist is to answer the *quaestio juris* with methods for the correct execution of interpretive activity. Quite simply, interpretation is procedure and understanding is its result. The two elements can and must be kept distinct. Otherwise, the objectivity of interpretive results is jeopardized. To add insult to injury, Gadamer further conflates understanding with a third element: application. When Lacan projected *Antigone* within his Freudian horizon, this effectively amounted to an application of its lesson onto circumstances Sophocles could not have foreseen. With a fusion of horizons, this gap closes. However, Gadamer would argue that a full understanding considers the series of its historical applications, like those made by G. W. F. Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard and Heidegger. For Betti, this is madness. An active interest in understanding is not enough. Interpreters must be technically trained to properly analyze the underlying laws which form the specific objectifications under consideration. At minimum, then, an adequate mastery of the ancient Greek language is required to correctly understand the meaning of *Antigone*.

Hirsch would whole-heartedly agree. An understanding arising from multiple applications is no brave confrontation with Nietzsche's insight into the

never-ending array of possible meanings. Rather, Hirsch feels it is evidence of failure to maintain a basic philological distinction in place since Boeckh, one which pits textual meaning against its critical treatment in wider contexts. What Gadamer purports to take away from a text is not its meaning but the significance of its meaning, as per his own personal evaluation of the text's journey through history. Once again hermeneutical phenomenology is charged with subjectivism and relativism. It appears to be an 'anything goes' approach. How could it not license the claim that *Antigone* is a play about gardening, if this was the madman's understanding? Yet if Gadamer would invalidate this claim just as quickly as the rest of us, surely objective standards exist. Both Hirsch and Betti place these standards with the author. The text means what the author intends it to mean and any interpretation approximating this meaning is deemed valid. The notion of authorial intent clearly returns meaning to its pre-Heideggerian status as an external object, along with renewed aspirations for an interpretive science. For understanding need only aim at this object to break its circular turn.

However, the scientific aspirations of interpretive theorists in the mid-20th century are more nuanced than those of Dilthey. Hirsch strives for validity – not certainty – when augmenting 19th century hermeneutical principles with contemporary procedures. Central to his project is a revival of Schleiermacher's psychological interpretation. This is precisely what is needed to reproduce the textual meaning which originally sprung from the unitary mind of its author. Given the self-identical, determinate and unchanging nature of this meaning, it stands to reason it can pass to another mind. Accordingly, the interpreter is to attempt a reconstruction of the author's stance, while preserving his own. This latter stance includes mobilizing interpretive tools to facilitate the successful passage of authorial meaning. Of course, a subject capable of splitting his consciousness in this manner is entirely ruled out by hermeneutical phenomenology, as Gadamer's notion of projected historical horizons suggests. But with the hermeneutical circle returned to the textual level, Hirsch need but supplement classical philology with new genre classifications to reveal how textual parts can provide autonomous footholds on the textual whole. Difficulties in applying linguistic rules are also eased by making use of probability theory. Being the very logic of uncertainty, this modern tool additionally provides a scientific measure of the text's probable meaning. These and similar procedures are what underlie Hirsch's (and Betti's) conviction that even the hermeneutical circle in its traditional formulation can be broken.

The integrity of hermeneutical phenomenology was not left undefended. Gadamer often directly countered these attacks himself. Or else a third-party would do so on his behalf, with Palmer leading the charge with his staunch endorsement of Heidegger et al. at the expense of Betti and Hirsch. But in retrospect it was a different type of attack which most engrossed the interpretive community. Launched from hermeneutical phenomenology's homeland of

Germany, the second wave of critical theory ostensibly stands closer to the new approach. This is not due to any abandonment of the subject-object schema, however. For Habermas and Apel equally decry the erratic nature of Gadamerian-styled research, and opt instead to erect a methodological framework for the human sciences in the spirit of Dilthey. Much like Betti and Hirsch, they re-instrumentalize hermeneutics by placing Diltheyan objectifications at the center of their project. These are the objects of an objectively valid knowledge and form the basis of a sound methodology for all four men. Yet there is an important difference to note between Betti-Hirsch and Habermas-Apel. Roughly speaking, the historicity of understanding informs the materialism of the latter. This places critical theory within closer striking distance of hermeneutical phenomenology. Against this background, the former appear as an inconsequential threat, their work amounting to little more than Romantic hermeneutics made palatable for 20th century empirical tastes.

More specifically, Betti and Hirsch follow Dilthey in assuming that the author's intended meaning can unproblematically objectify [*vergegenständlichen*] into his text. They bemoan the general move away from these objectifications and seek to demonstrate how they readily lend themselves to the statements of natural science. In contrast, Habermas argues that objectifications only effectively express authorial intent under non-repressive conditions. Since all societies have historically been repressive, all objectifications distort authorial intent. The interpretive process thus begins with a corrupt text. To restore it to its full meaning, a hermeneutics composed solely of philological procedures is inadequate. This could only reclaim conscious intent. But a hermeneutics modeled on (Freudian) psychoanalysis could trace textual corruptions back to the self-deceptions of an author dwelling in repressive social conditions. This would reveal the unconscious meaning of the corruptions to the interpreter, simultaneously canceling the efficacy of those historical forces behind *his own* self-deceptions. In other words, full understanding occurs when the interpreter reflects the corrupt text and himself simultaneously as moments of an encompassing objective structure. What results are the true objects of interpretation, those which objectivate [*objektivieren*] through the process of realigning objectifications with authorial intent. But in no way are objectifications meanings of *Dasein*. For they are seized conceptually by a subject capable of objectively comprehending itself in its own self-formative process. With Habermas, the hermeneutical circle of understanding becomes a means for liberating subjects.

To be sure, critical theory expressly directs these means towards the liberation of humanity. Since distortions are casually linked to existing social conditions, hermeneutical technique should be used at the intersubjective level whenever a disturbance of consensus manifests itself. This ideally moves all subjects towards a mutual understanding free of external coercion. Hermeneutics is thus a tool to achieve universal ends, and not a universal end in

itself as Gadamer claims. For Habermas, such a claim reveals a de facto acceptance of repressive conditions. He reasons that if one dispenses with the notion of autonomous subjectivity, a conservative disposition emerges in its place. Hence Gadamer's rehabilitation of the authority of tradition is highly suspect. Devoid of a critical consciousness, nothing prevents the acceptance of prejudices whose authority is based on force rather than reason. To combat this threat to enlightened subjectivity, in true Diltheyan style critical theory turns to the natural sciences. In contrast to Betti and Hirsch, however, what these sciences offer cannot be utilized without modification. Habermas, for instance, finds that modern positivism has completely removed the knowing subject as a reference point. Under its reign, the constitution of objects of possible experience is no longer problematic, and so the very inquiry into their meaning appears superfluous and even irrational. Gadamer would certainly agree. Yet Habermas insists that the scientific attitude is indispensable for guiding hermeneutics, provided science itself is made to self-reflect.

Apel provides a way this could be done. He explains that a natural science like positivism operates with a Kantian subjectivity, a pure consciousness of objects. This reflective *a priori* cannot extract meaning from the world. But by supplementing it with a bodily *a priori* of knowledge which can, a critical consciousness emerges at the crossroads of hermeneutics and scientism. Accordingly, this subject is capable of setting into play a dialectical relation between the human and the natural sciences. On the one hand, the natural sciences excel in explaining events by subsuming them under general laws. But when these events are historical, its causal explanations fall short. For what ultimately conditions these events are not causal forces but the intentions of historical individuals. These intended meanings can only be understood with the *a priori* concomitant to the human sciences. On the other hand, the human sciences need the natural sciences to complete its historical task. When the Enlightenment fatally questioned the immediacy of understanding tradition, the human sciences arose to ensure its continued transmission. Yet the fragmentation of what is to be understood proves too great, requiring the methodical thought of the natural sciences to rationally integrate results into objectifications. As might be expected, the dialectical mediation of scientific explanation and hermeneutical understanding culminates in psychoanalysis. Both Habermas and Apel consider psychoanalysis a self-reflective discipline productive of objectifications equivalent to a critique of ideology.

Any account of the original debates would be remiss for omitting Ricoeur. His work is significant for establishing the very framework future commentators would use to contextualize the issues at stake. But while his earlier work distinguishes the two sides well enough, it is not until the 1970s that his more concerted position emerges. Consider his massive reading of Freud in 1965. In the opening chapters meaning is articulated as hidden in a complex intentional structure. Similar to critical theory, a Freudian excavation appears necessary to

demystify false consciousness. But according to Ricoeur, such meaning could also be recollected through the being disclosed by the hermeneutical circle of understanding. Indeed these form the two poles of his project which aims to resolve their tension with a general hermeneutics. Yet his position remains ambiguous. Given the stated intentionality of meaning, his defense of Kantian transcendental logic, and his overall effort to ground the two poles in a concrete reflection not unlike what the Habermasian subject achieves, Ricoeur presents a classical stance. Then again, his book concludes with favorable discussions of faith, the sacred, and the spoken word as revelatory of *kerygma*, which suggest instead an embrace of hermeneutical phenomenology.

This ambiguity is not easily cleared up. Projects aiming to resolve the debates tend to remain vague on where loyalties ultimately lie. But only officially, for the very effort to resolve is at once an implicit acknowledgment of the gap separating the two sides. Typically then, a close reading reveals one of two mutually exclusive strategies. Either this gap is deemed as always already overcome à la Gadamer, or else it is somehow productively maintained. Ricoeur's later work undertakes the latter strategy. Doing so places him at odds with the above four men who all feel a categorical dismissal of the former strategy amounts to a satisfactory resolution. In contrast, Ricoeur subjects hermeneutics once again to the alienating distance of the other presupposed by methodological abstraction, while *simultaneously* acknowledging the logical priority of hermeneutical phenomenology. This priority is reasonable enough. No longer a mode of knowing but a way of being, Heidegger's understanding addresses a field of meaning beyond the reach of traditional methods. As a result, any subject exclusively appealing to objectified (or objectivated) meanings necessarily misses the primordial meaning of the entire interpretive venture. It is therefore not surprising that once Gadamer spread the word of the high cost of remaining in a pre-Heideggerian state, hermeneutical phenomenology quickly came to prominence.

However, this does not fully warrant dispensing with methodology. Of course, hermeneutical phenomenology officially casts aside the subject-object schema. But the fact remains that even its most ardent supporters enthusiastically discuss the schema, long after and far beyond what Heidegger originally deemed necessary to establish the historical succession of his philosophy. This might be read as vigilance, in recognition of the difficulty of surmounting our spontaneous understanding of the world where meaningful objects appear 'over there.' Yet it could also be that the meaning of primordial understanding is only disclosed against the backdrop of what it is not. In which case the schema appears essential to the success of the ontological project. Ricoeur's work isolates this essence to the gap between the subject and object. He argues how the phenomenon of distance is no obstacle to be primordially overcome. Rather, it is found to be indispensable to any articulation of the meaning of being. In short, hermeneutical phenomenology paradoxically

undercuts its own efforts at reaching the underlying ontological foundation of the schema whenever it overlooks the productivity of the gap inherent to the schema. As a correction, Ricoeur sets 'distanciation' as the very condition of understanding. But far from breaking the hermeneutical circle of meaning, this only serves to solidify its *a priori* reign.

It seems the subject will need to withdraw from hermeneutics altogether if a true distance from meaning is desired. We examine some fields of thought offering this possibility beginning with the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2

WITHDRAWALS FROM MEANING

[P]hilosophy...is essentially subtractive. Philosophy must indeed subtract Truth from the labyrinth of meaning...Philosophy is not an interpretation of the meaning of what is offered to experience; it consists in the operation of a category subtracted from the category of presence. And this operation of seizing truths indicates precisely that once seized, truths are distributed within that which interrupts the regime of meaning. This point is to my mind essential. Philosophy is above all a rupture with both narrative and commentary on narrative...[P]hilosophy contrasts the effect of Truth to the effect of meaning. Philosophy is distinct from religion because it breaks with hermeneutics.

—Alain Badiou

Historically speaking, meaning has only recently become an object of study. This is perhaps a surprising statement given the discussion undertaken in the previous chapter. It was seen how the subject's longstanding wish to achieve meaningful understanding was addressed by the slow rise of hermeneutical theory over the course of many centuries. But a moment's reflection confirms how this understanding has traditionally been cast with particular objects in mind. In other words, hermeneutics only ever makes withdrawals *of* meaning for its various textual and ontological objects. What remains to be examined are disciplines which instead explore the very nature of meaning, of meaning *as such*. Since this exploration requires a withdrawal *from* meaning, these disciplines are not mired in debates over methodology. Their projects simply necessitate using the subject-object schema of science. The extreme example is the axiomatic philosophy of Badiou. Here meaning is so objectionable that an entire project is founded on thought which unconditionally withdraws from its field, in the strictest intransitive sense of the verb. However, most withdrawals have been of a more transitive nature. These theorists not only keep the field of meaning within their sights, but they additionally investigate residual objects of meaning. Later it will be seen how Lacan's central investigative object permits conceiving the very universality of the hermeneutical circle as paradoxically linked to the subject's withdrawal from its sweeping turn. In the present chapter some well-known disciplines of the 20th century are taken up for the insights they provide on meaning's internal construction, as well as its relation to non-meaning, to sense and most importantly, to nonsense.

Section 2.1 begins with an account of Husserl's break with 19th century epistemology to establish phenomenology, a new philosophical approach deemed rigorously scientific. It then examines three interpretive schools Husserl inspired: phenomenological aesthetics, phenomenological criticism, and reception theory. Section 2.2 first introduces Saussure's structuralism, a discipline also formed at the turn of the last century. Late structuralist work is then examined, inclusive of Jakobson, Derrida and Foucault. The focus for both sections is on the way these two disciplines conceive the constitution of meaning. Section 2.3 discusses contemporary developments in the older tradition of aesthetics, particularly with respect to Kant. It takes up aesthetic theorists like Baudrillard and Rancière, who seek to antagonize disruptions to the meaningful experience of art, as well as others like Deleuze and Nancy, whose work raises the possibility of sustaining these disruptions in a more permanent fashion.

2.1 Phenomenology

Meanings inspired only by remote, confused, inauthentic intuitions – if by any intuitions at all – are not enough: we must go back to the 'things themselves.'

—Edmund Husserl

With these words the dawn of the 20th century was greeted by the emergence of phenomenology. Its etymological root in the Greek word *phainomenon* [appearance] already suggests what it entails: a methodological shift from studying the external world of objects to instead focus on the way these objects appear to the subject. Husserl's call to treat the object not as fact but only as it appears – as a phenomenon – challenged the epistemology of natural science. But it also broke with Kant. For no longer was the phenomenal appearance of an object considered a failed encounter with the noumenal realm. The supposed noumenal limitation on the constitution of phenomena, which proved a stumbling block for Kant, was effectively removed, since the phenomenal world alone was now reality itself and not just the reality we can know. A new emphasis was thus placed on the subjective experience of phenomena. Indeed, phenomenology is sometimes called the 'philosophy of experience.' Phenomenologists accordingly task themselves with describing the structures of this experience, particularly at the level of consciousness. As already seen, Heidegger's ontologization of this experience amounts to a rejection of the subject-object schema. But his former teacher Husserl found it indispensable when attempting to account for the phenomenon of meaning itself. Below the Husserlian notion of meaning and its constitution is recounted, as per the *Logical Investigations*. A few interpretive schools this original architecture engendered are also considered for their textual approaches.

Husserl's theory of meaning emerges through his concerted effort to counter the growing influence of psychologism. This empiricist-naturalist philosophy held that only physical objects truly exist. Accordingly, non-physical phenomena like numbers, concepts, and thought in general were deemed so many effects of the physicality of the human mind. Eventually even the study of reasoning became a province of psychology, the science of the psychical acts of the mind. For Husserl, the belief that rational thought and the laws of logic are reducible to psychological states of affairs was grossly in error. It would require absurdly concluding, for instance, that to different psychic structures correspond different logics, or that logic evolves along with the human species. He illustrates his own position using his favored propositional form, the apophantic 'Subject is Predicate;' much to Heidegger's chagrin, Husserl always considered this form the basic structure of thinking and language. As Husserl sees it, psychologism conflates the content of a proposition like 'two times two is four' with its assertion. The laws of logic do not apply to the latter, which legitimately falls to psychology, but only to the meanings making up the former. This implies that $2 \times 2 = 4$ is not simply a mental entity of an individual's mind, as psychologists have it. Rather, the content of $2 \times 2 = 4$, its meaning, is a logical object of the subject's thinking. Moreover, these objects possess an existence and a truth transcending the mental life of any thinker. They lie in an objective domain which not only makes the very idea of scientific knowledge possible, but is something which may itself be scientifically explored. To be sure, Husserl expressly defines logic as the science of meanings.

This notion of meaning is fruitfully contrasted with the work of Frege, a fellow logician and anti-psychologist. Frustrated by inexact talk regarding verbal expressions, Frege had proposed a distinction which has remained influential to this day. Quite simply, the definite object referred to by an expression is its meaning. Hence the meaning of 'the discoverer of *objet a*' is the French psychoanalyst named Lacan. But while 'the theorist of the mirror stage' has the same meaning, the two expressions are said to embody different senses. In contrast, Husserl would argue for their different meaningful contents. The contrast should be clear. While common sense follows Frege in permitting the real objects of empirical science to qualify as meanings, for Husserl meanings are *ideal* objects entirely devoid of any physicality. Yet an ambiguity nevertheless persists. What exactly are we to make of the ideality of meaning? Their characterization in the *Logical Investigations* suggests a Platonic reading. Meanings are routinely held as irreducible in their being and thus objective, transcendent, singular, unchanging, universal, sharable and standing outside time. But a closer reading makes it apparent that Husserl does not place them in a Platonic heaven. So how and from where do meanings come to embody expressions?

To answer this, logical experience must be seen as having two sides paralleling the subject-object divide, namely, the objectivating act and the logical object. These align with the two moments of Husserl's larger theory of

consciousness as intentional. As the word implies, consciousness is directed beyond itself to a vast array of objects both real and ideal. There are, then, acts of consciousness and objects of those acts; consciousness is always consciousness of something. But Husserl does not so much think of the object as external to consciousness. Rather, it is the content of the act of consciousness, the correlative matter referring consciousness to an object in such a way that it fixes the object meant precisely in the way in which it is meant. The object meant in a meaning-intentional act is thus the matter of that act and an ideal object of meaning. So in no way are meanings to be hypostasized 'up there.' At most, Husserl's theory suggests a moderate Platonic approach where meaning is envisaged as a half-existing stuff in the heavens. In Kantian terms, meaning is designated a simple phenomenal entity, a *Gegenstand*, an object which belongs to the domain of possible experience. A subjective meaning-intentional act would then be required to transform that possibility into a fully existent actuality. Said otherwise, the universality of meaning is instantiated into an objectivated instant through the conscious act of a subject intending a particular meaning.

Against the new phenomenological science, classical hermeneutics appears quite tame. It had primarily focused on interpretive consciousness for its grasp of meaning. But Husserl opens up countless other acts of consciousness for investigation, and does so for their *constitutive* grasp of meaning. Of course, Heidegger's later acceptance of meaning as irreducibly non-univocal creates a need for phenomenology to hermeneutically choose from among competing potentialities of meaning. But Husserl's earlier insistence on the univocality of meaning suggests another path. If meanings cannot be built out of other meanings, phenomenology can effectively do without the hermeneutical explication of composite formations. For meaning comes already objectively known to the conscious subject. The only thing left is to describe the processes constituting that meaning. This is amply demonstrated by his student Ingarden.

Developed over three-quarters of a century ago, Ingarden's work is the first and still the best application of strict Husserlian phenomenology to aesthetics in general and to the reading of literary texts in particular. Accordingly, his investigations into the phenomenon of reading are not descriptions of what transpires in the mind when meaning is understood during the reading experience. They are attempts to discern and methodically interpret the meaning constituted in that experience. The examination of this object of experience, and not just the experience itself, is a defining feature of phenomenology. It is also what defends against psychologism. Ingarden laments that despite Frege's and Husserl's fatal critiques, interpreters remain all too susceptible to psychologism's erroneous belief that experiencing subjects form verbal meanings in isolation. If this were the case, how one correctly understands a word used by another remains a mystery. But not so when meanings are held as identical and transcendent to all experiences, and existing as such only through those

experiences. Ingarden's particular project attempts to account for their existence during reading. Concisely said, he first discloses half-constituted meaning via an analysis of the essential structure of textual works. He then examines the structured acts through which those works are understood. Finally, he describes the convergence of the two sides in the reading experience where textual meaning is fully constituted and objectivated.

Ingarden clearly uses a subject-object methodology. On the object-side is the literary work of art whose structural properties must be sought in a pure analysis which makes no presuppositions. Doing so reveals this structure to be multi-layered, with individual strata sequentially ordered and forming a unity for the work as a whole. Nevertheless, this whole is a schematic formation, as several of its strata contain places of indeterminacy or structural gaps. On the subject-side is the reader who encounters these gaps as obstacles to meaning comprehension. Here the reading process slows down or even halts. Helplessness ensues and the reader guesses at the meaning to complete the act of understanding. Ingarden broadly identifies two types of reading. Passive reading proceeds sentence by sentence and is incapable of providing summaries. It thus fails to hold textual meaning as an object and so remains in the sphere of meaning. By contrast, active reading has a certain intercourse with the text. It anticipates the meaning of future sentences based on those that precede it, and rethinks the meaning of past sentences retroactively, in light of those that follow. It is as if reader and text are projected into a co-creative realm wherein extracted meanings change into intentions identical to those of the act of understanding *and* those of the text itself. In this way structural gaps are filled and the literary work of art becomes concretized.

The establishment of phenomenological aesthetics influences two key members of the Constance School of reception theory which reached a highpoint in the 1970s. Both Iser and Jauss establish technical methods that similarly regard the subject as co-creator of the irreducible, universal and shareable meanings of the text. Iser's work particularly recommends itself for having undertaken its own phenomenology of reading. In many respects an updated version of Ingarden, Iser provides intricate descriptions of the slow convergence of reader and text from their initial separation to the final emergence of the aesthetic object meant. But he attends more to this emergence than does Ingarden, underscoring its dynamic interaction with both reader and text. This clarifies how meaning participates in its own constitution.

In terms of the previous discussion, Iser adds a level of complexity to the object-side by no longer considering structural gaps as stable. He reasons that a fundamental asymmetry exists between reader and text. They lack a common frame of reference which might otherwise regulate their dyadic interaction. Ultimately, the gaps encountered *in* the text are so many manifestations of the gap *between* reader and text. Attempting to bridge or fill gaps is what spurs the reading process. As the reader progresses through the text, imagined missing

content is either affirmed or denied. Significantly, Iser argues that what is denied nevertheless remains in view. This remainder modifies the reader's attitude towards the text and gives rise to additional structural gaps. The implication is that these gaps are not the same for all readers, as if having been pre-programmed by the author. Rather, their appearance varies according to the particular relation the reader strikes to the text. Ingarden may conceive indeterminacies as determinately positioned in the text's structure. But for Iser, indeterminacies are *themselves* indeterminately positioned. Different readers thus forge different constitutive paths through the text. Accordingly, they each experience their own unique sequence of images through which the text's meaning comes alive in their imaginations.

An objection might be raised at this point. A text may very well point to a subset of ideal meanings identical and transcendent to all individual readings. But there is no guarantee that they will be grasped as such. Perhaps surprisingly, the work of Jauss can be mobilized to address this issue. On the face of it, this does not seem possible. Jauss' method of assessing the meaning of a text, almost exclusively in terms of the reception it receives by its readers, raises serious concerns. For without a corresponding analysis of textual structure, his methodology seems subject to all the vagaries of psychologism. But given that a text's collective reception is the focus, his admittedly more pragmatic phenomenology can serve as a supplemental check or yardstick against which individual readings might be measured.

More specifically, Jauss curtails the threat of psychology by describing public reception against the literary, aesthetic and cultural expectations accompanying the appearance of a given work of art. This allows him to set up evaluative criteria to better determine its artistic character. For instance, if a text cannot be said to have disappointed its public, it is likely to predominately hold entertainment value for receiving consciousness. But if the disparity between its expectation and actual reception is so great as to register profound disappointment, the text may later prove to be an initially misunderstood masterpiece. This suggests the importance of establishing the original set of expectations for the text. Comparing its current reception with the way it was initially received raises the possibility of reading differently. This possibility is made all the more palpable when a series of historical receptions also exist, along with receptions of texts similar to the one in question. Faced with this wealth of differing reading experiences, it becomes obvious that objective meanings embodied in texts are not always immediately accessible. So similar to Ingarden's findings, if the objects most appropriate to the text are to be recognized, the reader must actively read rather than passively receive. The broader implications of Jauss' work lie with the need for interpretive theory to factor collective reception into an individual reading. This would help isolate the text's ideal meanings, and thereby create a vantage point from which to confidently adjudicate the interpretive findings of other readings.

The subject-side is emphasized to an even greater degree in the earlier Geneva School of phenomenological criticism which flourished in the 1940s–50s. Having roots with Ingarden as well, its methodology is perhaps best illustrated with the phenomenology of reading carried out by its most well-known member, Poulet. Already in the first moment Poulet problematizes the text *qua* object. The book lying on the table appears as no other. It seems almost aware of its potential to existentially transform when picked up and read. And Poulet does just that, taking his own reader through a first-person account of phenomena encountered along the way. At once the book loses another aspect of objectivity, as it appears to emit from its pages the consciousness of a rational being. This is the author's mind for classical hermeneuts and likewise, *mutatis mutandis*, for Geneva School phenomenologists who generally seek to coincide subjectivities through textual objects. But Poulet does not presume beyond the text before him. He seeks instead a pure identification with this consciousness. As he continues to read, this consciousness slowly opens up and allows him to think its thoughts. Suddenly he realizes these thoughts are objects of his own thought. It is as if he were invaded by some strange and indeterminate entity. But far from excising the foreign invader, Poulet encourages an alliance by clearing its path of remaining textual objects. In the end, a pure consciousness is seen to preside over the meaningful unfolding of the literary work.

Poulet's endeavor to apprehend a subjectivity without objectivity seems to disqualify him from the Husserlian interpretive camp. As Ingarden and Iser exemplify, to consider the literary work as concretized, both sides of the subject-object schema must be deployed. Against this background, trying to get by with just one side appears rather short-sighted. But then again, Poulet stands quite close to Husserl. As already stated, phenomenology broke with epistemological strategies of the past by insisting that meanings come already objectively known to consciousness. So while demonstrating the constitution of the aesthetic object meant through the convergence of reader and text is certainly helpful, Poulet's own strategy to lend this emerging object a subjective voice is equally so. For it underscores how meanings are not idealities 'up there' but instead closely aligned with the conscious acts of subjects taking aim at external objects like texts. From the perspective of discussions untaken below, however, Poulet's value lies in having discerned something foreign to thought contemplating textual matters. It will be seen that despite this phenomenon's association with meaning, it is best understood to subsist outside its field. The further suspicion that it nevertheless retains ties to the subject will be amply confirmed by the work of Lacan.

2.2 Structuralism

[H]ermeneutics and semiology are two ferocious enemies.

—Michel Foucault

With the arrival of structuralism in the early 20th century, a very different withdrawal from meaning presents itself. Like in phenomenology, meaning becomes an object of study. But sourcing meaning to the intentions of consciousness is deemed mistaken. From the structuralist perspective, such a strategy amounts to an *ad hoc* intuitive response which abandons any serious attempt to place investigations of meaning on sure methodological footing. Indeed, structuralism is fervently anti-humanist in its own aspirations for scientificity. It situates the locus of meaning entirely within the confines of language. Accordingly, a full account of the constitution of meaning can be had by exclusively examining linguistic structures – a method suggested by its very name. To be sure, structuralism puts the crucial accent on the structural parts of language, and not on the meaningful wholes they compose. It undertakes a systematic study of the basic elements of language, especially in their relations of combination and contrast to one another. The further assumption that the resulting linguistic figures are arbitrary in nature forces an additional focus on the particular functions they serve in the larger components of language. Overall, the meaningful effects of language hold secondary interest for structuralism, as its primary task is to uncover language's internal dynamics. The following section first discusses two classical structuralists, and then turns to a few so-called 'post-structuralists' from the 1960s onward. Whereas the former analyze language atemporally and without any consideration for subjectivity, the latter's rejection of the centrality of structure relaxes these constraints. Differences aside, they all demonstrate structuralism's general withdrawal from the field of meaning to a non-meaningful domain, the formal framework of language which effectively delimits this field.

A concerted turn from meaning is already accomplished by Saussure, the father of structuralism. This is reflected in his very choice of theoretical object. Significantly, *la parole* [speech] is set aside for an exclusive focus on *la langue* [language]. He argues that the individual utterances of the former only execute possibilities already existing in the latter. This is not to say that Saussure would, for instance, turn a deaf ear to the spoken *kenyigma* to directly take up written Scripture. For language is to be examined in its pure abstraction from the diversity of concrete languages. This notion of abstraction is novel in itself. But *la langue* also breaks with theories of the past in a more literal sense. Whereas 19th century philology gave significant thought to historical factors, Saussure analyzes language as if it were frozen in a moment of time. In later structuralist terminology, he opts for a synchronic rather than a diachronic approach. The diversity of concrete languages is thus no opportunity to offer yet another meaningful narration of the mythical fall from the one primeval language.

Rather, it is evidence of the arbitrariness of the linguistic sign, what Saussure considers the functional unit of language.

Carefully distinguished from the meaning-packed symbol, the sign is composed of two elements which Saussure illustrates as an encircled ratio with the signified (or concept) on top and the signifier (or sound-image) on bottom. Their connection is arbitrary. But it is based on societal convention and therefore not susceptible to the dissenting intentions of individual authors, readers or the prejudices of interpreters. While signifier and signified are distinct, they are nevertheless inseparable, like two sides of a sheet of paper. Together they function as a unit to produce signification (or meaning). But signification is not Saussure's primary focus. The emphasis falls instead on the value each element has through its difference from similar elements at its own level. There are thus two chains of differences which diverge from each other in parallel fashion, with intervallic correspondences between those pairs of elements which make up individual meaning-units. For instance, the value of the signifier 'dog' is in being neither 'cat' nor 'house,' etc. By simultaneously considering their corresponding signifieds, the meaning of 'dog' can likewise be defined. Although here Saussure changes terminology. There are not differences between meaning-units, but oppositions; at the level of its meaning, 'dog' is opposed to 'cat.' This distinction reflects the (mathematical) sign qualities assigned to language. That is, while signifier and signified are purely differential and thus negative when considered separately, their combination is a positive fact.

Given that the linguistic sign holds together the two differential chains of values at particular intervals, Saussure's characterization of meaning-units as positive is apt. He does tend to treat meaning as relatively stable. But at its most consequential, his work anticipates post-structuralism which will underscore the instability of meaning. Hence, when the syntagmatic relation (which refers elements to others in the same chain), is pitted against the paradigmatic relation (which refers elements to others present in the mind but absent from the chain), it is implicitly understood that no perfect one-to-one correspondence between signifier and signified exists. From the structuralist perspective, those textual ambiguities known since the time of Flacius are inescapable. Not due to authorial or interpretive ineptness, such ambiguities are instead inherent to language. The differential chains of language effectively rend meaning so as to prevent its uniform consistency. These mechanisms of language are what interest Saussure the most, not carrying them out in expressions of meaning. His work deeply informs all subsequent treatments of language as structural form and not as that which houses a mystical substance.

In many ways Jakobson stands at the summit of classical structuralist thought. He has decomposed language to a much greater extent than Saussure, producing elaborate and often quite obscure linguistic categories. But many highly useful concepts have also resulted. Through his analysis of aphasia, Jakobson for the first time discerns and sets into opposition two primordial

principles of language use, well-known to anyone who has even a passing familiarity with linguistic theory: metaphor and metonymy. Equally famous is his outline of the six constitutive factors of language. Concisely said, through a point of CONTACT the ADDRESSER sends a MESSAGE to the ADDRESSEE within a CONTEXT using a CODE. The six basic functions of language which correspond to these factors are the PHATIC, the EMOTIVE, the POETIC, the CONATIVE, the REFERENTIAL and the METALINGUAL, respectively. Even without detailing these factors and functions, it might readily be surmised the effort needed to properly set them to task on a text. A moment's reflection should also confirm that while a text is being investigated in such a technical fashion, the experience of meaning which comes from simply reading the text is lost. No doubt this occasions the structuralist to interrupt his interpretive activity with an inquiry into textual meaning. Such hermeneutical questioning is, in fact, an employment of the metalingual function. This is also the function with which Jakobson expresses the least interest.

Instead, Jakobson privileges the poetic function. Given the historical tendency to assign deep significance to poetry, this function is ironically titled. For it is intended to capture the process by which poetic or linguistic sequences are actually generated. The generation of meaningful equivalences to already existing sequences falls instead to the function of meta-language. These two functions are in diametrical opposition to one another. By way of a general assessment, since it is never the poetic word but rather the poetic *function* that is at stake, we might say that if linguistics is to structuralism as poetics is to meaning, what Jakobson accomplishes is the annexation of poetics to linguistics. As with Saussure, his primary concern is not for signification. Rather, it is for the meaningless mechanisms of language which form its structured support. This concern does not change with later theoretical developments.

Post-structuralism is often identified with deconstruction, a term coined by Derrida. However, strictly speaking deconstruction is not a theory but an interpretive technique. It presupposes a text to be fundamentally incompatible with itself, as simultaneously striving toward and deferring convergence between what it says and how it says it. But far from facilitating convergence, deconstruction antagonizes the gap between textual meaning and textual structure. More specifically, a text's binary oppositions are sought out and shown to be structured hierarchically; this hierarchy is then overturned to make the text say the opposite of what it initially appeared to say; finally, the opposition itself is re-inserted into a nonhierarchical relation of difference, thereby exposing the text as incapable of maintaining a univocal center of meaning. Said to haunt every unity, Derrida's notion of difference has its theoretical roots in Saussure.

Recall how Saussure values the signified and signifier negatively, as each is constituted on its own differential plane. But when combined into the linguistic sign, the result is a positive unity embodying the substance of meaning. What

Derrida does is remove the characteristic of positivity from the sign by situating it on the differential plane as well. No longer just in opposition to other signs, its own differentiability is now held to be its most essential characteristic. This doubled, even tripled, notion of difference – whereby the sign is constituted through its difference to other signs, each of which is composed of two differentially constituted elements – is designated by Derrida by the neologism *différance* (as opposed to simple *différence* [difference]). The Derridean project *qua* science of *différance* is therefore deeply Saussurean. Where Saussure accented the negative behind every positive linguistic unity, for Derrida language *only* possesses this prior negative level. Consequently, his investigations into meaning are necessarily decentered due to the inherent instability of the investigative object. For each sign simultaneously confers and derives its meaning diachronically with respect to other signs. This implies that meaning is dispersed across the entire system of language. The additional implication is that any given sign leaves its trace in the others. Deconstruction wagers that within the confines of a single text, these traces accumulate in certain signs. But determinate meanings do not. Instead, the meanings embodied by these signs are exceptionally unclear and what most visibly frustrates textual unity. In the end, a text inevitably subverts and exceeds the author's intentions. It is a perpetually self-deconstructing literary object whose meaning is constituted inter-textually, as functions of *différance*.

This is a long way from Frege's notion that the meaning of an expression lies with the definite object to which it refers. Derrida challenges the commonsensical treatment of language as a mimesis of the world. In a certain sense, there are no extra-textual objects. A linguistic expression is a self-representation whereby operations of *différance* both repress and foreground themselves to give off the *illusion* of referentiality. According to Derrida, the problem lies with the very term *représentation* [from the Latin *repraesentatio*]. It leaves the impression that what is present comes back as a copy of the thing in the absence of the thing for, by and in the subject. In other words, the object presents itself behind its representation for a subject. Worse still, the subject has similarly come to apprehend itself as a representative of some supposed original presence. However, deconstruction removes the prospect of an original presence of Meaning or Self or any other transcendent essence aimed at in interpretation. For what ultimately lies beneath the text are the pre-ontological traces of *différance*, thoroughly frustrating our full grasp of meaning at its every turn.

In more polemical terms, Foucault likewise pits post-structuralist thought against the hermeneutical tradition. His own etymological analysis places the belief in hidden, primordial meanings with what the Greeks called *allegoria* and *hyponoïa*. Championed instead is the disposition inherent to the discipline of semiology, which derives its name from *semeion* [a sign]. But this was only made possible after men like Nietzsche and Freud profoundly transformed the

distributive space of signs. Whereas 16th century thought could dispose of signs uniformly as if occupying a homogeneous space, in the 19th century signs began to stage themselves in a much more differentiated space. The possibility of an alternative interpretive methodology had arrived. Texts no longer needed to be interrogated for their deep meanings. Now, interpretation could project itself out over such depth to expose the textual secret as absolutely superficial.

Without the possibility of arriving at a final meaning, there is nothing to draw the interpretive activity to a close. In a Nietzschean vein, Foucault argues that no sign presents itself passively without already being an interpretation of other signs. Interpretations aim not at signs but at other interpretations, an activity Foucault characterizes as violent seizure. With interpretation logically preceding the sign, the sign has thoroughly lost its 16th century status as a simple benevolent being which proves the benevolence of God. The positive space it once occupied is now deemed negatively infinite without real content or reconciliation. Accordingly, the sign becomes ambiguous, suspicious, even outright malevolent. It collapses under its own interpretive weight, dissolving into the semiotic structures which otherwise support it. Believing differently is to profess faith in original signs which refer to meaningful subjects and objects standing outside the semiotic system. This would submit semiology to hermeneutics and signal the death of interpretation. For Foucault, the very life of interpretation begins by placing semiology prior to the hermeneutical field of meaning.

Post-structuralist insights into meaning have been employed by lesser known figures like LaCapra and White. In particular, their 1980s project to rethink intellectual history constructively carries out a linguistic turn to textual analysis. For his part, LaCapra underscores how the notion of textuality frustrates the usual concept of reality. Textual representations of the past are not a given. Not just its meaningful recovery, but its very existence is always already contingent on the way texts use language. Thus, the interpretive key to meaning is not had by reading a text in its 'proper' context. LaCapra considers a series of common text-context strategies, only to reject each in turn. At one extreme, the context of authorial intention à la Hirsch is defective for its unitary conception of meaning which lends itself to empirical verification. At the other, Gadamer's fusion of horizons and other contextual modes of interpretive discourse overlook how discourse functions *in* texts. As an alternative, a text is better conceived as a complex use of language, or else as a multivalent event in the history of language itself. So if text-context terminology is desired, the former synchronic conception might be set against the diachrony of the latter conception. This would channel investigations to intra-textual uses of language, dampening the intellectual's unwarranted concern for core meanings, as well as the historian's tendency to slide into an uncontrolled plurality of meaning. The intellectual historian is thus called on to make a performative approach to

historical texts, whereby the two extremes are placed into dialogue within the linguistic boundaries of the text itself.

According to White, it is precisely these boundaries which account for the text's symbolic and mimetic effects. So like Saussure, he treats language essentially as form and not substance. But in post-structuralist fashion, this form is set into motion. White's text is an internally self-propelling force, a system of signs or codes which shift at the formal level of its language. His interpretive effort thus abandons direct concern for the text *qua* meaningful product, to instead rigorously follow its internal processes of code shifting which produce that meaning. Such analysis is what makes the text-context problem resolvable. In a certain way, textual form has its own content. The context is already *in* the text, in the specific modalities of code shifting. In other words, the context does not shed hermeneutical light on the text. Rather, the context itself is illuminated in its detailed operations by the structural moves made in the text at the level of its form. Quite unimaginable for Gadamer, what makes the classic text so intriguing is that it actively draws attention to, and makes as its own subject matter, its own processes of meaning production.

At the same time, the dynamic process of overt and covert code shifting calls up and establishes a specific subjectivity in the reader. Consistent with post-structuralism, White argues that the materialization of this subject is precisely just that: not a Subject which maintains its identity from text to text, but one thoroughly produced in, by and through the structures of the text in question. In the end, the meaningful experience of the text consists in the imaginary relation this structural subject strikes with the text's representation of the world. The development of Lacan's thoughts on the subject's relation to the structure of meaning is discussed throughout the final chapters. But first aesthetic theory is examined for the manner in which it withdraws from meaning.

2.3 Aesthetic Theory

The image suspends the course of the world and of meaning – of meaning as a course or current of sense (meaning in discourse, meaning that is current and valid): but it affirms all the more a sense (therefore an “insensible”) that is selfsame with what it gives to be sensed (that is, itself). In the image, which, however, is without an “inside,” there is a sense that is nonsignifying but not insignificant, a sense that is certain as its force (its form).

—Jean-Luc Nancy

As the preceding section endeavored to show, the structural mechanics of language form a limit to the hermeneutical pursuit of meaning. Aesthetic theory also recognizes that meaning is not all there is. But its own investigation into non-meaningful domains employs a methodological approach abandoned by structuralism. Derived from the Greek *aisthanesthai* [to perceive], the very term aesthetic suggests how the subject plays a pivotal role. For the theorist interested

in the aesthetic realm, sensory perceptions become *the* investigative tool to gather in phenomenal objects for examination. The way these objects appear to the investigator is therefore significant, a fact which aligns aesthetic theory with phenomenology. At least in the sense that subjective experience delineates the appropriate investigative venue for both disciplines. Of course, the experience of art is not without meaning. Centuries older than structuralism or phenomenology, aesthetics has proven itself more than capable of extracting out meanings from objects of art. But in recent decades there has been a discernible shift in theoretical focus. Explorations are increasingly being made into what disrupts the meaningful experience of art. Highlighted below are contemporary French thinkers who have theorized on the nature of these disruptions, particularly with respect to the Kantian sublime.

In the early 20th century, Benjamin challenged the traditional notion of translation. As Hermes exemplified, an unfamiliar tongue effectively elevates the disruption of meaning to its complete impasse, while translation permits meaningful messages to flow once again. But for Benjamin, translators who propagate meaning between languages fail to give adequate voice to the *intention* of the original. This is especially true of poetic works where regaining the expressionless creative Word is of utmost importance. To accomplish this, he reasons that a translation should pursue its own course by reproducing textual sense tangentially. Meaning would then cling loosely to the resulting text, even plunge irretrievably into the abyss of its language. Ideally, translation and original become one, like interlinear Scripture. Indeed, here lies Benjamin's prototype, a text identical with truth without the mediation of meaning. It is thus unconditionally translatable.

A half-century later, redemptive-like qualities begin to be directly assigned to the abyssal void itself. Consider how Baudrillard calls the art world's bluff. Artists present their artwork as null. But this pretense of meaninglessness is precisely what compels consumers *a contrario* to attribute deep and hidden significance to aesthetic objects. Baudrillard argues that real insignificance is exceedingly rare. He locates the problem with a loss. In the past, the representation of the world through images kicked off the power of illusion. Today, the value of art is instead linked to a pure circularity. Subjects who enter the image accordingly lose the capacity for illusion. A passion for illusion can be recovered, however, with poetic thought. Such thought stands at the violent crossroads of meaning and nothing. It wagers that 'nothing' runs underneath meaning, and so aims to ex-center reality by attracting the void to its periphery. This opens up a creative space, where creation proceeds from the energy of signs and not from the accumulation of meaning. On the contrary, the subject must aim to destroy substantive meaning in a spectacular event, thereupon restoring its illusory quality. In structuralist terms, Baudrillard's poetic thought similarly attends to the formal level of language so as to account for the appearance of its meaningful content. But the difference between the disciplines

should be clear. Whereas structuralism characteristically refrains from questioning the existential status of meaning, aesthetic theory quite expressly judges meaning to be illusory or imaginary.

Obviously such a characterization of meaning puts aesthetic theory squarely at odds with hermeneutical phenomenology. This is certainly the case with Badiou. Interestingly, both Badiou and Heidegger privilege poetry over other forms of art. They both agree it is capable of truth, one held to be immanent to its artistic effect. But whereas Heidegger embraces artistic truth only insofar as it adequately articulates the meaning of being, Badiou argues that it belongs to art singularly and absolutely. It does not circulate among other domains of truth, like science. Accordingly, an account of its existence is possible by restricting interpretation to the specific procedures of art. Briefly, artistic truth is a subjective composition which proceeds along a precise path: in the beginning is the event, which is sustained by a subject who engages in finite artistic investigations in the name of that event; such fidelity results in a sequence of particular artworks; this composes an infinite truth, the artistic configuration, which operates as the pertinent unit for a thinking of art. If this methodology nevertheless seems scientifically inspired, it is with good reason. Badiouian understanding is one predicated on the fundamental axioms of set theory. In fact, accompanying the emergence of artistic truth is the void, the empty set of mathematics. Whether the void, truth, or the initiating event serves to interrupt the regime of meaning for Badiou, his lesson remains. Internal to the experience of art are elements which sever the subject's relation to the meaning disclosed therein.

Other disruptions to the field of meaning have surfaced through recent developments in Kantian aesthetic theory. In simplified terms, a work of art is a product of artistic activity. It thus bears the mark of purposiveness. But Kant argued that it appears beautiful only insofar as it is experienced as serving no definite purpose. This is true of natural beauty as well. Despite being interrogated by teleological judgment, the attempt to discern hidden purposes at work in the mechanical laws of nature is in vain. Beauty can never proceed from a conscious plan. Whether adhering to artworks or products of nature, it must appear without reason or end. It is as if beauty spontaneously emerges from a void, or a gap in nature's causal chain. Here lies the site of the sublime. Its notion indexes the discord between beauty and purpose, articulating their negative intersection. Kant accordingly characterized sublime phenomena as being neither beautiful nor purposive: nature at its most chaotic displays the very opposite of beauty's harmonious form, while such inexpedient excess dispairs faith in nature's hidden purposiveness. However, Kant did not work out a specific *aesthetic* theory of the sublime. He found the sublime only in crude nature of sufficient magnitude and might, never in artworks or banal natural objects. If St. Peter's Basilica nevertheless *did* convey something of the sublime for Kant, this was due to its colossal size, not its aesthetics.

Contemporary aesthetic theorists imagine otherwise. They have made significant headway in reading Kant against himself, extending his logic of the sublime from its once exclusive domain of chaotic nature, to the aesthetic realm and its objects. In this way, even small artworks like paintings prove capable of triggering sublime effects in the subject. Subjectivity is precisely what holds the key to this accomplishment. Kant had articulated the sublime experience well enough. But his investigations stopped short of questioning the subject's relation to the sublime. Doing so reveals how the subject is fully complicit in its inherent discord. The subject's imagination is simply stretched past the breaking point when attempting to grasp really big objects like God, the soul and the universe as a whole. What Kant called the Ideas of reason, these objects are not of the domain of possible experience. Yet a question arises. Are there not circumstances in which imagination falters when directed at smaller objects which seemingly belong to this domain? For Kant, this was not the case. The transcendental schematism – a notoriously obscure component of his critical philosophy – provided enough time for imagination to complete its task. But for theorists like Lyotard, Rancière, Deleuze and Nancy, it is not just the Ideas of reason that are inadequately schematized. Temporal gaps can also be experienced with everyday objects, especially artworks.

Most clearly, Lyotard puts a logic of the sublime directly to work in the realm of art. The use here of the indefinite article is deliberate. Kant actually specified two sublimities, or rather one sublime divided into two each with its own logic: the mathematical and the dynamical. The mathematical logic takes priority, as it fragments reality into discrete phenomena. While the dynamical transcends and establishes a constitutive exception in the noumenal domain, thereby providing an external guarantee for the coherence of phenomenal reality. These two logics effectively delineate two different strategies to deal with the failure of imagination. With Lyotard, it is the dynamical logic which unlocks his aesthetic project. He expresses this largely on the subject-side. The experience of the sublime gives rise to a pain stemming from the lack of beautiful forms. But this pain engenders pleasure. Not only does the impotence of imagination attest *a contrario* to a striving to harmonize the aesthetic object with reason. The failure to provide a representation of the unrepresentable is also, in a way, successful. For this very experience acts as a (negative) confirmation that the ungraspable Thing exists. Lyotard enlists the avant-garde to ensure the aesthetic sublime receives ample testimony. He entrusts it to perform the essential task of art today, to allude to non-edifying indeterminacy in artistic form.

While slightly more difficult to discern, Rancière opts for the mathematical strategy. The dispersive nature of his texts already suggests this. They seem devoid of exceptional points or moments where definitive conclusions could be drawn. This may disengage his reader, but it no doubt reflects Rancière's commitment to artistic innovation *qua* multiplicity. Apparently, even *discussions* of aesthetics should avoid the representative regime. For Rancière, there is no

reality functioning outside of art. There is only a multiplicity of folds in the sensory fabric of the common. These folds are due to the inherent fissure of sense, the conflict between sensory presentation and the making sense of it. This notion is modeled on Kantian imagination, the essential force of sensibility, which likewise suffers a temporal lag between the apprehension and comprehension of its perceptions. In the end, he finds disputes over the meanings of aesthetic objects to be disputes over what is given and the frame within which these givens are seen.

Rancière's investigations are centered precisely on this frame – a stand-in for the Kantian schematism. His account of what it has disclosed, as well as the different forms it has assumed in the past, is not just to provide a general history of aesthetics. The true intent is to formulate a new distribution of the sensible which could continuously rupture given relations between things and meanings. In other words, he rigorously works to maintain the gap between the two. Anything which might intervene is driven towards dissolution. Rancière thus undercuts Lyotard's preoccupation with the Thing *qua* aspect of the aesthetic object. The Thing may disrupt meaningful aesthetic experience just as much as the gap from which it arises. But Rancière's mathematical logic exposes the substantive Thing as ultimately phantasmatic. There is simply no stable or solid base from which the subject could withstand the violence of imagination as it endeavors to overcome the inherent gap between its own apprehending and comprehending functioning.

In a certain way, Deleuze and Nancy would disagree. Their work has not only uncovered similar disruptions to meaning. It additionally opens up the possibility of *sustaining* these disruptions. This achievement is made possible through a third option not covered by either mathematical or dynamical logic alone. In contrast to Lyotard and Rancière, Deleuze and Nancy think the two logics *together*. Needless to say, the difficulty of their work is an order of magnitude greater than the former. However, they have helpfully made detailed analyses of particular artworks. These artworks instantiate, rather than just illustrate, their respective theoretical projects. That is, a particular artwork *is* its commentary 'on' it. This implies that the minimal gap between the two is somehow sustained. Indeed, Deleuze and Nancy have delimited an object which proves to be the source for the preceding disruptions. From the perspective of this object, Lyotard is overly concerned with the Thing appearing in the wake of its withdrawal, while Rancière expends too much effort on the gap it leaves behind. But the subject may also strike a different relation to this elusive object. As it paradoxically entwines the subject- and object-sides of the aesthetic experience, fully assuming this object permits the sublime to be more consequentially endured.

Deleuze articulates the emergence of this nonsensical point – what might be called the sublime object – through the paintings of Francis Bacon. At stake in Bacon's work is the need to break from mere figuration and narration. These are

only effects, but for that very reason they are intrusive and must be eliminated. This is accomplished with the diagram. Just as the Kantian schemata mediate between chaotic sensibility and unifying understanding, the diagram is a bit of two extremes. It is catastrophic for the figurative givens, but also a germ of rhythm for the new order of the painting. A painting thus integrates its own chaotic abyss, something which the painter experiences as an oscillation between a beforehand and an afterward. This abyss could certainly be reduced to a minimum by transforming abstract form into a visual transformation (Lyotard). Or else by deploying the abyss to a maximum so that the diagram merges with the totality of the painting (Rancière). But Deleuze undertakes the two strategies at once, conceiving the diagram simultaneously as a purely external abstraction *and* as eating away at the entire painting. Summarizing in step-like fashion, the subject is first confronted with the figurative form. Then the diagram intervenes and scrambles it. What emerges is a form of a completely different nature: the Figure. This Figure is no monster. It only appears so from the perspective of a lingering narration. Effectively, the Figure is a realization of the schematic diagram, constructed both as a gradual series and as a sudden whole. Such a sublime object must necessarily exist to hold open the subject's frame for the painting. Otherwise, there is no accounting for why it does not immediately collapse onto the field of meaningful narration.

A slightly different formulation of the sublime object is had with Nancy. He too finds a monstrous dimension in art. But this time dwelling in the depths of photographic images. Again the monster draws its strength from the violence commensurate with the failure of imagination. So if the viewer finds the encounter with the image threatening, this is due to a perspectival illusion which fails to take into account one's own subjectivity. For there is no image without the subject also being in its image. As Nancy speculates, the very ground of the image disappears in the encounter, forcing both itself and the subject into the image. The ground is therefore not an all-encompassing structure. It is instead schematic precisely in the Kantian sense. Expressed otherwise, Nancy argues that it is of the very nature of the image to disrupt meaning. But within its affirmation of sense there exists a bit of intelligible nonsense. This can be read as the collapse of the schematic ground into a mediating point. It is from this point that the subject can sustain monstrous disruptions to meaning. Yet another expression is had with Nancy's analysis of Pontormo's *Visitation*. Does the site of the sublime object lie with the painting, the viewer, both or neither so as to be decentered with respect to each? This ambiguity is experienced in the way the painting seemingly ensnarls the subject into its web. The gazes of the painting's figures overlap with the viewer's own, condense, and then settle into what is perhaps *the* sublime object, depicted in the painting itself: the presence hidden in Mary's womb. As if unsatisfied, however, the gesture repeats, the overlapped gaze settling on other elements equally as indiscernible. In a final

reading, it may be said that this elusive object effectively re-grounds the viewer's analytical framework by incarnating its minimal gap with the painting.

CHAPTER 3

LACAN ON MEANING

[E]very dream has a meaning, though a hidden one.

[E]very dream reveals itself as a psychological structure which has a meaning.

There is at least one spot in every dream at which it is unplumbable – a navel, as it were, that is its point of contact with the unknown.

—Sigmund Freud

Freudian psychoanalysis has always had its adherents. But even in its earliest days, its detractors far outnumbered the faithful. And once the former group brought the dissenting school of ego psychology to prominence, pitching it as the true inheritance of Freud, important psychoanalytic discoveries were in danger of being lost. So it is not surprising that calls for a ‘return to Freud’ were soon heard after the founding father’s death. The majority of these returns were partial, as Habermas’ rather tendentious use of Freud typifies. The same with Ricoeur. He may have had a more comprehensive reading, yet he similarly overlooks vital aspects of psychoanalytic thought. It is Lacan’s own reading which makes these failings obvious. Over the course of many decades he returned time and again to Freud’s original texts, producing his own set which at first blush seems to offer little by way of resemblance. But closer examination reveals how Lacan’s methodology reflects the same multi-leveled approach he found in Freud. This methodology is discernible in any one of Lacan’s works. Yet it may also be used to characterize his lengthy career which divides accordingly into three distinct periods. Expressing this division in terms of the previous chapters, while his hermeneutical phenomenological period (roughly 1933–mid 1950s) makes obligatory petitions to meaning, his structuralist period (mid 1950s–60s) produces withdrawals from meaning. It is the work of his final period, however, which suggests how psychoanalysis proves foundational for the theorization of meaning. For Lacan’s non-hermeneutical phenomenological period (1960s–1981) opens up the possibility of a full suspension of meaning. Part II directly demonstrates how this is theoretically accomplished. The present chapter discusses texts from each of his three periods in turn. Generally speaking, these three periods correspond to the Lacanian registers of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real.

Section 3.1 opens as the other sections do, with a brief discussion of Freudian dream interpretation. It then examines a few of Lacan's *écrits* [writings] for his early efforts to submit psychoanalysis to the imaginary effects of the hermeneutical field. Section 3.2 takes up later *écrits* to consider how Lacan departs from structuralism proper by his efforts to delimit a cause of meaning via the symbolic order of signifiers. Section 3.3 interrogates two of Lacan's seminars for his nonsensical *objet a*, first articulated as the real object *qua* trauma and then as the real object *qua* impossible.

3.1 Imaginary Lacan

[I]t is not enough...to say that Freud lived in a scientific century. Rather, with The Interpretation of Dreams, something of a different essence, of a concrete psychological density, is reintroduced, namely, meaning. From the scientific point of view, Freud appeared at this point to revert to the most archaic thinking – reading something in dreams. He later returns to causal explanations. But when one interprets a dream, one is always up to one's neck in meaning. What is at issue is the subjectivity of the subject, in his desires, in his relation to his environment, to others, to life itself. Our task, here, is to reintroduce the register of meaning, a register that must itself be reintegrated on its own level.

—Lacan, November 18, 1953

Before asserting his famous thesis that all dreams are fulfillments of wishes in the third chapter of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud claims something much simpler: dreams have meaning. Its successful demonstration was a major break from previous thinking. More so than today, in Freud's time dreams were viewed as absurd and not worthy of serious study. He nevertheless does find enough material for a significant scientific literature review dealing with the phenomenon. But by the second chapter a methodology is announced which will not directly address the specific problems raised in the review. For Freud's primary concern is to treat the dream in an unheard of way: as a text. As he writes, "[t]he title that I have chosen for my work makes plain which of the traditional approaches to the problem of dreams I am inclined to follow. The aim which I have set before myself is to show that dreams are capable of being interpreted...[and] "interpreting" a dream implies assigning a "meaning" to it."¹ The traditional approach is hermeneutical and here is the first level at which Freud can be read. Like any other text the dream has a hidden (or just as often, a 'secret' or 'concealed') meaning and its extraction requires interpretation. This level has been well appropriated by the academic and non-psychoanalytic interpretive community, which predictably focuses on Freud's use of classic literature to model the scandalous human 'complexes' he uncovered. It is also on

¹ Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 96.

this level that he is criticized for his supposed intention to develop universal standards.

Lacan can also be seen providing such standards. Witness his *écrit* entitled “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” (1936, 1949). He continuously re-worked its logic over the years. But initially the new theory of ego-formation it conveyed had strong hermeneutical overtones. Homologous to Kant’s transcendental idealist revolution, Lacan argues that it is not man who adapts himself to reality, but rather man who adapts reality to himself. More specifically, the ego creates a new adaptation to ‘reality’ and the subject then tries to maintain cohesion with this double. Ego-formation is quite literally imaginary identification, for this double is essentially an image or ‘*imago*.’ Lacan further refers to the appearance of these doubles and object-projections as hallucinatory and dream-like. This is to better underscore the role the mirror plays in presenting a whole, yet fictional image for the fragmented child. We can readily understand this by considering the scene Lacan paints for us. The human child is born pre-mature and is in need of care. Up to the age of eighteen months, he has immense difficulty with motor coordination and is even outdone by the chimpanzee in intelligence. But while both are able to recognize their images in a mirror, it is only the child who remains fascinated with his specular image, as the chimpanzee quickly loses interest. Present here is the elementary imaginary dyad: the fragmented child anticipates himself when looking into the mirror,² but is ever uncertain, so he turns to his mother who offers a confirmation. “Yes, that’s you!” she says and he is swept up in the wave of jubilation which attends this phantasmatic experience of self-mastery. In this way the child is compensated with a whole image of himself, an image that he will carry for the rest of his life. This image is what Lacan calls the Ideal-ego.³

The inherent division of subjectivity will become a great motif in Lacan. But at this early stage he tends to emphasize the subject’s primordial envelope. In “Presentation on Psychical Causality” (1946), for instance, what is seen as decisive to ego-formation is the being it represents. Accordingly, ‘any healthy phenomenology... requires us to consider lived experience prior to any objectification and even prior to any reflexive analysis that interweaves objectification and experience.’⁴ To put it somewhat crudely, if the gap between the subject and its ego becomes too wide so as to become symptomatic, these symptoms are to be integrated back into the patient’s life in a meaningful way. The goal of psychoanalytic treatment is thus similar to the general approach of

² To be sure, an actual mirror need not be present. Another child or even an adult can act as that other who lends its whole image to foster a sense of wholeness for the fragmented child.

³ Lacan, “The Mirror Stage,” 75–7.

⁴ Lacan, “Presentation on Psychical Causality,” 146.

hermeneutics which integrates disturbing elements of the text into an overall cohesive narrative. Otherwise said, the text is like a fragmented child, with the interpretive gesture amounting to the act of reassembling the text into the wholeness of a mirroring interpretation. Textual gaps index interpretive failure and simply must be resolved, as they impede the text's full integration into the field of meaning. It is as if the text casts a disturbing gaze out from these gaps, resulting in an unsettling experience which the interpreter endeavors to neutralize through hermeneutical technique.

The first period of Lacan's career culminates with his *écrit* "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis" (1953), popularly known as his Rome Discourse. While using his name only twice, this paper nevertheless bears the distinctive mark of Heidegger as it generally links together the subject, language and speech on the basis of a reading of psychoanalysis that is undeniably hermeneutical phenomenological. As he writes, "[i]f psychoanalysis can become a science (for it is not yet one) and if it is not to degenerate in its technique (and perhaps this has already happened), we must rediscover the meaning of its experience."⁵ Like Heidegger's problematic of unveiling meaningful truth, the very notion of the unconscious calls for an exegesis to reestablish the censored chapters of the subject's history. This is analogous to the interpretive task of clarifying obscure texts. And just like for hermeneuts from the medieval period onward, this task is linked to truth. But in the present case this takes place phenomenologically, through 'the Word realized in discourse that darts from mouth to mouth, conferring on the act of the subject who receives its message the meaning that makes this act an act of history and gives it its truth.'⁶ But simply because Lacan stresses language and speech throughout this paper, one should not conclude that he is a structuralist. In 1953 his use of the phrase 'symbolic order' still refers to the substantive matter and imponderable meaning of symbolic objects and not to the mechanics of signifiers. Thus the claim that the Freudian 'discovery was that of the field of the effects, in man's nature, of his relations to the symbolic order and the fact that their meaning goes all the way back to the most radical instances of symbolization in being'⁷ is a reading of psychoanalysis that situates the symbolic order *qua* system of signifiers behind a primary concern for a being grasped through meaning. Later, Lacan straightforwardly writes that 'psychoanalysis in its early development...[was] intimately linked to the discovery and study of symbols' and that this new development 'expresses nothing less than the re-creation of human meaning in an arid era of scientism.'⁸ This is significant because, as he wrote earlier,

⁵ Lacan, "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," 221.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 238–9.

‘[s]ymbols in fact envelop the life of man with a network so total that they join together those who are going to engender him “by bone and flesh” before he comes into the world; so total that they bring to his birth, along with the gift of the stars, if not with the gifts of the fairies, the shape of his destiny; so total that they provide the words that will make him faithful or renegade, the law of the acts that will follow him right to the very place where he is not yet and beyond his very death; and so total that through them his end finds its meaning in the last judgment, where the Word absolves his being or condemns it – unless he reaches the subjective realization of being-towards-death.’⁹

Speaking even earlier about the Word, ‘the world of things will situate itself in ‘a language’s world of meaning.’¹⁰ Lines like these could have easily been written by Ebeling, Gadamer, Ricoeur or anyone well-versed in Heideggerian hermeneutical phenomenology. At this point in Lacan’s career it is clear that the meaning-dense symbol forms the structure and limit of the psychoanalytic field.

Consequently, the experience of self-dispossession is attributable to the subject’s alienation from its most primordial and meaningful being. The task of psychoanalysis is thus one of reestablishing a link to this ontological dimension, or else to compensate for its loss with a renarrativization of the subject’s history. The use of the *futur antérieur* – a French verbal declension that marks what ‘will have been’ the case after a particular future moment has lapsed – problematizes simple conceptions of meaning-conferment by adding a complex temporal dimension. This in large part accounts for Lacan’s opposition to determinist lines of thinking which consider events in the subject’s past as simple facts. On the contrary, for Lacan such events are always already historicized so that what is important is how the subject today perceives them to have been experienced. Here is where the psychoanalyst may be of assistance:

‘What we teach the subject to recognize as his unconscious is his history – in other words, we help him complete the current historicization of the facts that have already determined a certain number of the historical “turning points” in his existence. But if they have played this role, it is already as historical facts, that is, as recognized in a certain sense or censored in a certain order.’¹¹

He provides an example by way of the anal stage to illustrate that what is at stake is not the fact of toilet training as such but whether the subject registers it as a victory or as a defeat. It should also be noted that Lacan claims such ‘restructurings of the event after the fact,’ which in French would be rendered by the term *après coup*, are in line with Freud’s notion of *Nachträglichkeit* or deferred action.¹² This implies that any event takes on its full meaning only at a

⁹ Ibid., 231.

¹⁰ Ibid., 228.

¹¹ Ibid., 217.

¹² Ibid., 213. This logic is equally applicable to the reading given texts. So in no way can the writings of Heidegger, Husserl, Derrida, Nancy, Freud or any other be taken as a

future date; its present status is thus what it ‘will have meant’ to the subject. In terms of meaning, the past is in a sense more flexible than the future.

Given this understanding, Lacan maintains that the psychoanalyst’s most formidable technique is to ‘punctuate’ the speech of the patient. Utilizing terminology from an earlier *écrit* on logical time, Lacan argues that with proper punctuation, the psychoanalyst ‘annuls the *times for understanding* in favor of the *moments of concluding* which precipitate the subject’s meditation toward deciding the meaning to be attached to the early event.’¹³ More directly, he writes that ‘[p]unctuation, once inserted, establishes the meaning; changing the punctuation renews or upsets it; and incorrect punctuation distorts it.’¹⁴ The exact nature of the punctuation, whether it takes the form of repeating a word the subject has just uttered or through a simple clearing of the throat, is less important when compared to its proper timing. Here lies the rationale for his infamous ‘short sessions’ which is more accurately termed ‘variable length sessions’ since there is no telling when a favorable opportunity will arise to suddenly terminate the session. He writes:

‘It is, therefore, a propitious punctuation that gives meaning to the subject’s discourse. This is why the ending of the session – which current technique makes into an interruption that is determined purely by the clock and, as such, takes no account of the thread of the subject’s discourse – plays the part of a scansion which has the full value of an intervention by the analyst that is designed to precipitate concluding moments. Thus we must free the ending from its routine framework and employ it for all the useful aims of analytic technique.’¹⁵

In other terms which are maintained throughout this paper, punctuation has the effect of halting the subject’s ‘empty speech’ to produce instead a genuine ‘full speech.’

As Lacan moves into his structuralist period, the hermeneutical phenomenological shell of these insights is removed in order to expose and rearticulate their underlying logic using the pure language of signifiers.

simple collection of facts. Rather, the particular way they have been ‘taken up’ – say, from the perspective of the work of early 1970s Lacan – is what is important.

¹³ Ibid., 213. The *écrit* in question is “Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty” (1945).

¹⁴ Ibid., 258.

¹⁵ Ibid., 209.

3.2 Symbolic Lacan

[T]he step I ask you to take in this seminar is to follow me when I say to you that the sense of the analytic discovery isn't simply to have found meanings but to have gone much further than anyone has ever gone in reading them, namely right to the signifier. That this fact is neglected explains the dead ends, the confusions, the circles and tautologies, that analytic research encounters. The mainspring of the analytic discovery isn't to be found in the so-called libidinal or instinctual meanings relative to a whole range of behavior. These exist, it's true. But in the human being those meanings that are the closest to need, meanings that are relative to the most purely biological insertion into a nutritive and captivating environment, primordial meanings, are, in their sequence and in their very foundation, subject to laws that are the laws of the signifier.

—Lacan, April 18, 1956

Besides the Oedipus complex, other offending overreaches of *The Interpretation of Dreams* include its account of typical dreams, and especially its sixth chapter which seemingly sets the meaning of dream imagery once and for all. What his critics overlook, however, is how Freud always takes the subject's individual appropriation of culturally inherited symbols. Indeed Freud 'should like to utter an express warning against over-estimating the importance of symbols in dream-interpretation, against restricting the work of translating dreams merely to translating symbols and against abandoning the technique of making use of the dreamer's associations.'¹⁶ Symbolic interpretation is merely an auxiliary method to the primary method of following the chain of associations the dreamer himself makes upon waking and speaking of the dream. Here is an aspect of the second level at which Freud can be read. This level is upheld whenever his readers are admonished not to be seduced by the imagery of the manifest content of the dream, but to turn instead to its latent dream-thoughts if the disentanglement of its meaning is desired. To make this clear, he famously likens the dream to a rebus whose solution can only be found by submitting its pictorial values to an analysis which takes place at the signifier level. The dream interpreter is to set aside the (hermeneutical) relations of the whole composition and its parts, and 'try to replace each separate element by a syllable or word that can be represented by that element in some way or other.'¹⁷ To illustrate, a dreamer who sees a clock in his dream that reads 'twenty to five' is to write it down with just these words, and not as 4:40. Otherwise, he is likely to overlook how it represents the number 225 – the dollar amount which caused him anxiety the previous evening as he filed his taxes. Picture-puzzles simply lose their true significance if merely treated as pictorial compositions.

It might be countered that it is precisely the absurdity of dream images which triggers the questioning upon waking of what the dream means. However,

¹⁶ Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 359–60.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 278.

a structuralist reading of Freud would point out that by remaining at this level of imaginary meaning, the meaningless structural mechanism which generates the dream's phenomenal meaning-effect is neglected. A concern for meaning and structure do not stand on the same level. While the meaning-effect is easily invoked by a simple pause in the analysis of the chain of signifiers, it takes considerable effort to move to that analysis from the level of meaning. Indeed '[i]t cannot be denied that to interpret and report one's dreams demands a high degree of self-discipline.'¹⁸ Freud often laments how his discoveries are not widely accepted because so few actually attempt to analyze dreams as he advises. Not only advises, but actually practices: upon waking from a dream Freud would write it down on paper, usually immediately but never longer than a day later. Its analysis would then proceed *from the written text itself*. It is this rigorous attention to the structural level of signification that accounts for Freud's conviction that 'dreams really have a meaning and that a scientific procedure for interpreting them is possible.'¹⁹ Writing in an intellectual climate that witnessed the modeling of the human sciences on the natural sciences, as well as the rise of phenomenology and structuralism, it is little wonder that Freud aspired to put his new discipline on firm scientific footing.

Lacan's own turn toward scientificity also parallels his structuralist concerns. But his move away from hermeneutical phenomenology should not imply that he now explains meaning through the determining forces of signifiers. At least not in the sense of naively conceiving meaning as a finished product which emerges from an assembly line of signifying chains. Readers of Lacan's work from his relatively brief second period might be tempted to conclude otherwise. They rightly identify his desire to delimit causal forces in the field of meaning. In his defense it must be stressed that while similarly investigating the formal aspects of this field as other structuralists, he uniquely does so by insisting that first, there is a cause of meaning; second, the cause of meaning is decentered; and third, this decentered cause is the signifying structure itself. Such an understanding better accounts for why meaning-effects are experienced only when strict structural work is set aside. For Lacan, at the formal level of language stands sense, and performing structural analysis accesses this sense but not meaning. The potential for meaning is actualized only in a future moment when signifiers are released from their analysis, thereby allowing their free and incessant sliding to produce the imaginary meaning-effect. At this point in Lacan's career sense and meaning are related roughly as cause and effect, articulated with respect to the symbolic *qua* formal mechanism of the signifying structure. In Lacan's third period meaning is still seen as an effect of sense, but the status of this cause is conceived as real and not symbolic. While the following three *écrits* from his structuralist period are best understood by taking

¹⁸ Ibid., 485.

¹⁹ Ibid., 100.

into account work from his final two decades, an adequate sense of Lacan's project can nevertheless be had by endeavoring to keep their examination strictly oriented towards the linguistic structures discussed therein.

The "Seminar on "The Purloined Letter"" (1956) recommends itself for a variety of reasons. Throughout this *écrit* the insights gained from structural analysis are juxtaposed to their imaginary meaning-effects which are liable to lead one astray. From the very first page Lacan announces how

[t]he teaching of this seminar is designed to maintain that imaginary effects, far from representing the core of analytic experience, give us nothing of any consistency unless they are related to the symbolic chain that binds and orients them. I am, of course, aware of the importance of imaginary impregnations (*Prägung*) in the partializations of the symbolic alternative that give the signifying chain its appearance. Nevertheless, I posit that it is the law specific to this chain which governs the psychoanalytic effects that are determinant for the subject – effects such as foreclosure (*Verwerfung*), repression (*Verdrängung*), and negation (*Verneinung*) itself – and I add with the appropriate emphasis that these effects follow the displacement (*Entstellung*) of the signifiers so faithfully that imaginary factors, despite their inertia, figure only as shadows and reflections therein.²⁰

As his use of Freudian terminology suggests, Lacan posits a parallel between the workings of the symbolic order and the functioning of the unconscious. This paper must have held special importance for Lacan, as he placed it at the very beginning of his *Écrits* whose compiled papers are otherwise generally presented in chronological order. Such importance is indirectly confirmed by the attention it has received by literary criticism. The brilliant structural analysis of Poe's short story has easily made this the most popular of all of Lacan's works for English departments across academia. Its main themes are well-known, like how the repetition of scenes in Poe's text proceeds according to which character possesses the feminizing letter, which in turn makes them possessed by its meaning.²¹ The possession of this letter further determines the spatial disposition of all the characters and even dictates how much insight they can draw from each scene. Less known are the how and why of these structural movements.

To address the underlying mechanism which accounts for these movements, one must turn to the latter half of the paper. There Lacan supplements his English department-friendly literary analysis with a scientific exposition. It comes complete with strange diagrams and figures inscribed in obscure notational shorthand. Together with his confusingly laconic writing style, the exposition is sure to give initial pause to even the well-versed in mathematics and logic. What Lacan illustrates is that there is a certain autonomy to the

²⁰ Lacan, "Seminar on "The Purloined Letter,"" 6.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

workings of the symbolic order and thus to unconscious processes. This autonomy stems from the various degrees of ciphering involved in these workings, a ciphering which dictates in many respects the general direction a signifying system can proceed. Their overlapping or overdetermined symbols are designed to mimic how natural language assigns more than a single meaning to any word or phrase such that a surplus of words is most often required to adequately represent one's intention. Lacan has effectively laid out a series of exercises for his reader. But in what is perhaps the Lacanian version of Freud's admonishment to *actually practice* dream analysis, he warns against taking up these exercises solely for their 'recreational character.'²² The painstaking process of slowly working through these pages with paper and pencil in hand may or may not appeal to one's sensibilities. But Lacan wagers that only through such analytic work – properly speaking, a *deciphering* – can one truly be convinced that if the unconscious does exist and its processes are so ciphered, then these processes indeed have nothing to do with meaning. The realm of meaning is under the sole purview of conscious thought and can be safely set aside when discussing (the truth of) unconscious formations and productions. More strongly said, meaning *must* be set aside as it covers over the unconscious causal forces of the subject. Lacanian interpretation does not so much aim to uncover meaning as rather seek to reduce the matter at hand to the meaningless movement of overdetermined signifiers.

But it is a year later that Lacan first works out a full theory of signifiers, as demonstrated in his *écrit* "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud" (1957). It is here that Lacan famously inverts the order of Saussure's linguistic sign, placing instead the signifier on top and the signified on bottom with an intervening bar which quite literally bars any intimate relation between the two. In his algebraic shorthand,²³ it is represented as $\frac{S}{s}$. Generally speaking, the signified is another term for (the smallest unit of) meaning. So what Lacan now calls an algorithm seems to concur with the Saussurean notion that to every signifier stands a meaning. Yet Lacan breaks from Saussure by claiming that these algorithms are 'devoid of meaning.'²⁴ Indeed this entire paper

²² *Ibid.*, 39.

²³ Lacan begins to use algebraic symbols in the mid 1950s in an attempt to formalize psychoanalysis, a basic requirement for any discipline with designs on achieving scientific status. Although his rationale for their use should be seen more in line with his repeated insistence that such formalization is necessary for the successful transmission of psychoanalytic knowledge in the training of psychoanalysts. This generally accords with structuralist thought which likewise adheres to linguistic form to frustrate the imaginary lures of intuitive thinking. His use of such symbols only increases from this point on, and in the early 1970s he coins the term *mathème* [*mathème*] to designate his own particular psychoanalytic algebra.

²⁴ Lacan, "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious," 416.

can be seen as an effort to set aside meaning for signifying structure, which here amounts to substituting for every signified a chain of signifiers.²⁵ A couple of illustrations are then presented to prepare us for the claim on the following page, *viz.*, that ‘the signifier in fact enters the signified.’ Signifiers always problematize the signified from within, and upon close examination the signified reveals itself as nothing but a series of signifiers. It is thus the signifier that has logical priority, ‘[f]or the signifier, by its very nature, always anticipates meaning by deploying its dimension in some sense before it.’ Interrupted phrases like ‘I’ll never...’ and ‘The fact remains...,’ which are missing their significant terms, anticipate their meaning. Yet they nevertheless make *sense* and one that ‘is all the more oppressive in that it is content to make us wait for it.’ In a sentence which nicely captures the problematic relation of meaning to the signifier, whereby the former incessantly slides under the latter, Lacan writes ‘that it is in the chain of the signifier that meaning *insists*, but that none of the chain’s elements *consists* in the signification it can provide at that very moment.’²⁶ Certainly the meaning of the sentence ‘George Washington was the first president of the United States’ insists in this series of signifiers. Yet one would be hard pressed to localize exactly where it consists in that series. It is as if its meaning suddenly emerges from nowhere since the whole of that meaning cannot be gotten by summing up the meaning of each individual part – well-known to anyone who has ever dabbled in translation and realized how word for word translations are often useless in rendering meaning from one language to another. This ‘nowhere’ from which meaning springs is the empty place occupied by the signifying structure itself.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that the potential sliding of meaning is (at least temporarily) stopped. To explain this phenomenon, Lacan uses the analogy of ‘button ties’ [*points de capiton*]. Literally designating upholstery buttons which prevent a shapeless mass of stuffing from freely moving about, the idea is that anchoring points exist to knot the signifier and signified together. Initiated towards the end of sentences, this involves a retroactivity which complements the anticipatory nature of signifiers noted above. Consider the interrupted sentence ‘It was light...’. Here the sliding of meaning manifests itself in the uncertainty which arises in the mind of the reader as to the exact signification of the term light. At best this term anticipates a limited array of possible meanings. But it is only by actually completing the sentence with one of these possibilities, say with ‘...outside,’ ‘...so he could carry it’ or even ‘...reading’ that the meaning is buttoned-down. The anticipatory nature of signifiers at the start of sentences thus overlaps with the retroactive nature of those at the end to result in a tying

²⁵ This is implied throughout but sometimes stated quite directly: ‘[I]t is easy to see that only signifier-to-signifier correlations provide the standard for any and every search for signification [meaning].’ *Ibid.*, 418.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 419.

down of meaning. A further implication of the analogy should also be clear. Just as button ties are not permanent anchors, the meaning of sentences are not so fixed that they cannot later be called into question with future sentences. If this brings Ingarden and Iser to mind, this is because Lacanian structuralist thought is generally in accord with the phenomenology of reading.

Another way to recognize with what 'elusive ambiguity the ring of meaning flees from our grasp along the verbal string' is through the 'fact that access to meaning is granted only to the double elbow of metaphor,...namely, the fact that the S and s of the Saussurian algorithm are not in the same plane, and man was deluding himself in believing he was situated in their common axis, which is nowhere.'²⁷ The actual arrangement of the algebraic ratio $\frac{S}{s}$ provides a visual prop for how a signifier S (light) can come to mark the place of a series of signifiers s (It was light so he could carry it) such that the latter disappears while its meaning is in some sense preserved in the former. This accounts for metaphor's poetic effect whereby two or more meanings exist in one signifier. But since meaning is demoted to the secondary structuring effects of signifiers, Lacan is driven to make a further distinction within the realm of the signifier. Hence his distinction between the signifier and the letter. Defined as 'the localized structure of the signifier,'²⁸ the letter is not of the realm of meaning but rather of sense. The letter is what provides direction to the movement of signifiers as they subvert the place of meaning itself. In this way, by straddling the very instance of this letter in the unconscious with a signifier substituting for a series of signifiers, Lacan can claim that the 'metaphor is situated at the precise point at which meaning is produced in nonmeaning.'²⁹

Other figures of speech and tropes are likewise defined as unconscious mechanisms. This generally distinguishes Lacan from the linguist. But he similarly departs from traditional structuralists who eschew notions of subjectivity. As a psychoanalyst, Lacan's interest in subverting meaning at the textual level is calculated to discourage the subject's alienating immersion in its field. This amounts to frustrating the constitution of an imaginary sense of self. Whereas reintegration into the field of meaning was once encouraged, Lacan now instructs analysts to *separate* the subject from this field. The gap between symbolic and imaginary identification is to be maintained, not primordially overcome. Expressed in terms of the mirror stage, the child must not remain transfixed by his Ideal-ego. He is to instead identify with the symbolic point *from which* that image appears to be a meaningfully good fit. Called the Ego-ideal, one such point is provided by mother's reassurance. As a signifier, it marks off the very space in which mirroring occurs and accordingly takes logical priority over the Ideal-ego. In the end, signifiers are the determining factors in the subject's

²⁷ Ibid., 430–1.

²⁸ Ibid., 418.

²⁹ Ibid., 423.

overall sense of self. So in no way is Lacan's structuralist turn to be viewed as registering a frustration with the incessant slide of meaning. Rather, it registers his faith that only signifiers can break the subject away from his Ideal-ego, which is nothing but a metonymic displacement of a desire for a full and meaningful being.

The separation between being and meaning is only brought to its full notion in Lacan's third period. There it is seen how the subject actually *emerges* from the meaningless structure of language as a being opposed to its meaning. However, at this time Lacan directs our analytic gaze to the operations of signifiers, for signifiers assembled into linguistic structures are germane to investigations into the cause of meaning. After listing numerous obscure figures of speech, he asks: 'Can one see here mere manners of speaking, when it is the figures themselves that are at work in the rhetoric of the discourse the analysand actually utters?' Lacan would agree with the common structuralist truth of how 'language speaks the subject.' But he goes much further to argue that 'we cannot confine ourselves to giving a new truth its rightful place, for the point is to take up our place in it.'³⁰ His own writing style is consistent to these ends as it is notably more performative and prescriptive than demonstrative. While this attests to the inscription of his own subjectivity in his texts, it does make reading them difficult. But only if the reader stubbornly remains at the question of what Lacan *means* by this or that formulation and avoids the challenging demands of actually working through his texts. In the opening lines of "The Instance of the Letter" is a statement equally applicable to the entire *Écrits*. Lacan writes that his text should be situated 'between writing and speech – it will be halfway between the two' and is so crafted as to 'leave the reader no other way out than the way in, which I prefer to be difficult. This, then, will not be a writing in my sense of the term.' Lacan's texts are only hindering and discouraging to those in search of readily appropriable meaning. But for the scholar willing to peek behind the imaginary veil to put the structures he finds there to productive and truthful ends, their difficulty merely signals the enormously flexible thought contained therein.

Lacan found Freud's work to be just as flexible. In "The Signification of the Phallus" (1958), he argues that despite preceding Saussure historically, Freud nevertheless fully anticipated structuralism:

[T]he commentary on Freud's work I have been pursuing for seven years...[has] led to certain results: first and foremost, to promote the notion of the signifier as necessary to any articulation of the analytic phenomenon, insofar as it is opposed to that of the signified in modern linguistic analysis. Freud could not have taken into account modern linguistics, which postdates him, but I would maintain that Freud's discovery stands out precisely because, in setting out from a domain in which one could not have expected to

³⁰ Ibid., 433.

encounter linguistics' reign, it had to anticipate its formulations. Conversely, it is Freud's discovery that gives the signifier/signified opposition its full scope: for the signifier plays an active role in determining the effects by which the signifiable appears to succumb to its mark, becoming, through that passion, the signified.³¹

He subsequently writes how this has led to a 'passion of the signifier' which has opened up 'a new dimension of the human condition in that it is not only man who speaks, but in man and through man that it [*ça*] speaks.' This 'it' speaks in 'the Other,' what Lacan in his structuralist period equates with the symbolic order, or the battery of signifiers that make up the unconscious. This is so 'because it is there that the subject finds his signifying place in a way that is logically prior to any awakening of the signified.' Lacan will rearticulate the underlying logic of the relation between the subject and signifying structure into his final decades. In terms of the present *écrit*, it is expressed in two different ways. The first has to do with distinguishing the phallus *qua* signifier from the meaning of the phallus. Their distinction is often overlooked in the literature. Perhaps rather predictably, as the very title of the paper leads one to suspect it will focus on the meaning (signification) of the phallus. Yet a cursory glance through its pages confirms that Lacan most often speaks of the phallus in its capacity as a signifier and not as a signified. And again there is an order of logical dependence: '[T]he phallus is a signifier...that is destined to designate meaning effects as a whole, insofar as the signifier conditions them by its presence as signifier.'³² The two aspects of the phallus are therefore related. The meaning of the phallus concerns a subjective experience. It is an experience of virility, the pleasurable feeling of potentially grasping *all* the signifiers (and thus all the meanings) in a structure. But it is also an experience of impotence, the painful realization that such an all (and the total meaning it potentially conveys) forever eludes one's grasp. The overall experience is thus one of *jouissance*, the pleased pain of a pulsation between everything and nothing, as when a friend unacquainted with your area of expertise suddenly inquires after its meaning. Such an auspicious occasion is often met with a feeling of helplessness or in psychoanalytic terms, the experience of symbolic castration.³³

What should not be overlooked is how this experience of the impossible fullness of meaning is *itself* marked by a signifier, and one that is entirely devoid of a signified. To explain this, consider how for any network of signifiers to operate as a differential system, it must contain a lack which cannot be filled so

³¹ Lacan, "The Signification of the Phallus," 577–8.

³² *Ibid.*, 579.

³³ In other words, symbolic castration causes one to excitedly declare how he knows the true meaning of some situation (a success) – much like Michael Jackson's enthusiastic "This is it!" – yet is simultaneously an experience proving him utterly incapable of explaining what precisely that meaning is (a failure).

as to 'complete' the system. This could also be conceived as a system which sets in motion its signifiers in an endeavor to find the 'missing' signifier. Either way the result is the same: its total completion and thus all of its meaning-effects are impossible to achieve. Yet this very notion of a lacking signifier is further marked by a signifier: a signifier of the lack of a signifier. However, this is not yet the phallic signifier. All one needs to do to grasp *this* signifier is reflect on the 'place' in which the lack of the signifier converts into the signifier of the lack. The signifier which marks this place is the phallus *qua* signifier, a paradoxical signifier-without-signified that 'sticks out' from the series of ordinary signifiers. It is an element in the symbolic order in which excess and lack coincide. So while the phallus *qua* signified is the subjective experience of pulsating between a joyful grasp of meaning and the painful inability to fully articulate it, the phallus *qua* signifier is a pure signifier which means meaning as such. They may be distinct, yet they are nevertheless intimately related. For being dispossessed of the phallic signifier is the price to be paid for any meaningful experience.

This leads to the second key expression of this paper, Lacan's contention that

'one can indicate the structures that govern the relations between the sexes by referring simply to the phallus' function. These relations revolve around a being and a having which, since they refer to a signifier, the phallus, have contradictory effects: they give the subject reality in this signifier, on the one hand, but render unreal the relations to be signified, on the other. This is brought about by the intervention of a seeming [*paraître*] that replaces the having in order to protect it, in one case, and to mask the lack thereof, in the other.³⁴

Concisely said, man is defined as 'having' the phallus while woman is defined as 'being' the phallus. Here lies the origin of Lacan's earlier attempt to formulize sexual difference. As can be seen, it is one which is strictly conceived as internal to phallic economy. The sexual categorization of the subject simply proceeds according to which of the two possible relations it takes with respect to the phallus. It is a resounding truth that much of the criticism leveled at Lacan's notion of sexual difference is leveled at this particular conception. What is thereby overlooked is how Lacan himself eventually recognized the shortcomings of articulating sexual difference as a symbolic reality. In the early 1970s, he turns instead to consider its *real* basis. Most strikingly inscribed into his 'formulae of sexuation,' commentary in the literature on this later conception of sexual difference has only slowly been growing in recent years. The formulae of sexuation are extensively discussed and enlarged upon throughout Part II.

³⁴ Ibid., 582.

3.3 Real Lacan

What is the signifier? The signifier – as promoted in the rites of a linguistic tradition that is not specifically Saussurian, but goes back as far as the Stoics and is reflected in Saint Augustine’s work – must be structured in topological terms. Indeed, the signifier is first of all that which has a meaning effect and it is important not to elide the fact that between signifier and meaning effect there is something barred that must be crossed over.

—Lacan, December 19, 1972

In an important footnote added a quarter of a century after the initial publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud explains that the essence of dreams is not so much found in latent dream-thoughts in distinction from the dream imagery of its manifest content. Rather, the key distinction lies between the former and the dream-work which creates that particular form of thinking known as the dream.³⁵ What is at stake is how the dream-work strives to transform potentially troubling latent thoughts into innocuous manifest content so that the dreamer will not awake. It is here the larger dimension of Freud’s structuralism reveals itself, imperceptibly moving into a focused concern for a nonsensical object. What thereby opens up is a possible third level at which Freud can be read. Two of the four factors composing the mechanics of the dream-work’s process of forming dreams are well-known. While condensation compresses the wealth of latent thoughts into the manifest content of dreams which are quite slight by comparison, displacement transforms latent thought elements of high psychological value into manifest content with lower, more acceptable intensities.³⁶ Along with considerations for representability and the secondary revision the dream undergoes by the awakened dreamer when he articulates it, a dream is formed whose overall status is a distorted fulfillment of a wish. It follows that its hidden meaning can be revealed by working back through the transformation process of the dream-work. However, Freud notes how

‘[t]here is often a passage in even the most thoroughly interpreted dream which has to be left obscure; this is because we become aware during the work of interpretation that at that point there is a tangle of dream-thoughts which cannot be unravelled and which moreover adds nothing to our knowledge of the content of the dream. This is the dream’s navel, the spot where it reaches down into the unknown. The dream-thoughts to which we are led by interpretation cannot, from the nature of things, have any definite endings; they are bound to branch out in every direction into the intricate network of

³⁵ Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 506–7.

³⁶ See *ibid.*, Chapter VI (A) and (B). These are later translated linguistically as metaphor and metonymy, respectively, by Jakobson.

our world of thought. It is at some point where this meshwork is particularly close that the dream-wish grows up, like a mushroom out of its mycelium.³⁷

All the elements of the dream can be accounted for by disentangling the meshwork of the latent dream-thoughts schematized by the dream-work. Yet an exceptional element nevertheless remains. Despite being disclosed by the dream-work, dream analysis cannot fully account for this most obscure and distorted element by tracing it back to a latent dream-thought. Here is why Freud expresses this element as a halting point to our knowledge of the dream. Its status is ontological, not epistemological. The objectivity it possesses comes precisely by paradoxically embodying the very dream-work which disclosed it. Without this object, analysis would be interminable and there would be no accounting for why latent dream-thoughts do not immediately collapse onto the manifest content of the dream. Using aesthetic terminology, Freud effectively uncovers the sublime object of dreams. If such an object were extracted, the entire dream and its meaningful content would unravel.

What remains parenthetical in Freudian dream analysis becomes a generally theorized object with Lacan. This may be approached by again raising the question of a cause of meaning. If Lacan's second period establishes that the signifying structure operates as the decentered cause, the movement into his third and final period does not so much abandon this insight as ask a further question: does the signifying structure *itself* have a cause? By answering in the affirmative starting in the 1960s, Lacan for the remainder of his career effectively moves beyond both hermeneutics and structuralism. This new concern is seen in the second lecture of his *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1964), a lecture that day dedicated to the 'function of cause' in which he is recorded to have said: 'Cause is to be distinguished from that which is determinate in a chain, in other words the *lam*...In short, there is cause only in something that doesn't work.'³⁸ There are two points to note with this statement. Firstly, Lacan now holds there to be an indeterminate (capital 'C') Cause standing 'outside' the series of (little 'c') causes which make up the mechanistic movement of a chain of signifiers. This Cause is defined to be of the real, which implies that the notion of the real has been radically reworked from the previous decade. Schematically said, the real for Lacan in the 1950s was largely equated with 'reality' regarded as the sensory-laden background of the symbolic subject. But in the 1960s the real is elevated to a more dignified notion, as that which acts as the absent cause of the symbolic itself. The ultimate Cause of meaning is thus one further remove from his previous structuralist thinking.

Secondly, the Cause *qua* real never *directly* effectuates its causal power. Rather, it only ever registers itself through its disturbing effects on the symbolic

³⁷ Ibid., 525.

³⁸ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 21, 22.

order. Thus Lacan's turn to the real does not signal his abandonment of the symbolic. Its exploration must continue. For the inherent incompleteness of the signifying network is precisely the way the non-symbolizable real makes its presence known, throwing the potentially smooth signifying operations off course. At first Lacan considers these real effects in their traumatic impact on the subject. But in the 1970s the real is conceived not only as traumatic but also as impossible – a conception notoriously expressed in his declaration of the impossibility of the sexual relation. Below two seminars from Lacan's non-hermeneutical phenomenological period are examined. Seminar XI is primarily taken up for its potential to radically suspend Heidegger's question of the meaning of being. Seminar XVII is likewise considered for having theorized an end point to the interminable slide of meaning.

The most pertinent section of Seminar XI is its last section which includes two Venn diagrams, reproduced in Figure 3.1 with slight modifications.³⁹

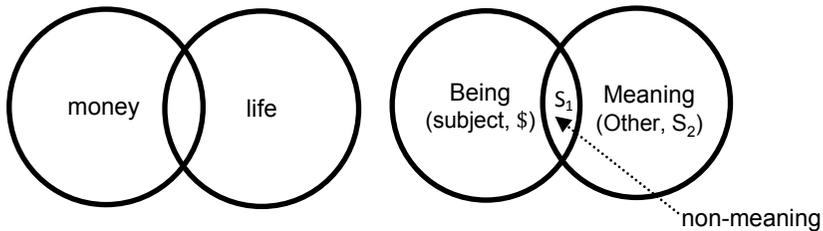


Figure 3.1: The *Vel* of Alienation

The diagram to the left is readily understandable and Lacan uses it to explain the one to the right. Suppose you are walking down an alley and a robber jumps out, sticks a gun in your belly and offers you the following choice, a *vel* (Latin for 'or'): "Your money or your life!" It is immediately evident that if you choose to keep your money the robber pulls the trigger, ending your life as well as relieving you of your money. The only way of retaining one of these options is to choose life, which is of course a life now diminished by a specific dollar amount. The choice of life is thus rather forced upon you⁴⁰ and Lacan's point is that so is meaning, for the subject faces a similar choice with respect to its being and its meaning. While Heidegger is not expressly named in these pages, one should recognize that where hermeneutical phenomenology holds meaning and being together in a single question that proves decisive for its very project, Lacan's non-hermeneutical phenomenology posits a gap between the two. As he says, 'the being of the subject [is] that which is there beneath the meaning.' He continues, summarizing the *vel* of alienation:

³⁹ Ibid., 211–2.

⁴⁰ The 'forced choice' of life goes well beyond the pragmatic outcome of rational decision-making, for in hearing the presented options, you have *already* 'chosen' life.

If we choose being, the subject disappears, it eludes us, it falls into non-meaning. If we choose meaning, the meaning survives only deprived of that part of the non-meaning that is, strictly speaking, that which constitutes in the realization of the subject, the unconscious. In other words, it is of the nature of this meaning, as it emerges in the field of the Other, to be in a large part of its field, eclipsed by the disappearance of being, induced by the very function of the signifier...One of the consequences is that interpretation is not limited to providing us with the significations [meanings] of the way taken by the psyche that we have before us. This implication is no more than a prelude. Interpretation is directed not so much at the meaning as towards the non-meaning of the signifiers, so that we may rediscover the determinants of the subject's entire behaviour.⁴¹

The subject, which Lacan algebraically represents by \$, cannot but find itself immersed in the Other, the chain of signifiers represented here by S_2 which make up the language it speaks and within whose system of differences meaning stands. This chain has a missing signifier, represented by S_1 , which if found would complete the system and grant the subject full access to the final Meaning (of its being). Yet the lack of this signifier is a condition for the differential signifying system itself and thus cannot be found. This is why Lacan characterizes this *vel as alienation*, as it condemns the subject to the field of the Other which will provide meaning to the loss of its being.⁴² But unlike Heidegger who calls for a deep hermeneutic to reestablish a connection to this being, Lacan calls for a further *separation* of the subject *from this entire scenario*, as in Figure 3.2.

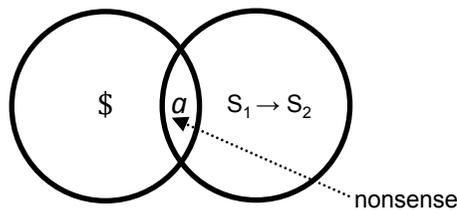


Figure 3.2: Separation

Separation occurs not when the subject realizes how there is a missing signifier which prevents grasping the full meaning of being; such an insight is readily known in structuralism. Rather, separation is the further experience of how the missing S_1 is *primordially* lost, how there is a lack which precedes that secondary lack manifesting itself at the structural level to which one may or may not hold out hope of filling in with a final signifier. Graphically this movement away from vacillating between the hope of finding the missing signifier and the recognition

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² This is implied throughout Lacan's talk. See, for example, *ibid.*, 218, 221.

of the impossibility of doing so amounts to shifting S_1 entirely over to the field of the Other. What is left is the empty place S_1 previously occupied at the intersection of the subject and the Other. This place was marked above by the phallus *qua* signifier. But Lacan now conceives the place of the intersection as the overlap of two lacks, a point which coincides with the lack in the subject and the lack in the other. This conception breaks away from set theory which treats elements of intersections as belonging to both circles. In contrast, Lacan considers it a *negative* intersection such that the nonsensical object *a* which embodies it belongs to neither the subject nor the Other. This quintessential Lacanian object is the previously identified sublime object. It is '[t]hrough the function of the *objet a* [that] the subject separates himself off [and] ceases to be linked to the vacillation of being, in the sense that it forms the essence of alienation.'⁴³ At the phenomenological level, the alienated subject cannot but meaningfully vacillate with its being, while the separated subject gains an 'empty' distance towards this meaningful existence precisely by identifying with this object which embodies the *jouissance* that supports the experience of alienation. At the theoretical level, this is 'the object that cannot be swallowed, as it were, which remains stuck in the gullet of the signifier.'⁴⁴ And in terms of methodology, the proper strategy is to aim for this object. As Lacan says, 'the effect of interpretation is to isolate in the subject a kernel, a *kern*, to use Freud's own term, of *non-sense*.'⁴⁵

Also called the object-cause, the *objet a* is what accounts for the real Cause which disturbs the signifiers of the symbolic order. Moreover, Lacan considers this object the objectal correlate to a subject that only exists in the differential signifying system as a pure difference, as per his often repeated tautological definition of the signifier as 'that which represents a subject for another signifier.'⁴⁶ These truths are recognizable together at the point where the subject 'sees himself caused as a lack by *a*, and where *a* fills the gap constituted by the inaugural division of the subject.'⁴⁷ This is a traumatic experience for the subject. By encountering *objet a*, the subject discovers that the Cause of meaning has something to do with its very own subjectivity. However, for the theorist with no such experience, these claims remain rather speculative.

Correlative to his belief that one acquires the agility needed to interpret the unconscious by working through ciphered matrices, Lacan increasingly advises taking up topological figures to expose the logic of the real. In Seminar XI a favored figure is often invoked – the möbius strip – which illustrates the existence of a structure whose limit separating its inside from its outside

⁴³ Ibid., 258.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 270.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 250.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 207.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 270.

coincides with its internal limit. Such a model is precisely what is needed to explain how the Cause *qua* real disturbing the signifying system from 'outside' the structure is the retroactive product of its own effects. For the möbius strip subverts the normal way of representing space. It seems to have two sides. But this is deceptive as it really has only one side (and one edge). Each 'inside' point appears to have a corresponding 'outside' point 'beyond' it. However, traversing the length of the strip (say, by tracing it with one's finger) reveals that the two points are not discrete but are, in fact, contiguous. In an homologous fashion, that substantive 'beyond' the subject so often wagers on as the Cause for disturbances in its world turns out to be a mere effect of its own disturbing effects. It only becomes traumatic in retrospect, from the perspective of a later symbolic horizon. The classic example is the small child who witnesses the copulation of his parents. There is nothing particularly traumatic about the scene to the child at the time. That possibility is reserved for a later date when his first sexual theories are formulated which do not permit the remembered scene to be symbolized and thus fully integrated into his newly narrativized life-world. This notion of the retroactive constitution of trauma firmly establishes Lacan's break from certain lines of structuralist thought which proceed linearly from cause to effect.

Yet in no way does Lacan break toward the hermeneutical field. Consider how the logic of the möbius strip cannot be grasped with a single glance. A single glance can only confirm what the subject already knows and imbue it with meaningful understanding – a temptation to be resisted at all costs. This is the topological backdrop to the admonition Lacan voiced on the penultimate day of Seminar XI during a discussion of interpretation:

I have already tried to embody certain consequences of the very particular *vel* that constitutes alienation – the placing in suspense of the subject, its vacillation, the collapse of meaning – in such familiar forms as *your money or your life*, or *freedom or death* which are reproduced from a *being or meaning* – terms that I do not propose without some reluctance. I would ask you not to be too hasty in overloading them with meanings, for if you do you will only succeed in sinking them. So I feel that it is incumbent upon me to warn you of this at the onset.⁷⁴⁸

In effect, the subject must permit itself to get caught up in the signifying structure, with its attending illusion of a substantive Cause of meaning, in order to discover how that Cause is nothing more than the subject's own path towards it. It is as if the entire path the subject forges through chains of signifiers and meanings collapses into a nonsensical point, suspending its desire to meaningfully appropriate its loss of being in the signifying field of the Other.

While these conclusions do find textual support, in 1964 alienation and separation are expressed more with signifiers than with *objet a*. But as Lacan

⁴⁸ Ibid., 246.

continues to clarify the subject's relation to the chain of signifiers throughout the second half of the 1960s, he will increasingly recognize the need to address the question of how the signifier and *jouissance* are related. This eventually becomes a question of establishing a link between *objet a* (or surplus-*jouissance*) and the chain of signifiers. This is first articulated in *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (1969–70). This seminar is well-known for having presented Lacan's Theory of the Four Discourses – of the Master, the Hysteric, the Analyst and the University.

By way of introduction, recall how for Lacan meaning is retroactively buttoned-down as the signifying chain proceeds from left to right, from an earlier signifier (S_1) to later signifiers (S_2). This is visually captured in Figure 3.3.

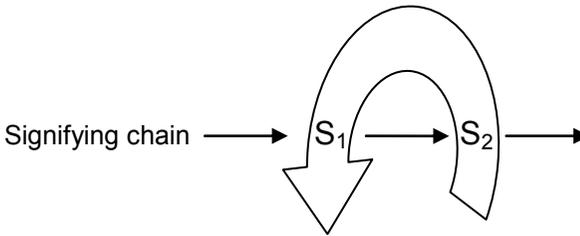


Figure 3.3: Retroactive Trajectory of Meaning

The four discourses are based on the definition of the signifier (S_1) as that which represents a subject (\$) for another signifier (S_2). What Lacan does is identify each of these three places, as well as the hitherto unidentified fourth place, as in Figure 3.4.

Definition of a signifier:	$\frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{\$}$	Places of discourse:	$\frac{\text{agent}}{\text{truth}} \rightarrow \frac{\text{other}}{\text{product/loss}}$
-------------------------------	---	-------------------------	--

Figure 3.4: Definition of a Signifier and the Places of Discourse

By superimposing the schema of Figure 3.3 onto the definition of a signifier in Figure 3.4, we can visualize Lacan's idea that the subject emerges from the meaningless symbolic chain. Lacan tells us as much in the very first session of Seminar XVII: '[I]t is at the very instant at which S_1 intervenes in the already constituted field of the other signifiers, insofar as they are already articulated with one another as such, that, by intervening in another system, this \$, which I have called the subject as divided, emerges. Its entire status, in the strongest sense of this term, is to be reconsidered this year.'⁴⁹ One aspect of this

⁴⁹ Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 15.

reconsidered subject is grasped through the distinction between what might be called the ‘subjectivization’ of the subject and the pure subject. The former is the emergence of the subject into the field of meaning, a subject imbued with meaningful content (visually confirmed with the \$ emerging at the tail end of the retroactive trajectory of meaning production). The latter is the empty lack between signifiers, a subject of the signifier devoid of any substantive meaning. Lacan’s effort here can productively be viewed as understanding the subject in its move from the alienation of subjectivization to the subject proper. How? Immediately following the above citation is Lacan’s reminder that he has ‘always stressed that something defined as a loss emerges from this trajectory. This is what the letter to be read as object *a* designates.’ Again, it is through the subject’s identification with this lost object that the subject sees itself as a lack. In terms of discourse theory, we now have the final element that occupies the fourth place of product/loss in the elemental discourse that Lacan calls the Master’s discourse (M_d). This is seen in Figure 3.5.

$$M_d: \quad \frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a} \qquad A_d: \quad \frac{a}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{\$}{S_1}$$

Figure 3.5: The Master’s and the Analyst’s Discourse

As the signifying chain proceeds from left to right (from S_1 to S_2), it produces *objet a*, but as immediately lost to a subject which also emerges from this very chain. Yet the mathemes indicate that the emerging subject does so as divided or split. But between what two or more elements is the subject split? The Venn diagrams Lacan uses in Seminar XI seem readymade to provide the answer. Certainly the subject is split between its being and its meaning. This is essentially correct. But it must be understood how this being is quite unlike the being pursued by the hermeneutical phenomenologist. First of all, it is so devoid of meaning that it lacks even a modicum of sense. Rather, it is a bit of nonsense. And second, it appears as utterly impossible. For if meaning is a forced choice, there is really no other option before the subject other than assuming itself as a meaningful subject. So again, why does Lacan call the subject split? The mystery is cleared up by recognizing how the split is, in a way, doubled. That is, the subject is split between itself in its meaningful dimension and *the split itself*. This latter element is of course nothing. But it is a curious nothing in that it nevertheless doubles itself into a ‘something’ which carries a certain material weight in the subject’s meaningful universe. Here is the other choice before the subject, an impossible choice – the *objet a* – which, once assumed, can suspend the hermeneutical questioning into the meaning of being.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Their objections notwithstanding, hermeneutical phenomenologists do employ a subject and one that is thoroughly subjectivized. Poulet’s phenomenology fares much

Seminar XVII thus marks a re-conception of the status of the real. The real is no longer to be strictly considered in its traumatic effects on the subject. For 'in supposing the formalization of discourse and in granting oneself some rules within this formalization that are destined to put it to the test, we encounter an element of impossibility. This is what is at the base, the root, of an effect of structure.'⁵¹ Lacan articulates the impossible *objet a* from the perspective of the Master's discourse in various ways, including how raising the question of the origins of language is 'a futile search for meaning.'⁵² Yet despite uncovering it, the Master's discourse cannot grasp this impossibility. Only the Analyst's discourse (A_d) can do so. As can be seen in Figure 3.5, the order of elements (S_1 , S_2 , a , $\$$) is constant from M_d to A_d , having been but rotated (counter)clockwise half a turn to fall into new places which do not themselves rotate. So S_1 in the place of agency in the M_d is now in the place of product/loss in the A_d . These two discourses are inversions of each other and it is in this sense that the M_d is the 'other side of psychoanalysis.' In his usual cryptic style, Lacan explains their unique link:

'I am a little analyst, a rejected stone initially, even if in my analyses I become the cornerstone. As soon as I get up off my chair I have the right to go for a walk. That is reversed, the rejected stone which becomes a cornerstone. It may also be, inversely, that the cornerstone goes for a walk. It's even like that that I will perhaps have some chance that things will change. If the cornerstone left, the entire edifice would collapse. There are some who are tempted by this.'⁵³

better as it seeks out 'a subjectivity without objectivity.' But without *objet a*, he cannot quite bring his pure consciousness to its full notion. The lesson here is how phenomenologists more in line with Husserl (and less with Heidegger) forge the straighter path toward late-Lacan.

⁵¹ Ibid., 45. More simply, 'the impossible is the real' (165) and '[i]f the real is defined as the impossible the real is placed at the stage at which the register of a symbolic articulation was found to be defined as the impossible to demonstrate to be true' (172–3) – a truth to be experienced, not proved.

⁵² Ibid., 19. Lacan effectively argues how structure trumps a concern for meaning. Hermeneutics may be correct to seek out historical contexts within which to appropriate the meaning of particular phenomena. But the very framework of subsuming particulars under universals belies its claim that meaning precedes structure. Moreover, when it comes to the question of the origins of the signifying system *itself*, no recourse can be made to any historical conception of its advent. There is a retroactive logic in play here, at the 'meta-level.' That is, the signifying system as such coordinates its own birth, retroactively positing its own origins. So structuralism trumps hermeneutical phenomenology, but in a radical way: structure ontologically precedes its historical advent. In this sense the standard argument that Freud failed to place the psychoanalytic framework into historical context becomes thoroughly innocuous.

⁵³ Ibid., 109.

Lacan speaks of *objet a* in two ways here. While it is in the place of loss in the M_d , it is spoken of as a rejected stone. But once it assumes the place of agency in the A_d , it becomes a cornerstone. As rejected, it is that which falls out of the signifying chain as it proceeds from S_1 to S_2 , retroactively producing meaning for ‘we feeble beings...[who] will keep on discovering for ourselves at every turning point...[how] we need meaning.’⁵⁴ The interminable slide of signifiers and meaning thus has its limit. It is *objet a* that embodies this limit. But produced as a loss, separation proves impossible in the M_d . However, as the agent of its own discourse, S_1 is produced as a loss instead. This halts any further sliding of meaning, effecting a collapse of the entire edifice of the subject, of its life-world and all the meaning it entails. The A_d is truly a subversive practice. While the M_d is the essential discourse retroactively producing meaning without restraint, the A_d reverses this process, putting an end to meaning production through identification with a nonsensical object.⁵⁵ For the M_d simultaneously also produces the object of its own demise such that if appropriated, can suspend the subject’s need to further inquire upon the meaning of phenomena.

These lessons were not immediately evident to Freud. It is often noted that Freud discovered psychoanalysis by following the path of hysterical desire. But not to be overlooked is how such a path begins by duplicity of which he was certainly the first victim. This can be understood through the Hysteric’s discourse (H_d), shown in Figure 3.6.

$$H_d: \quad \frac{\$}{a} \rightarrow \frac{S_1}{S_2} \qquad U_d: \quad \frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\$}$$

Figure 3.6: The Hysteric’s and the University Discourse

As can be seen, knowledge (S_2)⁵⁶ is produced in the H_d . Historically, it was the demand of the hysteric which put Freud to *work* and his texts bear witness to the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁵ In no uncertain terms the A_d is to be equated with nonsense. During a question period an interlocutor makes the following statement: ‘*What you say is always decentered in relation to sense, you shun sense*’ and Lacan responds: ‘This is perhaps precisely why my discourse is an analytic discourse. It’s the structure of analytic discourse to be like that.’ Ibid., 146.

⁵⁶ As might have already been suspected, many of Lacan’s mathemes take on (a limited number of) different equivalences depending on the context within which they are discussed. This is partly due to Lacan’s occasional use of the same algebraic notation over the course of decades which saw his thought develop considerably. But it is equally true that at any given time during that development many of those differing equivalences are, in fact, equivalent. Two cases in point: first, taking S_2 here as denoting knowledge reflects Lacan’s contention that the epistemological dimension constitutes itself as a signifying chain, which is how S_2 was first introduced above; and second, the nuances between S_1 and the phallus *qua* signifier are sometimes relaxed so that they are effectively

construction of numerous theories which, at least initially, he was all too willing to *explain* to his patients. Armed with this academic knowledge, he accordingly assumed the place of agency in the University discourse (U_d). But such a move only ever maintains the patient in his hysterical setup, for what it produces is $\$$. Hysteria is a refusal of meaning based on metonymy. Expressed in mathemes, the subject $\$$ *qua* hysteric stands in metonymic relation to the meaning-effects of S_2 , the chain of signifiers: $\frac{\$}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{\$}{S_2}$. Yet this is an imaginary solution. A refusal of meaning, however consistently undertaken, is still a meaningful project for the subject. Addressing the subject's demands in academic fashion thus satisfies a request for meaning. But to provide this meaning is to offer temporary relief at best. It never fully patches over the subject's underlying desire and ultimately only results in antagonizing the subject's constitutive lack. Psychoanalysis is to instead suspend the hysteric's subjectivized stance. Once Freud understood this, his interpretations were no longer limited to an ever shifting desire but attended instead to that around which desire circles. This amounts to listening to the underlying cause of subjectivization, the *objet a* in the place of truth in the H_d . What results is a shift in discourse, from the U_d to the A_d , which Lacan himself accomplishes in the 1960s. Once positioned as the object-cause of the subject's desire, the analyst can stop the interminable slide of meaning which covers over the lack constitutive of subjectivity.

equated. While certainly confusing or even discouraging to the neophyte, this variability, combined with the fixedness of a quasi-mathematics, is one of the reasons Lacanian theory continues to be fruitfully developed in unexpected directions.

PART II

SEXUATION, DISCOURSE THEORY AND TOPOLOGY: THE SUSPENSION OF MEANING

In effect, a discourse like analytic discourse aims at meaning. By way of meaning, it is clear that I can only deliver to you, to each of you, what you are already on the verge of absorbing. That has a limit, a limit provided by the meaning in which you live. I wouldn't be exaggerating if I said that that doesn't go very far. What analytic discourse brings out is precisely the idea that that meaning is based on semblance. If analytic discourse indicates that that meaning is sexual, that can only be by explaining its limit...Meaning indicates the direction toward which it fails.

—Lacan, March 13, 1973

These words were spoken by Lacan moments after he placed his famous formulae of sexuation on the blackboard during a session of his well-known twentieth seminar. The excerpt is telling. Its last sentence thoroughly frustrates reading the first as somehow advocating analytic discourse be taken as meaningful discourse. Indeed, given that meaning (*sens*) indicates the direction (*sens*) toward which it fails, a less charitable reading of the 'aim' of analytic discourse suggests itself. It is perhaps rather like the way in which a sharpshooter lines up his target into the crosshairs of his scope. Yet if this new reading nevertheless goes too far (and it does), this is not so much for having elevated meaning into the position of foe as it is for treating meaning as an object to which the subject of the analyst's discourse might externally oppose himself. This is not to say that reverting to the spontaneous understanding of the first sentence fares any better. True, treating meaning as a substance which mediates the subject-object divide seems to be encouraged by Lacan himself who says his teachings only succeed 'by way of meaning.' Yet the further statement that there are nevertheless limits implies that this substance is not without a structure. This at once demotes meaning from the realm of being to mere semblance. But meaning takes an even greater hit at the hands of Lacan. From the perspective of analytic discourse which embodies such structural limits, meaning is neither to be conceived strictly as an object nor as an imaginary substance which mediates the subject's engagement with the object.

Rather, what analytic discourse ultimately reveals is nothing short of a real understanding: *meaning is sexual*. Coming to terms with this rather surprising claim is the major undertaking of the following two chapters.

In general terms, the proposal here is to directly use the formulae of sexualization to demonstrate how meaning is sexual. It is contended that these formulae revealingly articulate the hermeneutical circle. Moreover, they further demonstrate the ultimate suspension of meaning – an act which effectively frees the subject from its alienating grip. This thesis is put forward in the firm belief that these formulae not only inscribe the real of the sexual relation, but equally the real of any relation struck by the speaking subject. If Lacan's words are to be believed, the relation the subject strikes with meaning is no exception. By unraveling the logic of this relation with the help of these formulae, it will be shown that important considerations for interpretive theory arise. These considerations may be especially appreciated in light of issues raised in Part I. In the discussions to follow, frequent pauses are made to address these issues and to suggest further applications of the formulae to other textual matters.

This thesis raises a question worth addressing from the onset. It is a question which concerns its broader contextualization. Expressed in terms of Part I, an answer is had by reflecting on how Lacan's use of the *matheme* effectively bears witness to his agreement with the Husserlian break from psychologism which originally established an independent and objective realm of logic. Lacan's articulation of sexual difference in strict logical terms provides an even stronger reason for placing his late project in the scientific tradition. Indeed, such an articulation aligns his thought with those of Frege and Bertrand Russell, two of the founding fathers of analytic philosophy. The choice here to directly use the formulae of sexualization to demonstrate the proposed thesis thus places the present study within the scientific tradition as well. Furthermore, as sexualization seems to inspire its own movement towards it, its demanding investigation is best handled by a commentary which proceeds in a logical and structured manner. This fact alone casts a vote in favor of those scholars seeking to reestablish a general methodological approach against those who would instead eschew all use of method. But while there is certainly something to be said for the efforts of Betti-Hirsch and Habermas-Apel to turn back the clock after the turn away from method began in earnest with Gadamer over half a century ago, the development here of a methodology grounded in the formulae of sexualization clearly departs from their own revival of hermeneutical tools to appropriate meaning. Instead, the approach in play here fully acknowledges Gadamer's insight into how any conscious use of method loses the meaning of the text. Yet since the present aim is to ultimately suspend meaning, this insight is enthusiastically embraced as a positive prospect. Contra-Gadamer, this is a case where the subject can have his cake and eat it too, for truth is seen to proceed (only) by way of method. Needless to say this approach favors the Husserlian brand of phenomenology since, in contrast to the Heideggerian, it

harbors a systematic method of inquiry and one which places the accent more on the constitution of meaning than with the experience of meaning. However, this should not imply that epistemology is to be simply championed over ontology, for Heidegger is held to be correct in arguing for the ontological *a priori* to every epistemological endeavor. Ricoeur's self-appointed task to reverse the historical trajectory of the past century so as to regain the epistemological question is therefore itself to be reversed. Although the ontology that is thereby unearthed is hardly Heideggerian. For in seeking a suspension point to meaning, what the non-hermeneutical phenomenological approach finds instead is a being whose singular existence is entirely without essence and which in no way strikes an equivalency between sense and meaning but is, rather, a bit of nonsense.

Chapter 4 is in many ways a preparatory chapter which primarily seeks to demonstrate the relevance of the formulae of sexuation to textual theory. However, since these formulae are difficult to understand for a variety of reasons, a significant amount of space is devoted simply to their explication. The scope of this difficulty is initially managed by way of an account of Lacan's original derivation of the formulae from established schools of classical and modern logic. Section 4.1 accordingly begins with a discussion of the logical system of Aristotle which functions as the historical basis for the formulae of sexuation. This provides an opportunity to inquire into whether the classical Aristotelian logical square could itself serve to articulate the hermeneutical circle. Section 4.2 offers an account of Lacan's revision of Aristotle with the conceptual tools of modern logic to arrive at his own logical square, a set of four logical propositions identical to the formulae of sexuation. Section 4.3 continues to suggest applications of the Lacanian logical square to rudimentary textual practices while intimating that doing so is a subversive practice.

Chapter 5 takes the groundwork already laid and adds additional structure to set the formulae into motion. This is necessary since the static analysis of the previous chapter is inadequate to capture the rotation of the hermeneutical circle of meaning. Yet too much motion works against the overall thesis since what is ultimately sought is its suspension point. Thus the challenge is to show how this very motion is embodied in a singular point which it itself discloses. Section 5.1 introduces this overall trajectory by way of the logic of negation and the Kantian table of nothings. Section 5.2 integrates the four discourses into the Lacanian logical square which effectively sets the formulae into motion. This establishes both its relevance to the hermeneutical circle and the breakdown of the relation the subject strikes with meaning. Section 5.3 supplements the use of set theory in the previous chapter with the use of topology as per Lacan's *L'Étourdit*. The overall contention is that method is neither to be conceived as a tool to be consciously wielded nor something to be altogether abandoned. Rather, it is held that by actively following the topological cuts and sutures which are the specific manipulations of sexuated space, the subject not only gains an appreciation for the sexual nature of meaning but is additionally led to its suspension point.

CHAPTER 4

DERIVATION OF THE FORMULAE OF SEXUATION

I posed the question of what one could call a matheme, positing already that it is the pivotal point of any teaching. In other words that the only teaching is mathematical, the rest is a joke.

—Lacan, December 15, 1971

Lacan spoke these words near the end of the year he spent devising his formulae of sexuation, a set of four logical propositions written in his own unique logico-mathematical shorthand. They represent a high point in Lacan's thinking that the matheme conveys something essential and in the case of sexuation this something most obviously has to do with sexual difference. His controversial claims regarding this difference have repeatedly been examined in the decades since his death. But what is often overlooked is how these formulae readily lend themselves to other fields of thought precisely because they are written as logical propositions. Since they bear no preconceived notion regarding this difference – indeed they deal with the very notion of notion, with the notion *as such* – this difference has fruitfully been used in the past to characterize the fields of philosophy and politics by the likes of Joan Copjec and Slavoj Žižek. By directly identifying the elements of the hermeneutical circle with the formulae themselves, the present chapter endeavors to begin demonstrating how the field of meaning undergoes a fatal disruption as it too similarly harbors this difference. Even less considered in the literature has been the fact that Lacan did not write his formulae in isolation but developed them from Aristotle by way of an influential contemporary commentary. A notable exception is Le Gaufey. This chapter makes extensive use of his recent work and further argues for a reading of these formulae that prove fruitful for interpretive theory.

Section 4.1 is a schematic presentation of the logical system of Aristotle leading up to a discussion of the classical Aristotelian logical square. Under specific consideration is whether this logical square could legitimately be conceived as a hermeneutical circle. Section 4.2 examines Lacan's decision to read the Aristotelian propositions in a more natural (and less logical) way which completely subverts the classical square and eventually leads to his own logical square – an arrangement effectively equivalent to the formulae of sexuation. Section 4.3 continues to provide a reading of the propositions in both the

classical and Lacanian logical squares together with their differing consequences for textual analysis. The thesis throughout this chapter that the Lacanian logical square offers the potential to radically suspend meaning is more fully considered in the following chapter.

4.1 The Aristotelian Hermeneutical Circle?

Aristotle was the first thinker to formulate a logical system. The treatises which comprise this system were later compiled into what is known as the *Organon* (4th c. BC).¹ Broadly speaking, the thought contained therein casted a dominating influence over philosophy from its immediate reception on through the medieval period until the 19th century. It succeeded in tying together all aspects and fields of philosophy because logic for Aristotle and his followers was not viewed as a separate and self-sufficient academic field to be considered in isolation from other fields of inquiry. Indeed that it was seen as a preliminary requirement for the study of every branch of knowledge is reflected in the very term *organon* [Greek, for tool or instrument] itself which suggests that careful thinking should proceed along its rigorous methodological path. We focus here on the first two treatises which make up Aristotle's logical system, *viz.*, *Categories* and *De interpretatione*.

In his *Categories*, Aristotle describes the world as composed of separate yet unified whole things called substances to which various properties can be ascribed. Substances are of two kinds, primary and secondary. A primary substance is an independent object composed of matter and characterized by form. An example would be an individual man. A secondary substance is the larger group to which these primary substances belong, say, man *qua* species. Aristotle's logic endeavors to correctly ascribe specific properties to secondary substances, which then indirectly ascribes these same properties to primary substances. Along with the category of substance (or essence), two additional ways to describe what is in the world would be with respect to the categories of quantity and quality. It is with these three categories that Aristotelian logic evaluates arguments in the form of statements composed of words of which the most basic is the proposition. A proposition is a complete sentence that asserts something and is a complex involving two terms: a subject (a word naming a substance), a predicate (a word naming a property) and a copula [Latin, for connection or link]. The generalized logical form of a proposition is thus 'Subject is Predicate' or in traditional symbolic shorthand 'S is P' where S stands for the Subject and P for the Predicate. Following this schema, simple assertions

¹ The logical treatises of the *Organon* include *Categories*, *De Interpretatione*, *Prior Analytics*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Topics* and *Sophistical Refutations*. See Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 3–314. *De Interpretatione* [On Interpretation] is the Latin translation of the original Greek title Περὶ Ἑρμηνείας or *Peri Hermeneias*.

can be analyzed accordingly. Consider the statement ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian.’ Gadamer is the subject (S), the property of being Heideggerian is the predicate (P) and the verb ‘is’ (the copula) links Gadamer and this property together in a single affirmation which claims a truth about the world. Of course asserting a truth about the world resounds more deeply if the subject in the proposition is a (secondary) substance to which an essential property is attributed, as in the case ‘Triangles have interior angles which sum to 180°.’ But Aristotle is flexible enough to consider propositions involving primary substances (as in the above example regarding Gadamer) and even properties of substances in the subject position.

After having fixed the proper logical form of a proposition, Aristotle in *De Interpretatione* makes two distinctions which have allowed logicians to classify his propositions into four different kinds. One distinction is between particular and universal terms. The particular term refers to individual things, like the name Gadamer, while the universal term refers to groups of things (*e.g.*, man) and so is said to be universally applicable to all members of a group. But as his own examples make clear, Aristotle does treat propositions with an individual subject as universal propositions. The other distinction made follows from Aristotle’s suggestion that all propositions must either be an affirmation or a negation. With these two distinctions each different categorical proposition asserts a relationship between two categories along two lines. On the one hand a categorical proposition possesses a quantity insofar as it represents a universal or a particular predication which is denoted by the adjectives ‘all’ or ‘some’ (where ‘some’ is to be understood as ‘at least one’), respectively. On the other hand a categorical proposition possesses a quality insofar as it affirms or denies the specified predication and this is determined by an affirmed or a negated verb. This allows one to reduce every categorical proposition to one of four logical forms:

- (1) The Universal Affirmative (the A statement) takes the form ‘All S are P.’
- (2) The Universal Negative (E) is ‘All S are not P.’
- (3) The Particular Affirmative (I) is ‘Some S are P.’
- (4) The Particular Negative (O) is ‘Some S are not P.’

Aristotle discusses the way these four categorical propositions are related to one another. As he writes,

‘I call an affirmation and a negation *contradictory* opposites when what one signifies universally the other signifies not universally, *e.g.* every man is white—not every man is white, no man is white—some man is white. But I call the universal affirmation and the universal negation *contrary* opposites, *e.g.* every man is just—no man is just. So these cannot be true together, but their

opposites may both be true with respect to the same thing, e.g. not every man is white—some man is white.²

The claims Aristotle makes here (that A and O are contradictories, that E and I are contradictories and that A and E are contraries) are captured in Figure 4.1. This figure reproduces the classical Aristotelian logical square but inverts its traditional presentation which places the universal and particular affirmatives on the left side with their negative counterparts to the right. The reasoning for this modification (a cosmetic change only which alters nothing substantial) is explained further below.

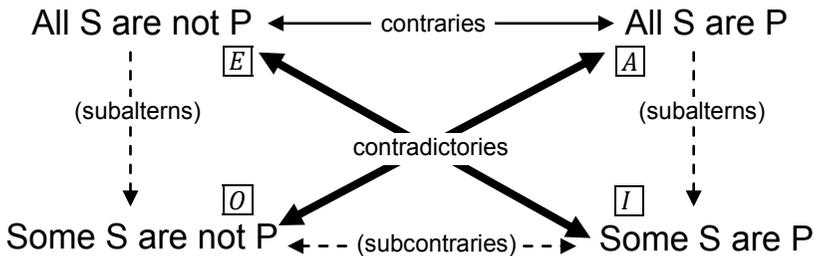


Figure 4.1: The Classical Aristotelian Logical Square (modified)

Aristotle's own examples are often confusing and differing translations, particularly with the choice of words like 'every' and 'no' to capture the two universal propositions, only compound the matter. In the present discussion the endeavor is thus made to use 'All' and 'Some' as per Figure 4.1, although with the license to omit the term 'All' when is it clearly implied in its opposition to 'Some.'

The two logical relationships Aristotle explicitly expresses as existing among the four logical forms can easily be illustrated by returning to the proposition 'Gadamer is Heideggerian.' As said above, although Gadamer is an individual man occupying the subject position, such a proposition is to be treated as a universal proposition. Reflecting on the standard practice in academia that the invocation of a scholar's name is often tacitly understood to refer to his body of work and not to his actual existence as a man should make this practice in Aristotelian logic equally acceptable. Thus 'Gadamer is Heideggerian' effectively says something like 'All of Gadamer's texts are Heideggerian' and does not refer to that man whose remarkably long life touched on three different centuries. It is also clear that this universal proposition is in the affirmative form as the verb affirms the predicate. Now, in considering Aristotle's first claim that such universal affirmative propositions stand in contradiction to propositions in the particular negative logical form, one finds that this is clearly the case. For if the

² Ibid., 27.

(A) proposition ‘All of Gadamer is Heideggerian’ is true, then the (O) proposition ‘Some of Gadamer is not Heideggerian’ must be false. The relation of contradiction equally holds for the reverse case, for if it is true that ‘Some of Gadamer is not Heideggerian, then ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian’ is obviously false. The same contradictory relationship holds as well between (E) propositions like ‘Gadamer is not Heideggerian’ and (I) propositions like ‘Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian.’ Generally speaking, two propositions stand in contradictory relationship if (and only if) they cannot both be true and both be false. Aristotle’s second claim is that the universal affirmative and the universal negative propositions are related as contraries. Contrary propositions cannot both be true. For example, it cannot both be true that ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian’ and ‘Gadamer is not Heideggerian,’ for the truth of either of these contrary propositions excludes the truth of the other. However, contrary propositions are not contradictories because it is possible that both of them may be false. This would arise when it is indeed the case that ‘Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian’ and ‘Some of Gadamer is not Heideggerian.’ Generally speaking, two propositions are contraries if (and only if) they cannot both be true but can both be false.

But while Aristotle only explicitly articulates the two logical relationships of contradictoriness and contrariety (indicated in Figure 4.1 by the solid arrows), logicians since the medieval period have traditionally extended the discussion of the possible logical relationships to be had between these four categorical propositions by two others. It is usually noted that these two additional logical relationships (indicated by dotted arrows), which thereby ‘complete’ the logical square, are wholly in keeping with Aristotle’s original analysis. One of these relationships exists between the two particular propositions occupying the lower half of the logical square. As subcontrary propositions, they cannot both be false. To demonstrate this, suppose that (I) ‘Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian’ is false. Then its contradictory, (E) ‘Gadamer is not Heideggerian,’ is true. This makes (E)’s contrary, (A) ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian,’ false. So (A)’s contradictory, (O) ‘Some of Gadamer is not Heideggerian,’ is true. This refutes the possibility that the propositions ‘Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian’ and ‘Some of Gadamer is not Heideggerian’ are both false. Said in another way, since every proposition has a contradictory opposite and since a contradictory is true when its opposite is false, it follows that while the opposites of contraries can both be true, they cannot both be false. Generally speaking, two propositions are subcontraries if (and only if) they cannot both be false but can both be true.

The other logical relationship not explicitly mentioned by Aristotle but that traditional logicians find implicit in his treatise is subalternation. As seen in Figure 4.1, subalternation is a logical relation between a particular proposition (the subaltern) and a universal proposition (the superaltern) of the same quality such that the former is implied by the latter. To demonstrate this, suppose that (A) ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian’ is true. Then its contrary (E) ‘Gadamer is not

Heideggerian' must be false. But then (E)'s contradictory, (I) 'Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian,' must be true. Thus if (A) 'Gadamer is Heideggerian' is true, then (I) 'Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian' is also true. A parallel argument establishes subalternation from (E) 'Gadamer is not Heideggerian' to (O) 'Some of Gadamer is not Heideggerian.' Generally speaking, a proposition is a subaltern of another if (and only if) it must be true if its superaltern is true, and the superaltern must be false if the subaltern is false. Traditional logicians after Aristotle have also noted that drawing the logical conclusion of subalternation can proceed without argument as it is immediately inferred from universal propositions. This does seem to be the case, for if all elements of an existent group possess (or do not possess) a specific property, it must follow that any smaller subset of that group must possess (or not possess) that specific property. So if it is true that (A) 'All of Gadamer's texts are Heideggerian,' this immediately implies that (I) 'At least one of Gadamer's texts is Heideggerian' must be true. Reformulating as a negation, the truth of (E) 'Gadamer is not Heideggerian' entails the truth of (O) 'Some of Gadamer's texts are not Heideggerian.' But it is important to recognize that subalternation is a logical relation which only proceeds from the universal to the particular proposition and does not work in the opposite direction (as indicated in Figure 4.1 where the subaltern arrow is distinct from the others by its uni-directionality). So if it is the case that 'Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian,' clearly it need not follow that 'All of Gadamer is Heideggerian.' However, note that if 'Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian' is false, it does follow that 'All of Gadamer is Heideggerian' is also false. These immediate inferences proceed in a likewise manner with the negations of these propositions.³

Traditional logicians have of course drawn other immediate inferences from these propositions as well as extending Aristotle's analyses in many other directions. But for present purposes it is enough to reflect on how the supplementation of subcontrariety and subalternation completes the fragment of the logical square Aristotle initially provided. Whereas Aristotle only explicitly commented on the logical relationships of contradictoriness and contrariety which exist among the four propositions, with the subsequent supplementation

³ Having thus defined all four logical relationships in the classical logical square, it should be noted that there is nothing which necessitates discussing contradictoriness, contrariety, subcontrariety and subalternation in this particular order. The foregoing presentation was indeed designed to build from what preceded it so that, say, subcontrariety would be defined without reference to subalternation, but the former could just as easily been demonstrated after the latter was first discussed. Thus to demonstrate that subcontrary propositions cannot both be false, consider that there are only three possibilities. Either 'All S are P,' in which case (by subalternation) 'Some S are P' is also true; 'All S are not P' which likewise implies that 'Some S are not P' is true; or 'Some S are P' and 'Some S are not P' are both true. It follows that at least one of the subcontrary propositions must be true or that both may be true, but not both false.

each of the four propositions can be seen as standing minimally opposed to each of the others. Taken as a whole, this gives the impression that the logical square is a rigorously defined network of relations. This network of oppositional relations between its four corners is a crucial characteristic of the 'square of opposition,' as the classical logical square is more commonly known. As has been already seen in the foregoing discussion of the logical relations themselves, the path one follows is in large part dependent on where one chooses to enter this logical network and with what purpose. So on the one hand the path once entered does indeed necessitate following a well-defined and restrictive trajectory, yet on the other the network does retain an element of contingency regarding the choice of an entry point. This fact alone may give one pause to consider how the corners of the logical square may not be as sharp as one might initially suspect so that even in such a tightly structured system there is room yet for an element of subjectivity. However, the analysis made thus far is incapable of demonstrating the inscription of the subject into such a logical structure. For the moment one must be content with contemplating a more modest possibility. Namely, the analogy to be had between the relation of the universal and particular propositional levels of Aristotle's classical logical square and the relation between the whole and the part of the classical hermeneutical circle. So articulated, it becomes evident how the discipline of the humanities generally manages its own internal rift between its traditional ground in the classical thought of the ancients and its strong hermeneutical roots in Romanticism. Today it seems to every self-assured declaration grounded in Aristotelian logic, the tendency is to quickly counter with "Yes, but there is meaning there!" This recourse to meaning, caught up as it is in the supportive structure of language, is what begins to round out the sharp corners of any logical square into a welcoming circle.

To illustrate the legitimacy of thinking of the classical logical square as a hermeneutical circle, consider the options available to the academic who decides to make a study of Gadamer with no prior knowledge of his thought. One strategy would be to first read secondary texts which provide introductions to Gadamer's theory, or else to inquire with colleagues who have already engaged with his work.⁴ In both these cases he may very well initially approach the set of

⁴These two strategies of initially proceeding from the knowledge of other academics are clear cases of an 'active pursuit' of such knowledge. Yet apparently 'passively receiving' such knowledge works just as well, at least in the case of Louis Althusser who boasted in his autobiography of having learned philosophy through 'hearsay.' He reports there how he would seriously engage with a philosophical text only after 'gleaning certain phrases in passing from my friends, and...from the seminar papers and essays of my own students.' For Althusser such hearsay was the 'equivalent of taking *soundings* from a body of philosophical thinking' and only after being sufficiently armed with such 'philosophical core samples' was he able to begin reading the text in question. See Althusser, *The Future Lasts Forever: A Memoir*, 166–7.

primary texts having learned that ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian’ and initially encounter particular passages which do nothing but confirm this expectation. In hermeneutical terms, the meaning he extracts from these particular passages are seen through the lens of the whole which is here taken as a proposition universally applicable to all of Gadamer’s work. By the logical relationship of subalternation this is really a foregone conclusion. For if it is true that ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian’ as the academic assumes, then it is certainly the case that ‘Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian.’ But in retrospect these particular passages which confirm the universal may have just been a fortuitous encounter, for in continuing his reading of Gadamer the academic may encounter a passage in which Gadamer comes across much like the empirically minded Hirsch who has very little in common with Heidegger. This, however, does not give the academic license to now say ‘Gadamer is Hirschian’ (by subalternation again). Rather, he may only make the particular claim that ‘Some of Gadamer is not Heideggerian’ which, of course, contradicts the claim that ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian.’ Related as subcontraries, both these particular (affirmative and negative) passages can be true, but both cannot be false, which further leads to the falsity of the two universal propositions of ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian’ and ‘Gadamer is not Heideggerian’ (as per the logical relationship of contrariety). Either way the academic is obligated to formulate a new universal proposition which, on the basis of these particulars, is perhaps something like ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian subject to proviso X.’ In hermeneutical terms, the meaning of Gadamer’s work as a whole is conditioned through the approach of some of its textual parts. With this new universal affirmative in mind the reading may continue untroubled or at least until the time that enough textual evidence has mounted to again trigger this process which ends in the reformulation of a new universal; this new universal in turn places passages to come and those already read into yet another light. It is obvious this process can continue *ad infinitum*, ever fine-tuning the universal through which nuanced meaning is continuously unearthed from its particular passages. It should also be clear that the complex web of logical relationships travelled, *viz.*, from subalternation and subcontrariety through contradictoriness and contrariety, is nothing more than a rigorously articulated version of the interdependent relations which exist between the whole and the part in the hermeneutical circle, that circle which

In contrast to these strategies of first gaining an informed universal grasp of a text with which one is initially unfamiliar, one might employ the opposite strategy of boldly taking up the primary texts to ‘organically’ arrive at a universal proposition regarding the work. Moreover, there is nothing to prevent the initial position from being formulated negatively in either its universal or particular form. So it should be noted that while the present paragraph examines the circular movement which ensues by initially entering its flow with a universal affirmative position, similar examinations could be had by alternatively taking up any of the other three positions as a first move into the reading process.

hermeneuts have expressed in various fashions from Ast and Schleiermacher onward.

The foregoing analysis demonstrates how the circular path in the classical logical square is initialized with the universal affirmative proposition. But instead of repeating the exercise to demonstrate how the circular path is equally set in motion with the three remaining logical forms, we do better to note how the classical logical square harbors a certain equivocation which potentially upsets its definitiveness. The problem concerns the status of the particular proposition and can be raised by inquiring into the source of its truth whenever such a claim is asserted. Illustrating this problem with the particular affirmative, note how this logical form is connected to all the others in one of three different logical relationships (as is the case with each of the four propositions). This is readily seen in Figure 4.1 where three arrows emanate to the proposition 'Some S are P'. Now, which of the three other propositions may be said to account for the truth of the particular affirmative? More generally, what are the implications of affirming the particular proposition? To use the ongoing example, say the academic eschews a preliminary investigation of Gadamer through secondary sources to instead immediately dive into his primary texts; moreover, suppose he there finds evidence to affirm the proposition 'Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian.' The truth of this particular proposition could, of course, contradict the *falsity* of the universal negative 'Gadamer is not Heideggerian,' but this conclusion is rather inconsequential. The two remaining possibilities are much more significant as they provide a source of this truth by way of their *own truth*. On the one hand, by subalternation the source of the truth of 'Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian' could be the universal affirmative 'Gadamer is Heideggerian,' for if *all* of Gadamer's texts are Heideggerian, then it is also true, *a fortiori*, about *some* of his texts. On the other hand, by subcontrariety the source of its truth could be the situation in which the particular negative proposition is also true. In this case the propositions 'Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian' and 'Some of Gadamer is not Heideggerian' are both true and *this simultaneously sets aside the truth of the universal affirmative*. Why? Because the truth of the particular negative stands in contradiction to the universal affirmative. Generally speaking, the two relations of subalternation and subcontrariety are thoroughly incompatible from the perspective of the particular in the sense that the propositions which they connect cannot be affirmed together. Clearly a choice must be made as to how particular propositions should be interpreted: if one chooses to proceed as per the first case, the meaning of the particular will be in agreement with the universal of the same quality. But if one makes the alternate choice, the meaning of the particular will exclude the truth of the universal of the same quality through the affirmation of the particular of the opposite quality.

The importance of this choice should not be underestimated, for it has crucial consequences in terms of textual exegesis. For instance, overly-eager scholarly work which rushes to cast universal judgment on a text or author on

the basis of scant readings of particular passages is no doubt symptomatic of having settled with the former option. But the theoretical consequences of this choice are potentially far graver. Recall in the discussion above how the logical relation of subalternation only proceeds in one direction, from the universal to its particular proposition. Yet if the affirmation of ‘some’ simultaneously affirms ‘all,’ the logical relation now proceeds in both directions. That is, it is no longer just the case that the truth of the universal implies its particular, for the truth of the particular implies the universal as well. The uni-directional arrow in Figure 4.1 now becomes a doubled arrow to indicate how the logical relation between the universal and particular levels of the same quality is no longer one of subalternation. Their once rigorously defined opposition has now been relaxed and one becomes hard pressed to distinguish the two levels. Most importantly, if the particular and the universal levels risk collapsing into one another, the analogy to be had between the classical logical square and the hermeneutical circle is no longer operative, just as would be the case if it was shown how there is effectively no difference between the whole and the part.

But did Aristotle choose this option? Ultimately, yes. Section 4.2 below further discusses these matters within the context of Lacan’s decision to follow the alternative option which excludes the universal. It also begins to explore some of the consequences of this decision, which is one way of characterizing the undertaking of Part II. But before turning to this discussion, it should be repeated how Aristotle only explicitly articulated contradictoriness and contrariety whereas it was later logicians who ‘implicitly’ found in his treatises additional logical relations like subcontrariety and subalternation to produce the classical logical square which often bears his name. This raises the possibility that Aristotle was himself unsure of the proper course to follow which may have in turn set these later logicians to work to construct a complete and unequivocal logical system to resolve the ambiguity they found harboring in Aristotle’s original texts. But after the work of Lacan and those Aristotelian scholars he followed in the 1960s, it is now known that Aristotle’s uncertainty was for good reason. For no amount of work can ever remove the equivocation which roots itself at the formal level of any articulated system of logic. Such a system could, however, theoretically inscribe *that very equivocation itself* into its set of logical formulae. This is precisely what Lacan endeavored to do with his formulae of sexuation.

4.2 From the Aristotelian to the Lacanian Logical Square

One of the undeniable strengths of Le Gaufey’s book *Lacan’s Notall: Logical Consistency, Clinical Consequences* (2006) is to provide an account of the debt Lacan owes to Jacques Brunschwig’s 1969 article on Aristotle. The discussion begins at the exact mid-point of the second chapter of Le Gaufey’s text and there we learn how this article effectively initiated Lacan’s complete revision of the classical

logical square. The article in question concerns Brunschwig's analysis of problems encountered by Aristotle when he tries to specify the meaning of particular propositions used in deductive or syllogistic reasoning. The overall contention of Brunschwig is that Aristotle significantly shifts his approach over the course of the *Prior Analytics*. At first relying on the equivocal quality of 'natural language,' this position is eventually found to compromise his logical system so that by the end of the text Aristotle's quest for definitiveness compels him to reject his initial position for one that is better able to control the troubling equivocations. The two positions Aristotle implicitly takes concur with the two options discussed above regarding the reading of the particular and the shift he undergoes is precisely a move from option two to option one. Brunschwig calls these two the 'maximal' and the 'minimal' readings of the particular, respectively. Restated in simple terms, the particular affirmative 'Some S are P' in its maximal sense concurs most closely to natural language, as in the case when someone says 'Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian.' Very few people if any at all would conclude from this statement that 'All of Gadamer is Heideggerian.' Yet a logician having chosen a minimal reading would do just that and accordingly would ask us to consider how this statement is only a particular instantiation of the universal affirmative. The contention of Brunschwig is that in the end Aristotle favors exactly this minimal reading of the particular (whereby 'At least one S is P' does not eliminate the possibility that 'All S are P') and one might add that logicians since the *Organon* have even more consistently excluded its maximal reading (whereby 'At least one S is P' implies *no more than* one S having the property P). However, in retrospect it is evident that its exclusion was not absolute. Indeed the possibility is raised that the exclusion in question concerns an element which haunts any effort to construct a complete and universal logical system.⁵ It is against this backdrop that Lacan's project of formulizing sexual difference most clearly surfaces. As Le Gaufey writes, 'Lacan is striving to pick up the challenge of what Aristotle, according to Brunschwig, had to drop in order to make his proofs of non-conclusiveness consistent.'⁶ By the early 1970s the time had finally come to work through the consequences of choosing the maximal particular.

The immediate consequences of this choice are paradoxical. To express this in terms already developed, by choosing to read the particular in the maximal or restrictive sense (*i.e.*, 'some, not all') Lacan completely undermines the logical relations of the classical logical square to the point which strains common sense.

⁵ Presupposing that the maximal reading of the particular involves an indivisible remainder which refuses to be taken up into the universal would no doubt form part of a productive approach to reading the first chapter of *Lacan's Notall* where Le Gaufey situates the medieval quarrel about universals against the eternal question of sexual difference.

⁶ Le Gaufey, *Lacan's Notall* (Ch 2), 28.

Recalling the above discussion, it is clear how the logical relation of subalternation is replaced by contradiction whenever the truth of a particular is affirmed. That is, 'Some S are P' excludes 'All S are P.' But the former must now be said to be parallel to 'Some S are not P.' In slightly different words, if 'Some (but not All) S are P,' then it is also the case that 'Some (but not All) S are not P.' With the removal of subalternation, the particular affirmative and particular negative are no longer logically related as subcontraries but should rather be thought of as effectively equivalent. It follows from this that since the two universals contradict their opposing particulars and since the latter are equivalent, the universals are equivalent as well. The logical relation of contrariety, just like subcontrariety, is replaced by equivalence. In the end, Lacan has simplified the classical logical square with respect to its logical relationships, reducing the logician's task from thinking with four (contradictoriness, contrariety, subcontrariety and subalternation) to only two (contradictoriness and equivalence). But the claims Lacan effectively makes here seem entirely unreasonable. How can 'All S are P' be considered the equivalent of 'All S are not P,' both of which are, moreover, said to stand in contradiction to 'Some S are P' and 'Some S are not P?' Expressed in these terms, this cannot be defended. But they do become defensible through Lacan's proposed changes to the *writing* of each of these propositions.

Before turning to examine these changes it should be acknowledged briefly how the choice of the maximal particular reopens the prospect of using the structure of a logical square to better articulate the dynamics of the hermeneutical circle within which meaning stands. Recall how the choice of the minimal particular closed down this potential in the classical logical square. But Lacan's choice of the maximal particular initiates the development of a new logical square in which the objection of the particular to its universal reestablishes a distance between these two levels that otherwise threaten to collapse into each other with the choice of the minimal particular. Such a distance is obviously necessary to effectuate the desired analogy between the universal and the particular of the logical square and the whole and the part of the hermeneutical circle. The possibility of using Lacan's new logical square to articulate (and ultimately to suspend) the hermeneutical circle is a thesis that is returned to time and again below.

Le Gaufey locates the precise date at which Lacan introduces his first writing of the four formulae of sexuation which replace Aristotle's four propositions to compose the new logical square. This occurs during his March 17, 1971 session of his eighteenth seminar. These formulae continue to be rewritten over subsequent sessions and only reach their finalized state a year later on March 3, 1972. The intriguing question of how these changing formulae precisely capture the topological transformations of Lacan's thought during these twelve months must be set aside for an examination of the final set of formulae which most closely inscribe his position in the early 1970s. Now, even

a cursory glance of these formulae confirms how Lacan 'is proposing to rewrite Aristotle...with the function and the quantification invented by Frege.'⁷ What Le Gaufey is referring to rather unclearly is Lacan's annexation for his own devices of what has been called

Frege's most remarkable and indisputable achievement,...the revolution that he effected in logic, which for over 2000 years, ever since its origins in Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*, had been dominated by syllogistic theory...[This real logical breakthrough occurs] in his creation of what we now know as predicate logic, through his invention of quantifier notation.⁸

This achievement essentially proceeds from Frege's novel 'mathematical' approach to the analysis of sentences in ordinary language. That is, he replaces the subject and predicate terms of a sentence with the mathematical notions of argument and function, respectively.⁹ Applying this approach to the familiar sentence 'Gadamer is Heideggerian,' as was seen Aristotle and traditional grammar would take 'Gadamer' to be the subject (S) and 'is Heideggerian' the predicate (P) so that the sentence takes the form 'S is P.' In contrast, Frege would consider the subject term 'Gadamer' an argument and 'is Heideggerian' a function. Yet this is far from simply an alternative terminology, for this introduces a significant change in the understanding of how sentences are constructed. To see this, suppose one substituted 'Badiou' for 'Gadamer' in the sentence 'Gadamer is Heideggerian.' Doing so proceeds from a claim that is possibly true to one that would be much more contentious in its 'obvious' falseness. In this way sentences can be seen as consisting of two components, one that is constant like '() is Heideggerian' and one that is potentially replaceable like 'Gadamer.' What Frege makes is an extension of mathematical terminology by which, for example, 8 is the value of the function $x \times 4$ for the argument 2, and 12 is the value of the same function for the argument 3. In this way 'Gadamer is Heideggerian' is the value of the function '() is Heideggerian' for the argument 'Gadamer' just as 'Badiou is Heideggerian' is the value of the

⁷ Ibid., 20.

⁸ Michael Beaney, *The Frege Reader*, 10.

⁹ A confirmation that Lacan makes this substitution could also readily be had by examining any of the earlier sets of formulae as they too reflect this most obvious change to the classical logical square: the abandonment of the readily understandable format of 'S is P' for a writing which employs an initially quite obscure series of symbols which Lacan uniquely constructs from established algebraic and logical symbols. These same mathemes are used from their initial introduction in 1971 to the finalized formulae of 1972. However, what does change over the course of this year is their actual arrangement or more specifically, the differing ways Lacan has chosen to express the quantity and quality of each proposition with the given array of mathemes at his disposal. The reader interested in Lacan's development of these formulae is directed to Le Gaufey, *Lacan's Notall* (Ch 2), 19–26.

same function for the argument 'Badiou.' And what Lacan does is apply this Fregean approach to the classical logical square. So what argument(s) and function(s) does Lacan use and how does he write them?

One symbol used in both the argument and function components of each of the four new logical propositions is x which is most 'naturally' read as the human being who is to be classified as either 'man' or 'woman' according to these propositions. These four propositions are the four formulae of *sexuation* after all. But Lacan frustrates this simple understanding precisely by using this symbol x which he borrows from algebra where it traditionally operates as a variable ready to be filled in with different object-terms. This alone greatly extends the applicableness of Lacan's propositions to fields other than those which entertain the question of sexual difference or alternatively, extends the notion of sexual difference to more abstract fields like hermeneutics and phenomenology. So this x is best considered an 'element' which may (or may not) be grouped together and which may (or may not) exist. These possibilities are determined in part by the quantifiers Lacan chooses to modify x . One such quantifier is the universal quantifier, marked by the symbol \forall , and which reads as 'for All' or simply 'All.' Thus the argument $\forall x$ can be read 'All x .' The other quantifier Lacan uses is the existential quantifier, marked by the symbol \exists , and which reads as 'at least one.' Thus the argument $\exists x$ can be read as 'There is at least one x .' These two are, respectively, Lacan's versions of 'All S' and 'Some S' in the classical logical square. Lacan also follows the Aristotelian manner of determining the quality of a proposition through affirmation or negation. But he departs from classical practice, which only entertains the affirmation or denial of the specified predication, by further allowing for the direct negation of the argument component of a proposition. The method he chooses is to place a bar over the component of the proposition to be negated. Thus the argument $\overline{\exists x}$ can be read as 'There is no x ' and the argument $\overline{\forall x}$ can be read as 'Not-all x .' A component which remains unmarked in this manner signifies affirmation. To produce the four propositions, each of these four arguments of $\forall x$, $\exists x$, $\overline{\exists x}$ and $\overline{\forall x}$ are placed in relation to a function which together determines its value. Given Lacan's use of x , one might expect that the function will take the traditional mathematical form of $f(x)$ and this is indeed the case, although he drops the parentheses and replaces the f with Φ so that the function to which the four arguments are (or are not) submitted to becomes Φx . This Φ is the symbol Lacan has long used for the phallic signifier and when it is graphically combined with x it produces Φx which can be read as 'the phallic function.' What allows Lacan to think of the phallic signifier as a function stems from Frege. As implied above, after Frege functions are no longer strictly numerical, for through his mathematical understanding of language the concept itself can now be taken to be a function which maps objects on to truth-values. Generally

speaking then, the phallic function Φx can be taken to be the concept of the phallic signifier Φ reconceived as a function. As per Frege, we could then consider Φx in its capacity to submit an x under the concept of Φ . More specifically and insofar as the latter is a quasi-transcendental signifier, the signifier of the symbolic order as such, this amounts to saying that Φx has the ability to include this x in the symbolic order which simultaneously makes x subject to all the limitations of the signifying system, or in psychoanalytic speak, subject to symbolic castration.¹⁰ But as was seen, an x stands in relation to a function like Φx as per one of the four arguments of $\forall x$, $\exists x$, $\overline{\exists x}$ and $\overline{\forall x}$ and what makes this even more complex is that Lacan allows for the placement of the bar of negation over this function so that these four arguments can potentially be combined with either Φx or $\overline{\Phi x}$ to produce the four propositions. Lacan's final decision on these combinations is reflected in Figure 4.2, the Lacanian logical square.

¹⁰ Drawn here is the connection between (the signifier of) castration and the failure of signifying systems to move to completion due to their inability to represent themselves in their signifying capacity. The difficulty of Lacan's notion of castration is eased somewhat by noting how a common phenomenon experienced by most speaking beings precisely illustrates the castrating effects of language. This phenomenon involves the extraordinary difficulty in saying exactly what one intends to say. No matter how well we speak, there always seems to be something left unsaid, a remainder of sorts that resists being articulated into language. But as well the obverse experience is equally true, for we just as often find ourselves 'saying too much,' over and above what we intend to say. Such 'Freudian slips of the tongue' often leave us quite embarrassed and at times expose us to an unconscious truth that was perhaps better left unsaid. This experience of saying too little and too much is due to the phallic function and Lacan's propositions can be read as inscribing four different relations the speaking subject may strike towards it. The entire trajectory of Part I could then be productively retraced with this in mind, broadly identifying the predominate stance each theorist takes to the phallic function. Or else a particular theorist could be scrutinized, closely following his work as it strikes different relations to the phallic function which might further allow for the possibility of moving that work towards relations that are omitted.

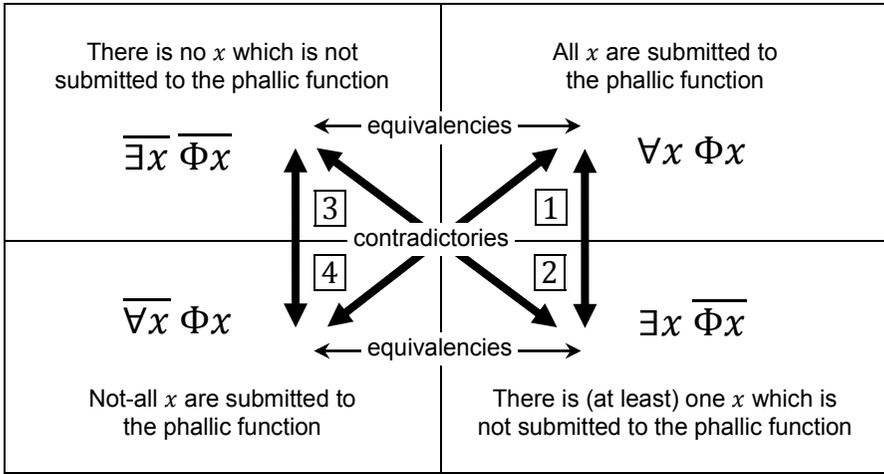


Figure 4.2: The Lacanian Logical Square

Before a more detailed discussion of these propositions is begun, there are a number of general points which should be made. The most obvious is that Lacan does not present a logical square in any of his seminars or published writings. But as Le Gaufey suggests, nothing prevents its construction.¹¹ In fact, its construction is rather straightforward given that these four propositions appear without modification in the upper portion of the table of sexuation presented at the beginning of the March 13, 1973 session of Lacan’s well-known twentieth seminar, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge, Book XX, Encore, 1972–1973*. These four propositions form what is usually referred to as the formulae of sexuation. Grouped together in two pairs, one pair is said to define ‘man’ and the other ‘woman.’ More specifically, the universal and particular affirmative propositions occupy the man side of the table while the universal and particular negative propositions occupy the woman side of the table. But in this table Lacan does not strictly observe the vertical ordering of the two pairs of propositions of the classical logical square from which they are originally derived. As can be seen in Figure 4.1 or 4.2, the universal propositions appear on top of the particulars. With Lacan’s arrangement however, while the two ‘feminine’ formulae do indeed follow this format, the ‘masculine’ formulae are so ordered that the particular proposition appears on top of the universal. So constructing a Lacanian logical square, which allows for a direct comparison to the classical Aristotelian logical square, merely

¹¹ ‘[W]hat about the square proposed by Lacan, even if he does not take the trouble to construct it as such? It can be depicted as follows...’. Le Gaufey, *Lacan’s Notall* (Ch 2), 32. The cosmetic difference between the Lacanian logical square Le Gaufey presents on this page and Figure 4.2 is explained below.

involves reversing the ordering of the formulae on the masculine side. A further point to be noted is that Le Gaufey constructs his Lacanian logical square so as to preserve the horizontal ordering found in both Lacan and Aristotle whereby the affirmative propositions (or masculine formulae) are placed on the left side of the square and the negative propositions (or feminine formulae) are placed on the right. Yet Figures 4.1 and 4.2 reverse this ordering. As has already been noted, this is only a minor change in presentation. The main reason for doing so is rather strategic: to better reflect the fact that the feminine formulae are more primordial than the masculine formulae. Thus, to serve as a reminder of this logical ordering the negative propositions have been placed on the left side where the reader's eye first takes them up before moving onto the affirmative propositions which occupy the right side; this approach thus harmonizes with the customary reading practice which moves across the written page from left to right. Yet this logical ordering whereby negation rightly precedes affirmation conflicts with the ordered sequence of numbers their quadrants have been assigned. That is, the symbols of A, I, E, O traditionally used to concisely refer to the propositions of the classical Aristotelian logical square of Figure 4.1 have been substituted by $\boxed{1}$, $\boxed{2}$, $\boxed{3}$ and $\boxed{4}$, respectively, in Figure 4.2. This has been done to capture the fact that despite the logical precedence of the elements inscribed by the propositions occupying quadrants $\boxed{3}$ and $\boxed{4}$, they nevertheless paradoxically come after those of $\boxed{1}$ and $\boxed{2}$. One of the endeavors of Part II is to explicate these and other similar claims.

Setting aside the ramifications of substituting these specific arguments and single function for subject and predicate for the moment, a cursory comparison of Figures 4.2 and 4.1 shows that Lacan apparently makes a change to the writing of each proposition in some respect except for the universal affirmative. At least in terms of quantity and quality, it appears to be the case that $\boxed{1} \forall x \Phi x$ does not represent any change over 'All S are P.' But Lacan clearly makes changes to the writing of the other three propositions by modifying their quantity or quality (or both). Beginning with the classical proposition 'Some S are P,' it is now seen to be written as $\boxed{2} \exists x \overline{\Phi x}$. In both squares these are considered particular *affirmative* propositions yet Lacan's writing *negates* the phallic function. So while both squares have an 'official' negative left side or deixis,¹² negation does appear on the affirmative right side of the Lacanian square in stark contrast to the classical square. This captures Lacan's claim that the particular affirmative stands in contradiction to its universal. Moreover, contradiction occurs within the other deixis, for this same relation is to be had between the universal and the particular negative propositions. That is to say, where the classical square articulates 'All S are not P,' Lacan counters with his

¹² As Le Gaufey notes, the term '[d]eixis is the name in the logical square for the elements that are ranked on the same side.' Ibid., 39n50.

own universal negative proposition which he formulates with a double negation: $\boxed{3} \exists x \overline{\Phi x}$. Very broadly speaking (and indeed at this point only summary observations are being made at the level of the apparent differences in the writing of the propositions in each of the two squares) a double negative returns the proposition to a qualitative status effectively equivalent to the universal affirmative. This double negative thus places it in contradiction to its particular which, for its own part, retains a single negation of its argument (and not of the phallic function which would be the case had Lacan strictly followed the format of ‘Some S are not P’ in the classical square): $\boxed{4} \forall x \Phi x$. Here is the proposition said to retain an equivalency to the similarly singly-negated particular affirmative proposition. The negative deixis also has a further curiosity in that the quantifiers of their arguments are reversed from those of the affirmative deixis, the latter of which seem to better accord with those of the classical square.

A high-level comparison between the two squares thus reveals how the general layout of the classical square is retained in the new square: both operate with the same two (universal and the particular) levels and the same two (affirmative and negative) sides. But set aside these formal similarities between the two logical squares and the differences rapidly begin to mount, both at the level of the individual propositions and by extension to the relationships between them. The question which now must be asked is why Lacan chooses these specific argument-function combinations. Or more simply said, what does each proposition *say*?

It was said above that $\boxed{1} \forall x \Phi x$ does not represent any change over ‘All S are P.’ This is true enough at the level of its two-component format. But at the level of its writing, especially in terms of argument and function, this assessment alters considerably. As Le Gaufey reminds us, by early 1971 the name of Charles Sanders Peirce begins to frequently appear in Lacan’s seminars¹³ whose own work in logic casts a formidable influence on how Lacan reads the quantifier \forall . The issue at stake takes up a problem known for centuries which concerns the existential assumptions of the classical logical square. Suppose that the S of ‘All S are P’ is an empty term. By subalternation ‘Some S are P’ is also false which makes ‘All S are not P’ true by contradiction. But by subalternation again ‘Some S are not P’ is also true, which must be wrong since there are no S terms in existence. The traditional solution to this problem was to insist either that the logical interrelations of the square unobjectionably hold even for empty S terms, which would then make ‘All S are not P’ (vacuously) true but not false, or to not even consider empty terms at all. Most traditional logicians opted for the former solution which rigorously upholds the logical relationships; they could thus easily hold the truth of a universal affirmative statement like ‘All unicorns have one

¹³ Ibid., 20.

horn' as leading to the truth of its subaltern 'Some unicorns have one horn' despite the fictional status of the S term unicorn. However, modern logicians like Peirce refocused the problem onto a question of the existential import of particular propositions. Surely by saying 'Some man is white' is to imply that at least one thing is a man who has to be white if this proposition is to be true; likewise with 'Some man is not white.' Since the classical logical square requires that one of these propositions is necessarily true as both cannot be false and since both imply that some thing is a man, it therefore necessarily follows that men exist. Such reasoning has led to the modern assumption that for a particular proposition to be true there must be at least one case in which the subject term exists. More broadly speaking, the modern assumption which Lacan thoroughly follows is to take universal claims referencing non-existent objects like 'All unicorns have one horn' to be true even if there are no unicorns, while the particular claims about them like 'Some unicorns have one horn' are seen as false since this claim requires that at least one unicorn exists for it to be true. Generalizing these assumptions, the truth of $\forall x \Phi x$ does not imply the existence of a term to which x refers, so it can be true even if there is no x (*i.e.*, even if x is empty, an element of the empty set: $x \in \emptyset$); yet for $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ to be true, at least one x must exist. Hence the reason for Lacan's choice of the existential quantifier $\exists x$.

The universal and particular levels precariously held apart by subalternation is now replaced by a logical relation which more radically maintains their opposition. Žižek's own discussion of the universal and particular affirmative propositions is illustrated by a citation from Lacan's ninth seminar,¹⁴ a fact which allows one to see how Lacan was already aware of the relation between these two propositions despite not yet formalizing this relation at a logical level – an achievement which only comes a full ten years later. The citation in question concerns how every existing father stands as an exception to the universal notion of father captured by the proposition 'All fathers are $f(x)$ ' as Žižek generically expresses it. That is, despite how the universal paternal function determines all fathers, this in no way implies that there exists a particular individual which exemplifies its truth. For each individual is either deficient or overbearing as a father such that the only father who fully exists at the level of his notion is the mythical 'primordial father' standing precisely as a particular exception to all the other fathers who waver between a too little and a too much. Le Gaufey's own illustration entails what is arguably the most elemental universal affirmative: 'All men are mortal.'¹⁵ If this proposition does not imply existence, to aspire to belong to it as a man simultaneously coincides

¹⁴ See Žižek, *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, 761–2. Due to a typographical error, the Roman numeral referencing Lacan's seminar in footnote 31 on page 762 should read 'IX' rather than 'XI.'

¹⁵ Le Gaufey, *Lacan's Notall* (Ch 2), 22.

with an abstraction from it. In other words, a particular man who says ‘All men are mortal’ arrogantly assumes his ability to draw a line over his own existence while he is alive. With these illustrations it begins to be seen that while the two propositions contradict each other, the existential declaration of $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ has the potential to undermine from within the universal notion $\forall x \Phi x$. In terms of textual exegesis, if the notion is initially held that ‘All of Gadamer is Heideggerian,’ this in no way presumes that there exist particular passages of Gadamer which exemplify this truth. What will actually be found are passages which fall short of Heidegger or alternatively, which parody him to ridiculous excess. These existing passages problematize the notion they were intended to illustrate and thus call for its revision which in turn will re-initiate the search for its own (non-existent) exemplification. In this way the hermeneutical circle turns for the individual interpreter while a larger circle operates at the level of the secondary literature itself where the following strategy is quite often employed: scholar A effectively critiques scholar B by targeting what the former views as the latter’s ‘poor choice’ of supportive textual material. But what Lacan’s two propositions articulate is how this is really a foregone conclusion, for any use of existing textual material cannot but undermine the interpretive thesis it is meant to illustrate.

Such a conclusion ultimately stems from Lacan’s privileging of the maximal form of the particular which objects to the universal. He affirms that if $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$, then one cannot conclude that $\forall x \Phi x$. In terms of the above examples, if at least one x possesses some property like the paternal function or mortality or falls under the concept ‘Heideggerian,’ it is wrong to conclude All x do, that is, that all fathers, all men and all of Gadamer’s texts submit to their respective function. Rather, what must be concluded is that Not-all do, or $\boxed{4} \overline{\forall x \Phi x}$. In this sense the Not-all is an affirmation of the setting aside of $\forall x \Phi x$ by $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ and thus can be seen as mediating between these two propositions. In doing so its own status is highly undecidable, for it operates as a sort of index to the discord between the universal and existence: to the $\forall x \Phi x$ which opens up the field of existence without implying anything regarding the existence of the x it universally affirms, it links $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ which affirms the existence of at least one x able to sustain the negation brought to bear on the phallic function. That $\overline{\forall x \Phi x}$ stands between the universal and existence (and thus troubles a simple opposition between existence and inexistence) can already be seen in Lacan’s choice to use the negation of the *universal* quantifier $\forall x$ to express the negative of a proposition dwelling at the particular level assumed to carry *existential* weight. But if by affirming $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ one concludes that $\overline{\forall x \Phi x}$, this still leaves open a potential for misunderstanding. If some x do not possess the property and simultaneously Not-all x possess it, traditional logic would conclude that their conjunction brings back the whole of the universal such that All x may be

said to possess it. To prevent this from happening (which at once shows his concerted effort to undermine the universal), Lacan recognizes how the particular negative proposition cannot stand alone but must be supplemented by the universal negative $\overline{\exists x \Phi x}$. The relation between these two propositions occupying the negative deixis of the Lacanian logical square can be classically read from top to bottom (so that $\overline{\exists x \Phi x}$ is a necessary condition of $\overline{\forall x \Phi x}$) or from bottom to top (so that the latter is the sufficient condition of the former): if Not-all x possess it, then this implies that there is no x that does not possess it. But the difficulty of understanding this is immense. For how exactly can it be that while there is no x that does not satisfy Φx , these x nevertheless do not totalize themselves into an All set?

Addressing this difficulty provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the fact that these formulae make use of set theory, which is that field of mathematics lying at its very foundation. Discussing how set theory relates to the Lacanian logical square is important if for no other reason than to lay the groundwork for understanding Lacan's further usage of a branch of set theory called topology to better articulate how these formulae interrelate. Topology is a topic that is discussed in Chapter 5. Basically, the Lacanian logical square involves set theory precisely at the level of the universal proposition where the quantifier \forall becomes operational by referring the x that follows it to some thing which is then written as belonging to a determinate set. Above it was implied that x was a variable ready to be filled in with any one of an array of different object-terms which have a determinate status. But since the universal affirmative does not imply existence, strictly speaking this is inaccurate. As Le Gaufey suggests, Lacan is following Frege's notion of how the 'indeterminacy' of x 'is not a descriptive epitaph of "number," it is rather an adverb modifying "indicate." We will not say that $[x]$ designates an indeterminate number, but that it indicates numbers in an indeterminate manner.'¹⁶ This notion raises the question of sets. More specifically, the use of $\forall x$ is effectively the hypothesis that a set which covers the range of values of x truly exists such that an element can be extracted from it given the employment of the proper function the x satisfies. In terms of the distinction Russell draws between the 'intensional' and 'extensional' approaches to the set,¹⁷ Lacan here seems to opt for the former. For the proposition $\forall x \Phi x$ collects $\forall x$ corresponding to Φx , which is consistent with the intensional or rule-governed understanding of a set as a collection of objects corresponding to a predicate or concept, an approach which presumes that the concept takes logical priority over its application. But it should be carefully noted how intensional set theory is strictly applicable only to the right deixis of the Lacanian logical square, for the left deixis undeniably

¹⁶ Ibid., 21n28.

¹⁷ See Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, 333.

inscribes the extensional or combinatorial understanding of a set which eschews proceeding along such strictly defined lines. In contrast to the intensional conception, any set that results from the extensional approach is built from the bottom up by a simple bundling together of elements and what solidifies the priority this approach enjoys over its counterpart is that it avoids the fatal limitation of holding to the rule-governance theory of set formation. The limitation in question is none other than the one exposed by Russell to Frege's great disappointment. Frege had defended the intensional approach. But Russell's famous paradox pointed out that the former's system allows for the distinction between properties that include and do not include themselves within their intensional grasp and so leads to sets which include themselves and others which do not. This is perfectly acceptable, but it further suggests that the formation of a set of all sets that are not members of themselves is possible. Yet it is easily shown how the attempted formation of such a set leads to a paradox, for if it is a member of itself then it is not a member of itself and if it is not a member of itself, then it is a member of itself – a paradox because it conflicts with Frege's sensible view that any coherent condition determines a set. Simply said, this set of all sets that are not members of themselves does not exist. Restating Russell's paradox in concise existential terms: if it exists, it is a member of itself if (and only if) it is not a member of itself; this is a contradiction and so it does not exist.¹⁸ Given that Frege's system leads to such a paradox, the conclusion must be that it cannot be logically sound. So the extensional approach must be seen as taking logical priority to the intensional approach and what makes the Lacanian logical square that much more 'complete' is that it inscribes *both* these approaches. In contrast to the right deixis where sets exist, the left deixis has priority through its inscription of the 'deeper' truth that some sets do not exist.

¹⁸ There is no shortage of helpful examples to illustrate Russell's paradox. One of the traditional examples is related on pages 30–1 of Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*. There Fink considers the status of a catalogue of all catalogues which do not include themselves within their own pages. According to this criterion a catalogue would be selected only if it did not include its own title in the list of titles it provides of other catalogues. Now, should the editor include the title of this catalogue of all catalogues within its own pages? Not to include it would make it a catalogue which does not include itself as an entry, so it should be included. But to include it makes it a catalogue which does include itself as an entry, so it should not be included. The upshot is that it is impossible to ascertain what such a catalogue contains or does not contain within its pages. Its status is thoroughly paradoxical. Another example:

'Consider, for instance, the analogy of a village barber who shaves only those people in the village who do not shave themselves. Does the barber, then, shave himself? We must conclude that there can be no straightforward answer. But the fundamental assumptions of intensional set theory seem to bar us from saying that there can be no such paradoxical set.' Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, 333.

To relate these results back to the propositions of the logical square, to think that there is no exception to the satisfaction of a function $(\overline{\exists x \Phi x})$ does not reunite those which do satisfy this function under the aegis of a universal set $(\forall x \Phi x)$ from which one could indeterminately draw an element and inscribe it into the existential order of the particular $(\exists x \overline{\Phi x})$; rather, a *domain* results $(\overline{\forall x \Phi x})$ which refuses to collectivize into a set. Žižek privileges ‘politics’ from the series of other terms he has employed throughout his career to helpfully illustrate this paradoxical domain. As he recently writes:

Politics which occurs in this in-between space is non-All: its formula is not “everything is political,” but “there is nothing which is not political,” which means that “not-all is political.” The field of the political cannot be totalized...there is no meta-language in which we can “objectively” describe the whole political field, every such description is already partial.¹⁹

Reading these words closely, one sees how Žižek effectively makes reference to the logics of each of the four propositions. Thus we are admonished not to move too quickly to declare how ‘everything is political’ $[\forall x \Phi x]$. Such a declaration seems rather naïve given the series of examples that immediately spring to mind which surely countermand its assertion $[\exists x \overline{\Phi x}]$. Sex perhaps is such an exception, providing a meta-language position from which an objective assessment of the field of the political might be possible. But then again as feminist discourse endeavors to prove, a closer examination reveals how ‘there is nothing (not even sex) which is not political’ $[\overline{\exists x \Phi x}]$. That is, taking each of these contradictory examples one by one will reveal that they do not hold any exceptional status to the function in question. This, however, does not re-submit them to the universal All but rather demonstrates how the political field can only be described in a partial manner. Here one must avoid thinking that this is so because this field is simply too vast to grasp all at once and thus only permits a piecemeal approach. For although the results of such partial analysis can be gathered together, their sum must be conceived as a loosely grouped and non-totalized domain (rather than a determinate set) such that it is only permissible to say ‘not-all is political’ $[\overline{\forall x \Phi x}]$. This illustration by Žižek makes it more clear

¹⁹ Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 488–9. He further argues that the political ‘Left and Right are not simply two options within a field, but two different visions of the entire field.’ Žižek has often drawn a direct homology between the split of political space into Left and Right and the split of the sexual into the difference between the feminine and the masculine, respectively. He concisely illustrates this using Claude Lévi-Strauss’ analysis of the two possible perceptions by the Great Lakes tribe of the Winnebago regarding the spatial disposition of the buildings in their village. See Butler et al., *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, 112–3. This homology lends incidental credence to having reversed the two sides of the Lacanian logical square in Figure 4.2, for now the feminine pair of formulae more properly occupy the Left deixis while the masculine pair stands to the Right.

why Lacan has paradoxically chosen to write the universal negative proposition by negating the existential quantifier ($\overline{\exists x}$) which in the right deixis affirms the existence of an exception to the universal All; while the particular negative proposition is written by negating the universal quantifier ($\overline{\forall x}$) which stands as a reminder not to conceive it as ‘some’ or ‘at least one’ with a determinate and essential existence. The two propositions in the left deixis thus work in unison just as those of the right. If we begin by claiming Not-all satisfy the function, this of course rules out that All should do so, but also that there should be one that does not since the universal negative compliments the Not-all claim by affirming that there is no one who does not satisfy the function.

Now that the propositional components, their specific combinations and the relations held between the two propositions in each pair have been introduced, a greater appreciation for how each proposition relates to all the others is needed. The example from Žižek above already suggests how the two pairs of propositions do not stand in simple opposition to each other but do seem to enter into an interplay of mutual relations just as do the propositions of the Aristotelian logical square. So while it is perfectly legitimate to speak of elements in the left or the right deixis of the Lacanian logical square, care must always be taken not to slip into thinking that this reflects a bi-partition which somehow occurs ‘within’ the universal. To do so is to precisely take up the meta-position offered by the particular affirmative (which the universal negative denies). In contrast, by continually approaching the global consistency of these four propositions which respects their interplay, the desire to comprehend them ‘all at once’ is frustrated. It also becomes clear that what is at stake in each deixis is the conception of the exception, affirmed on one side ($\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$) and denied on the other ($\overline{\exists x} \overline{\Phi x}$).

Making use of Le Gaufey’s occasional practice of generically referencing the propositions in a convenient shorthand (whereby $\forall x \Phi x$ = all say yes; $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ = one says no; $\overline{\exists x} \overline{\Phi x}$ = no one says no; $\overline{\forall x} \Phi x$ = not-all say yes), the logical relations between the four propositions can be concisely articulated. If all say yes, then it is false that one says no and that not-all say yes (as seen in Figure 4.2, [1] enters into contradiction with both [2] and [4]) and if no one says no, then it is false that one says no and that not-all say yes ([3] enters into contradiction with both [2] and [4]). In addition to contradiction, there is also the relation of equivalency. For if all say yes, no contradiction ensues with the fact that no one says no (the two universals [1] and [3] imply each other and are effectively equivalent), as is the case with the two particulars, for if one says no, this does not contradict with the fact that not-all say yes (an equivalency between [2] and [4]).

Concerning the question of equivalency it will be noticed how the last sentence of the previous paragraph seems to stand in tension to the conclusions

drawn in the immediately foregoing paragraphs. For if those conclusions forewarn us not to conceive of the Lacanian logical square as neatly partitioned into two sides, how are we to make sense of the equivalent relations between the universals and the particulars which cannot but give the sense of a perfect symmetry between the two sides? Le Gaufey would suggest that the answer lay with Lacan's conception of the universal negative which is 'undeniably...the high point of his invention, much more than on the side of the "not-all"'²⁰ The general contention that Lacan wants to preserve the equivocation of the maximal particular is here specifically translated into ensuring that the universal negative vacillates so that if the two universals are said to be equivalent, this 'equivalence' is nevertheless conceived in a way which harbors an internal rift. To understand this, consider how one might begin the movement of the writing of the four propositions with the universal affirmative $\forall x \Phi x$. As seen above, Lacan's choice of the maximal particular immediately excludes this universal, which he affirms through the particular negative $\overline{\forall x} \Phi x$ in a writing both denying the universal operator while sustaining the existence of Not-all. But if not-all illustrate the universal, on the right deixis the particular affirmative $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ is obligated to say that some do not illustrate it. The movement just traced out proceeds as $\boxed{1} \rightarrow \boxed{4} \rightarrow \boxed{2}$ and at this point Le Gaufey notes that it becomes clear how Lacan has taken his departure from the Aristotelian conception of the maximal particular. This latter conception would read Not-all as 'some' and so the maximal particular of 'some, but not all' in quadrant $\boxed{2}$ would read as " $\overline{\forall x} \overline{\Phi x}$ " as per the logician's choice of reading each proposition as per the *relations* of the logical square. In contrast, Lacan transforms the negation of the universal quantifier $\overline{\forall x}$ into the existential quantifier $\exists x$ since he has chosen to write each proposition *at its place*.²¹ These places are made available for writing because of the universal negative, which logicians for their part might well read as " $\forall x \overline{\Phi x}$." But to ensure the universal is well evacuated from the left deixis Lacan instead writes the universal quantifier by negating the existential quantifier, that is, he substitutes $\overline{\exists x}$ for $\forall x$. In doing so, Lacan

²⁰ Le Gaufey, *Lacan's Notall* (Ch 2), 35. This is a rather curious statement given the title of Le Gaufey's work which seems to recognize that Lacan's greatest contribution lay with the particular negative. Placing his highpoint with the latter would be more consistent with what Lacan himself claimed as his single greatest discovery in psychoanalysis, *viz.*, the *objet a* which, as is more clearly seen in Chapter 5 below, is the *matheme* from discourse theory most closely associated with $\overline{\forall x} \Phi x$. However, regardless with which of the four propositions Le Gaufey places the crucial accent, his analysis is fruitful for having suggested how the very operation of the universal negative is what opens up the 'space' of the logical square. This is further discussed immediately below.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

captures an essential ambiguity which complements the ambiguity attending the claim that the negation of universality produces existence. More specifically, $\boxed{3}$ is as ambiguous ('if not some, then all' but it is equally sustainable that 'if not some, then no one') as the ambiguity of $\boxed{4}$ ('if not-all' then either 'some' or 'no one'). If Lacan's propositions are an ambiguous read, it is with good reason for his intention all along has been to capture the equivocation of language in a logical manner and his writing here does just that. For while the 'not some' of $\overline{\exists x}$ is equivalent to 'all,' it must simultaneously be read as 'no one' or 'none' or 'the place of all.' To speak more broadly so as to capture its relation to all the other propositions, the universal negative $\overline{\exists x} \overline{\Phi x}$ can be conceived not only classically as the set of elements not satisfying the function, but also as a locus or space devoid of any element. In Le Gaufey's words, 'with this writing [Lacan] secures a sort of bolting down of his battery of formulae which, otherwise, would go down the tubes.'²² Yet as strange as it sounds, it is the 'nothing' inscribed by $\overline{\exists x} \overline{\Phi x}$ that does the bolting down. An understanding of this might be gained by conceiving of this proposition as a *subjective* gesture, precisely the one described above as taking elements 'one by one.' That is, the subjective activity of submitting each x for closer analysis is simultaneously the very operation which 'clears the space' in each of the other quadrants so that a place is made available for the determinate writing of their propositions. The complete movement is thus $\boxed{1} \rightarrow \boxed{4} \rightarrow \boxed{2} \rightarrow \boxed{3}$ and the paradox is that what clears the space for the propositions to be written into their places comes 'after' the propositions themselves have actually been inscribed.²³

So in contrast to the logician's choice to read the Not-all of the particular negative as a partitive 'some' so that if 'some say yes' the right deixis balances things out with a 'some say no,' Lacan's writing of the universal negative inscribes his desire to break with such a neat symmetry: there, where no one says no, not-all say yes. Thus this Not-all should not be seen as partitive but as affirming that those elements present in the left deixis (and having been taken one by one) are each subject to the same function but without becoming elements of an All. Each element in the left deixis has an existence under the regime of the function but in a way which cannot be made into a determinate set. In this manner the existence of these elements remains unattached to any essence within which they would be subsumed. Because of this one must speak of the asymmetry of the Lacanian logical square. This must always be kept in

²² Ibid., 35. More clearly seen in Chapter 5 below, the *matheme* from discourse theory most closely associated with the 'nothing' that is inscribed by $\overline{\exists x} \overline{\Phi x}$ is \$, the Lacanian subject.

²³ This is analogous to how an 'object' must first exist so as to permit the conception of the space it delimits, yet logically speaking the empty space comes first and is only 'later' occupied by the object.

mind when utilizing Figure 4.2, for despite the equivalencies running horizontally across the square which suggest symmetry there is an internal rift in this relation which is even more troubling than the formally acknowledged contradictory relation running vertically between the universal and the particular in each deixis. Moreover, Lacan's writing has effectively redoubled the logical rift, supplementing the one running *between* propositions by the one now discernible *within* the writing of the propositions due to the inversion of the universal and existential quantifiers in the left deixis. This not only leaves the classical Aristotelian logical square far behind but even takes its distance from the logician's reading of the maximal particular, for the latter can only register such rifts through the unfolding of the relations internal to the logical square. In contrast Lacan's writing thoroughly ensures that the left deixis is not treated as a mirror image of the right which would symmetrically oppose each to the other. For now each deixis must be taken as contributing reciprocally to one another as both obstacle and support.

Now that a certain 'global' understanding of the Lacanian logical square has been reached, a momentary pause in the analysis is warranted to take stock of the fact that Lacan is not simply a skilled logician. It is of course undeniable that Lacan thoroughly acts the part, masterfully commandeering both classical and modern logic to develop his own logical square. The foregoing analysis has made this plain, demonstrating how Lacan retains in the left deixis the central lesson of Russell's paradox, *viz.*, that there are well defined sets which do not exist, as opposed to the right where this paradox is not taken into account. However, these logical moves are made by Lacan the *psychoanalyst* whose predominant interests lay outside the strict realm of logic. In the present case Lacan has turned to logic to search for a way to best articulate the difference between the sexes. One might say that his goal is to emulate the accomplishment of Russell. Where the latter's paradox caused a crisis at the level of the once certain foundation of mathematics, Lacan hopes to similarly articulate a radical break with the traditional binary logic of the sexes which places man and woman on opposite sides of the sexual divide as per some pertinent universal feature. Recalling that each deixis of the Lacanian logical square is also a 'sexual side' whereby the left represents woman and the right man, the foregoing analysis already demonstrates certain successes of his project. For instance, Lacan's infamous claim that 'Woman does not exist' is reflective of the fact that in the left deixis, while individual women certainly exist, they nevertheless resist forming themselves into the set Woman. In a word, Woman is Not-all. This alone ensures that the irreducible asymmetry of the sexes remains entirely independent of any feature one might presume to impose on their relation in an attempt to bridge – or even define – the sexual rift which separates them. Moreover, this sexual rift thoroughly maps onto the logical rift(s) articulated

above. As Le Gaufey correctly stresses, for Lacan sex and logic thoroughly intertwine.²⁴

One further point should be made. The operating assumption of the present chapter has been that Lacan's formulae, written as they are in logical script, are flexible enough to be adapted to other realms. Thus both the Aristotelian and Lacanian logical squares have proven useful in discussing and articulating the hermeneutical circle. But it will be noted that those demonstrations largely proceeded from the affirmative deixis. This was not simply to keep the discussion relatively free of negating terms which might otherwise have added an avoidable level of complexity; rather, this anticipated the asymmetry of the Lacanian logical square whereby the negative deixis stands to the 'subversive left' of the affirmative deixis. Such a square suggests that if the hermeneutical circle is confined to the space of the right, the space of the left is where the suspension of meaning is accomplished. In these terms the current chapter has been laying the groundwork for Chapter 5 which more expressly demonstrates this possibility.

To gain a deeper appreciation for what has been accomplished in the left deixis, one might turn to the right to inquire how Lacan understands the status of the 'exception,' a term that has hitherto been used without complication. Above it was said that the elements to the left do not collectivize into a determinate set since their existence is without essence. Lacan's concern to maintain a distinction between existence and essence is not unrelated to the 'at least one' element to the right, that is, the particular exception to the universal affirmative. Consider that Lacan takes the universal quantifier \forall as an ontological marker and so one directed toward being and essence as opposed to existence, just as do Aristotelian logicians. For instance, by saying 'All of Gadamer' it is understood that these signifiers have a denotative status which awaits effectuation, for they do not establish any existence by themselves but merely produce a being which could be qualified and thus produce an essence. Inversely, the existential quantifier \exists directly asserts the existence of the element

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 36. Le Gaufey's words are reproduced in full so as to reemphasize this important point:

'Lacan shows that he is aware of the fact that if one wants to undermine the dualities Man/Woman, Yin/Yang, XX/XY, penis/unpenis etc., one must not hesitate to damage their logical underpinnings, since he is sure that logic, in its own foundation, is much more "gendered" (because of its fundamental binarity) than "sexed." It is important to be convinced of this point, otherwise one will miss the intuition that pushes him to bring together "logical fault" and "sexual fault." For him sex touches on logic, but logic touches just as much on sex. So that reconnecting them with one another illuminates the one and the other, the one by the other, while the couples of opposites sustain logics of the kind (man/woman, active/passive, etc.) which, for their part seek to articulate themselves without fault, and without remainder.'

that it writes, as in the case of asserting ‘There is (at least) one text of Gadamer.’ Here is where Lacan begins to take his departure from Aristotelian logic. For the latter has it that this existence corresponds to an essence, so it always relates to the supposed being of the universal. That existence is nothing more than the particular actualization of a being always universal in its category is reflected in the classical choice of the minimal particular. The approach of the minimal particular would, moreover, maintain a consistent universal which would unproblematically span the entire logical square so as to develop an essence for each deixis. But this is precisely what Lacan wants to deny, preferring instead ‘to make existence prevail over essence’²⁵ so as to contravene the Aristotelian derivation of existence from essence and make the universal vacillate.

To this end Lacan would have us conceive how the universal $\forall x \Phi x$ finds its true foundation in the existence of the exception $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ which opposes it. If this is the case it certainly lends support to Lacan’s decision to include negation in the right deixis so that its particular enters into contradiction with its universal just as is the case in the left deixis. Now, if existence is placed with the two particulars and existence trumps the essence to be had in the universals, for Lacan the truth would lie with the particulars which in turn would make the two universals necessarily false. But while the conception of a universal thus grounded certainly distinguishes itself from the Aristotelian conception, one is hard pressed to understand such a claim. Le Gaufey quotes Lacan who suggests the proverb ‘the exception proves the rule’ illustrates the claim, but one would have to agree with his assessment that this sheds little light on how the exception provides support for the universal.²⁶ The further suggestion is made to look to the other deixis and generally speaking this is good advice when difficulties arise in comprehending aspects of a specific deixis; for if the logical square comprises both classical logic and its subversion, indeed there is no other gesture to make than a tautological one. In the present case it is thus pertinent to ask what would occur to the universal if there was no exception. This in effect is the claim of the universal negative $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ which negates the exception and what results is Not-all or $\overline{\forall x \Phi x}$, precisely the proposition which negates the universal quantifier. Again, while the logic of the right deixis places elements into a set, the logic of the left concerns only a domain of elements whose existence is indeed affirmed (recall how $\overline{\forall x}$ acts as an existential quantifier) but nevertheless cannot be collectivized into a universal set precisely because no element escapes it. Through the contradictory writings of the two propositions

²⁵ Ibid., 38n49. Le Gaufey opposes Lacan *qua* existentialist to the tendency in the literature to place his thought within structuralist theory, although he is careful to note that Lacanian existentialism is not of the Sartrean type but is rather more in line with Blaise Pascal and Kierkegaard.

²⁶ Ibid., 39.

in the left deixis, the existing domain of elements thus also escapes having an essence produced of them.²⁷ Here something exists which does not belong to a universal and so is devoid of essence yet at the same time cannot be conceived as an exception. So to the right deixis where an All is founded on the existence of the exception of at least one, the left deixis professes that insofar as no exception exists, those that do exist do not form an All. In contrast to the classical logical square, running across the top of the Lacanian square are propositions which deeply damage the universal, for in *both* partitions the universal simply cannot collectivize all the elements which would give rise to a homogeneous unity without exception. Le Gaufey is quite right that one must strive to hold together the two types of contradiction which run *within* and *between* each deixis or else the entire project easily reverts to a symmetrical square reflecting traditional bipolar thinking subsumed under a grand universal. For his part the key to doing so is to specify the relationship that the universal maintains with the exception better than Lacan himself has done.²⁸ Following the results of his analysis is valuable for its introduction of the term 'limitation' into the vocabulary of the Lacanian logical square.

Not finding what he needs from Lacan's seminars, Le Gaufey turns instead to *L'étourdit* (1972) to find a passage suggesting that the exception be conceived as a limit. There Lacan writes of the universal affirmative $\forall x \Phi x$ that for all x , Φx is satisfied. But with regard to this very same proposition he further writes how 'there is by exception the case, familiar in mathematics (the argument $x = 0$ in the exponential [*sic*] function $\frac{1}{x}$), the case where there exists an x for which Φx , the function, is not satisfied, namely, by not functioning, is in effect

²⁷ To Le Gaufey's point that '*The woman does not exist*' (or alternatively denoted with a capital 'W' as in 'Woman does not exist') which expresses the missing *universal* in the speaking being, it would be legitimate to add how the missing *essence* has long since been captured by the 'male chauvinist' insight into how 'woman has no *soul*.' See *ibid.*, 41.

²⁸ Le Gaufey remarks

'that the universal (that there is no question of doing without, it is what allows us to write with complete security) maintains with the exception a relationship that Lacan to my mind, does not manage to clarify in the course of these two seminars, *Of a Discourse that might not be a Semblance* [Seminar XVIII] and *...or worse* [Seminar XIX].' *Ibid.*, 41.

While he does travel outside these seminars in search of clues on how to conceive of this relationship, it seems to be the case that 'Le Gaufey remains at a certain level of the notall, in other words principally at the seminar *...ou pire* [Seminar XIX], of 1971–1972.' See Fierens, "The Fact of Saying Notall with Reference to Le Gaufey's Work," 6. Fierens equally suspects that Le Gaufey improperly places an accent on propositions other than the Not-all, despite the title of the latter's work. To his mind this is corrected by more closely examining the 1972 text *L'étourdit* which reflects advances in Lacan's thought regarding how the formulae of sexuation are to be read.

excluded.²⁹ The exception he speaks of is the particular affirmative $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ and Lacan's point is that it operates precisely like how $x = 0$ creates a limit for the function $(x) = \frac{1}{x}$ which here stands in for the universal affirmative. This is visually confirmed by examining Figure 4.3 which presents the graph of this hyperbolic function.

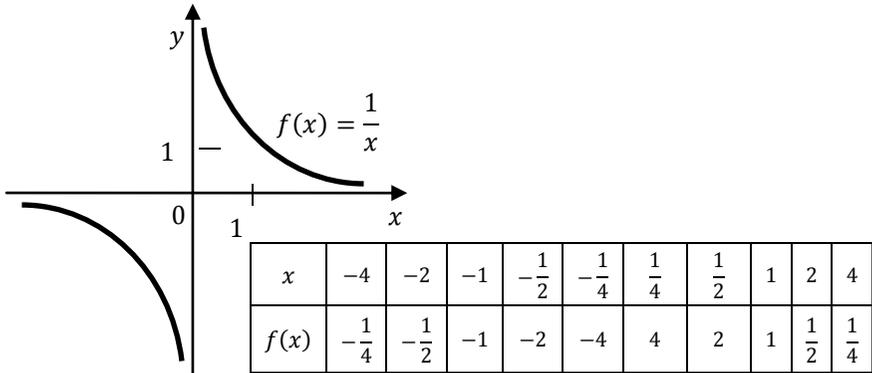


Figure 4.3: A Hyperbolic Function

The table determines several points $(x, f(x))$ on the graph of f . Reading from left to right, it can be seen that for $x < 0$, $f(x)$ increases towards infinity as x decreases towards 0; while for $x > 0$, $f(x)$ decreases towards 0 as x increases towards infinity. However, $f(x)$ presents no value if $x = 0$. Mathematically speaking, $x = 0$ is not in the domain of f . That is, it is impossible to divide a real number like 1 by 0, for dividing 1 by 0 is to effectively ask ‘Which number multiplied by 0 gives 1?’ There is no such number because the product of any real number like 1 and 0 is 0. In a word, division by 0 is undefined. This is visually confirmed by the sloping curves of the graph which will never cross its asymptotes. The asymptotes are the lines that the branches of the hyperbola approach as they recede farther and farther from the origin; that is, as the absolute value of x becomes greater and greater. For such an (equilateral) hyperbolic function as $(x) = \frac{1}{x}$, the coordinate axes (*i.e.*, $x = 0$ and $y = 0$) act as its asymptotes and it is precisely at this locus or place of 0 where Lacan situates $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$. This graph quite nicely provides a visual representation of how the universal takes its support on the exception, but as seen this foundation is anything but solid. There is an undecidability here: if the

²⁹ Lacan, *L'étourdit* (First Turn), 11. As both Le Gaufey and Fierens note, there is an obvious error in the text in that the function $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$ is not exponential but hyperbolic.

submission of All x under the $f(x)$ is conditioned by the fact that at least one escapes it, should this escaped $x = 0$ be counted amongst the All or not?

While noting how this example is quite useful in illustrating this undecidability, Le Gaufey is right to suggest how the graph tempts one to favor a 'transcendent' reading of the exception, one that is wholly in line with St. Augustine's God *qua* superior element to the worldly series.³⁰ That is, since there is a stark disparity observable between the graph and its asymptotes, the temptation is to read the function as founded on a perfect exteriority. This reading is to be rejected because if accepted, it becomes legitimate to ask the subject *from where* he has made such an assessment. To the believer such a reading is authorized by faith, but for the non-believer well-versed in the impossibility of taking up a meta-position or bird's eye view from which a neutral assessment of the function and its limit could be made (in other words, there is no meta-language), this assessment must be abandoned. The analysis here is perfectly sound and Le Gaufey strengthens the argument by noting how no meta-position is available in the left deixis as well, although in this case the assessment would concern the status of the *absence* of the exception. In the end he proposes to think the exception as effectively starting from the series of x of $f(x)$ which would allow one to resist thinking of both the series and its exception or limit as occupying a common space. This is thoroughly in line with the impossibility of taking up a meta-position. But the problem with this solution lies with its very endeavor to provide the 'correct' way of reading the relationship between the universal and its exception. In contrast, one should instead approach the right deixis in a way which *preserves* its undecidability and, moreover, allows one to 'wrongly' choose the meta-position reading of the relationship in a first move. For this 'incorrect' reading is part and parcel of what Lacan intends to capture with the two propositions in the right deixis. More precisely the exception *is* the meta-position, the point from which man audaciously claims to be able to assess it All. To clarify Le Gaufey's failing on

³⁰ Le Gaufey, *Lacan's Notall* (Ch 2), 44. This logic is of course not limited to the world of religion but permeates the very core of philosophy, as seen with Kant's dynamical logic: the inaccessible noumenal realm which acts as the constitutive exception to phenomenal reality, providing both its support and ultimate guarantee, is homologous to the masculine sexuated logic Lacan puts into play.

While on the topic of Kant it might be noted how the graph in Figure 4.3 nicely illustrates the Kantian regulative Idea which is only achievable through an asymptotic approach. In this way an illusory space is held open for the subject who conceives his project as one involving infinite and endless progress.

In contrast to this reading which excludes the exceptional x from the set of x so as to provide a clear limit, Le Gaufey argues in what follows how the exception might alternatively be conceived as included in the set of x while simultaneously also operating as the limit to that set, much like how the topological figure of the möbius strip includes its edge.

this issue along different lines, certainly his reading of the right deixis and the status of the existing exception is *ultimately* correct, but what is overlooked is how this reading is done from the vantage point of the left deixis which stands logically prior to the right. Here is the reason for his recourse to the left deixis when articulating his solution and no wonder, since it is this very deixis which inscribes the impossibility of taking up a meta-position. Hence his further specific advisement that one tarry along with the series of x (*i.e.*, one by one) in order to break the spell of the meta-position. His failing here also explains his misreading of Lacan on this score. Had Le Gaufey consciously recognized how the spell of the right deixis is only broken by reading it from the more subversive left, he would not doubt that Lacan intends to capture 'a wish, religious in style, clearly worthy of...hope for an eternal life' with the exception.³¹ His denial that this is the case leads to a general confusion over what exactly is being inscribed in the right deixis. Broadly speaking, what is missed is how Lacan places the secondary and more phantasmatical dimension of subjectivity (inclusive of the field of meaning, as is seen below) in the right deixis while reserving the space to the left for its subversion.

4.3 Additional Interpretive Consequences of Sexuation

The third chapter of Le Gaufey's work recommends itself for more deeply specifying the relationships which adhere between the propositions in the Lacanian logical square. Ostensibly the chapter is an attack on the cherished clinical practice of the vignette in psychoanalysis, to which he counters by arguing for a clinical practice that might instead be modeled on the logic of the maximal particular. But his analysis is so favorably peppered with insights into how the particular undermines the universal that they easily form their own separate theme. Thus the work has broader applications. It is, for instance, easily adapted to counter the 'cookie-cutter' approach to textual analysis which begins with a universal framework and subsequently cuts out textual material into readily digestible morsels or failing that, otherwise submits the uncooperative text to the Procrustean bed of a well-constructed theory. More pertinently, insofar as hermeneutics has established itself as a universal field since Schleiermacher (and with important renewals of its universality coming from different quarters by the likes of Dilthey, Heidegger, Bultmann and Gadamer), for a project aiming to suspend this universal field the insights of Le Gaufey prove invaluable. This is especially the case given that his thematic demonstrates the overall non-relationship which adheres between the two sides of the bipartite structure of the Lacanian logical square in such a way that the crucial accent

³¹ Ibid., 45. Le Gaufey had already acknowledged that such universals hold a certain necessity for writing and this indispensability, we must now add, is functionally true despite their illusory quality.

invariably falls on the left deixis whenever it is a question of parting company with the common notion of the universal on the right.

To say that the Lacanian logical square inscribes a non-relationship is at once to say that its two sides cannot be reduced to a binary, even one in its most primitive form. Yet the analysis in the previous section might suggest otherwise. For clearly the right deixis supports the existence of an essence which develops a symbolic value of the element x which contrasts with the left deixis where it is affirmed that there is no essence for those elements which do exist and therefore cannot be so symbolically mapped out. It thus seems the logical square inscribes the most elemental binary whereby the right deixis bears a symbolic mark while the left deixis does not. This can be seen in the very writing of the propositions. On the right there is at least one x sticking out from all the others³² and its exceptional status presents itself with the mark of a bar over the phallic function $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$, while on the left the absence of this mark is denoted by negating the existential quantifier $\overline{\exists x \overline{\Phi x}}$. But can the logical square be reduced to the oppositional couple of presence/absence of a distinctive mark? To answer in the affirmative is to conceive the relationship between the two sides as one of complementary difference whereby absence simply responds to presence and vice versa. Yet the writing of the two propositions indicates that the actual relationship is thoroughly asymmetrical since what is at stake is a relationship of quality which founds absolutely separate terms. Consider that one can deny the presence of the given mark of $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ to arrive at its absence $\overline{\exists x \overline{\Phi x}}$. But there is no certainty that this vector can be reversed, for by denying its absence one *might* return to the same mark but it is also possible that another mark will appear or perhaps none at all. The same mark would be returned to if the relationship were a matter of simple difference where what is not in one deixis is in the other. But being absent in one in no way obligates its presence in the other, for the absence of the mark in the left deixis provides no reference point as would its presence in the right.³³ Those elements without a place in the latter

³² For this reason S_1 is the matheme from discourse theory most closely associated with $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ and S_2 , all the other signifiers from which it sticks out, is the matheme likewise associated with $\forall x \Phi x$. These associations are more fully explored in Chapter 5.

³³ It is easily seen in mathematics how denying the presence of a given mark arrives at its absence by considering how the subtraction of 1 from 1 results in 0. But denying the resulting absence in no way guarantees a return to the same mark of 1. This can also be seen at a more fundamental level with reference to the Axiom of the Empty Set which is one of nine axioms of set theory that compose the very foundation of mathematics. It states that the empty or null set \emptyset exists and it can be arrived at by denying the signifying mark which allows a group of elements to be collectivized into a set; the resulting elements would no longer be a set but instead loosely grouped in a domain. Here is the movement from the right to the left deixis. But there is no assurance of returning to that signifying mark by denying this domain; rather, a *set* would have to be

the *allos*; that no *alter* subsumes the *alius*' and that the right and left sides are not aliquot parts but instead aliquant.³⁵ To begin gaining an appreciation of this, it is advisable to rearticulate the four propositions of the logical square as a maximal particular choice to limit the range of the universal notion.

It was seen in the previous two sections how classical logicians followed Aristotle in setting aside the maximal understanding of the particular so as to better provide for logical consistency and how Lacan, through Brunschwig's analysis, directly confronts the ambiguity that nevertheless remains. This ambiguity can be expressed at the level of the two universals which are related as contraries in the classical logical square. The two different understandings of contrariety determine the two different approaches to the particular (minimal and maximal) which at once map onto the two ways of conceiving the spatiality of the logical square. On the one hand the two universals can be seen as marking the extreme points of a common space so that the relation between them is one of continuity; standing in contrast, they oppose (without entirely excluding) each other so that they might be said to be reciprocally complementary. On the other hand they manifest themselves in terms which cannot unite and so must be said to occupy mutually exclusive spaces which are minimally separated; contrariety is defined here by incompatibility rather than by contrast. These two senses of contrariety are admittedly difficult to distinguish but the defective nature of the perfectly ordered logical square this distinction is designed to illustrate becomes more transparent by approaching the problematic through the level of the particular. Now, what differences are there between the particular affirmative $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ and the particular negative $\overline{\forall x} \Phi x$ despite being equivalencies in the Lacanian logical square? As equivalent the former lends the partitive term 'some' and from the latter the restrictive 'not-all' so that together either of the propositions reads as 'some, but not-all.' This is to read in the maximal sense that takes the partitive as a restrictive and such a reading thoroughly corresponds to the 'natural ear' which hears the particular 'Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian' as a statement excluding the universal statement 'All of Gadamer is Heideggerian.' In contrast, the classical logician drops the restrictive so that the propositions would read as 'some, because not all' (recall that through subalternation 'some' is implied by All). In this case 'Some of Gadamer' is taken against the way it is naturally heard by considering it only a partial instantiation of 'All of Gadamer.' Here it becomes possible to see how the logical square has no perfect order. Recall that both the classical and Lacanian versions of this square are identical in having grouped each particular to its universal according to quality (affirmatives to the right and negatives to the left) and also hold that a

³⁵ Le Gaufey, *Lacan's Notall* (Ch 3), 8. The aliquot designates a part of a number that divides the number evenly and leaves no remainder. The number 8 is such a part of 24. The aliquant designates a part of a number that does not divide the number evenly but leaves a remainder. The number 8 is such a part of 25.

relation of contradiction runs diagonally between each universal and its opposite particular according to quality. The problem is that the single word ‘some’ is utilized for both the existential particular affirmative and the restrictive particular negative. A choice must be made and for their part Aristotle and classical logicians privileged the ‘some’ of the particular affirmative which denies the ‘nothing’ of the universal negative without restriction, whereby leaving the field free to the dictates of the All since their choice of the minimal particular has it that ‘some, because not all.’ This choice places the restrictive particular negative into a secondary slot since its equivocation is only removed by adding the restrictive ‘some, but not-all’ of the maximal reading which for them has been ruled out.

So despite its apparent symmetry the classical Aristotelian logical square nevertheless leans to the right deixis, favoring the particular affirmative for its agreement with the universal affirmative and for the ontological weight it carries through its contradiction with the universal negative. Thoroughly remaining within the limits of the classical framework (though inverting its values as has been seen), Lacan instead leans to the left deixis by giving priority to the Not-all of the particular negative $\overline{\forall x \Phi x}$.³⁶ This move acknowledges the difficulty discussed above in conceiving the particular affirmative $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ as the negation of the universal negative $\overline{\exists x \Phi x}$ and allows it to enter into contradiction with the universal affirmative $\forall x \Phi x$ in a manner which removes the need to conceive the particular as an exception to the rule of the universal; instead, the particular affirmative stands in contradiction to the universal affirmative through the prior affirmation of the Not-all which denies the universal affirmative and thus leaves to it the space of the right deixis. This privileging of the restrictive aspect of the particular negative which restrains both the universal affirmative and universal negative again better accords to the way the ear naturally hears the particular proposition and moreover, empties the universal of any ontology remaining from its Aristotelian heritage. For with the classical logicians, the universal quantifier $\forall x$ does possess some existence through its existential subaltern which stands in agreement with it. But with the Lacanian logical square, while $\forall x$ is as predicable as it is with the classicals it is now to be considered strictly a symbolic element without any assured existence. The symbolic status of the universal is even more pronounced with the universal negative which allows for predication in the absence of a subject. And the validity of the two particular existentials no longer stems from being partial instantiations of a universal truth which claims to govern the logical square

³⁶ Ibid., 11–2. In contrast to his second chapter where it seems Le Gaufey often places the crucial accent with the universal negative, on these two pages he quite expressly places that accent on the particular negative in order to make sense of the internal writing of the four propositions.

within a single space. Seen as working in tandem, they both directly object to such universality by a common disagreement: for those that say no ($\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$) and those that say yes ($\overline{\forall x \Phi x}$) reject the equivalent universal suppositions that all say yes ($\forall x \Phi x$) and that there is none to say no ($\overline{\exists x \overline{\Phi x}}$) and thus also the single spatiality of the logical square.

By evacuating any assured existence from the universal so that only its symbolic dimension remains, the logical arrangement of the Lacanian square creates a new epistemological situation for textual interpretation.³⁷ Consider an academic text which sets out to demonstrate that ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian.’ This is called its ‘thesis’ and as per standard academic practice this is usually declared openly at the beginning of the text. Such an intention effectively operates as an articulated universal statement which delimits the common space within which the text subsists. As the text proceeds, particular passages will be pointed out and perhaps explicitly cited as demonstrative of the thesis. In this sense the academic text appears as the locus of a deictics charged with drawing links between the theoretical knowledge embodied by the thesis where the parts making up its subject are only rationally described and the opaque presence of the actual passages selected by the author. The ideal is for a significant passage not so selected to nevertheless find its place in the epistemological edifice, yet too often it is the case that the reader simply defers to the authority of the author’s good name and believes his thesis stands or fails on the passages actually selected. Moreover, the thematics of classic texts are often authoritatively established by their first commentators and considerable time must pass before radical deviations from these norms become tolerable. Thus the assessments of Gadamer by Betti, Hirsch, Habermas, Palmer and Ricoeur establish an interpretive horizon within which the following generations of commentators are obligated to remain. In large part they are content to expand on the common narrative but forego any serious attempt to escape from its grasp.

This style of textual interpretation is not the prerogative of a method of textual analysis which would instead follow the inner relations of the Lacanian logical square. To begin to see this, the standard operating procedure of the interpretive text seeking to impart its thesis upon the reader must be more closely examined. What is at stake here concerns the basic operation by which particular elements of primary texts are used to impress upon the reader the truth of the interpretive hypothesis. As already stated, the interpreter may refer to primary textual material through direct citation and in such a case it becomes quite clear how the reference stands to the secondary text in much the same

³⁷ Indeed this is the case if $\forall x \Phi x$ is associated with S_2 , the matheme denoting knowledge. Undermining the universal simultaneously undermines the possibility that knowledge is so easily transferable.

fashion as the vignette does for the psychoanalytic case study. After providing a brief etymological analysis of the word itself whose history from the medieval period onward indicates ‘the difference of workmanship in these vignettes that ornament, decorate, garland, enhance, embellish, adorn remarks that one fears lack some flesh,’ Le Gaufey notes how ‘it is remarkable that they all accomplish the same task, which moreover justifies their appellation: *to illustrate*, by a demonstrative example, some statement that is too arid and because of this is qualified as “theoretical.”’³⁸ On a very basic perceptual level, is not the citation an adornment to the interpreter’s text and one made especially obvious not only by its frame of quotation marks but when length demands that it stand apart from the surrounding text with its own distinct set of margins, line spacing and font size or when made to stand in even greater isolation at the masthead of a chapter? More importantly, these citations read in isolation are often unclear, but as embedded within the surrounding text (their context) they become completely understandable and ideally serve to illustrate the intended thesis. Yet when some passages of Gadamer are referenced, this is not simply an invitation to enter into interpretive debate. For what is at stake is not whether the author is correct to have selected *these* particular passages to illustrate the thesis ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian.’ Indeed it may very well be generally acknowledged that the particular passages referenced satisfactorily fall into the abstract category of ‘being Heideggerian.’ But what the foregoing analyses of the minimal and maximal particular underscore is the collection of hypotheses accompanying even this noncontroversial case by which a particular is straightforwardly subsumed under a universal.

To produce a thesis is effectively to produce a concept or notion which holds that a certain number of elements correspond to its definition. The notion is a basic component of (scientific) knowledge, providing the elements under its purview a link to other notions and their associated elements and thus opens up new avenues with which to potentially expand the epistemological field. Defined this way it is clear how the notion is similar to the universal as both subsume in a common space elements according to a similar feature. This allows the plurality of elements to be treated as a unity since each element bears the same mark and so is valid for all, which in turn makes of the universal notion the bearer of a truth liable to enter into relations with other similar unities. The universal ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian’ may very well supply the correct notion for reading a particular passage by Gadamer. But note how the universal implies the reading of the particular in this case. Opposed to this minimal reading is the maximal, which is just as legitimate and logically rigorous despite its objection to the universal of the same (and different) quality. This reading resists a certain rationalist approach which reduces using the notion to subsume positive occurrences to instead consider its contradictory relationship to every existence.

³⁸ Ibid., 17.

Rejecting subalternation and embracing active refusal, the maximal reading of the particular recognizes that the mark a particular element presents, which allows it to be subsumed under a universal notion, is not of the same nature as the mark present in the universal notion. With the minimal particular such a prospect is absurd, since by definition the particular is only subsumed under the universal notion to the extent that the mark is identical in both. But with the maximal particular, affirming that elements exist which do not fall under the notion ('There exist some passages of Gadamer that are not Heideggerian' in the face of 'All of Gadamer is Heideggerian') gives precedence instead to existence. This, however, does not so much attack the notional order itself as 'offer it on the contrary a possibility of consisting otherwise than as the map of a country that is already there' and thus one which comes complete with a navigable set of organized signs.³⁹ In sum, the two readings of the particular are radically opposed perspectives on how knowledge operates with respect to the phenomena it structures. Yet they stop short of being *diametrically* opposed because while the minimal reading is recognizable within the horizon of the maximal (though it is rejected), such recognition does not hold in the reverse. This may help dispel the impression that there is a simple technical choice to be made between the two readings. For we can hardly do without the minimal reading which acknowledges how the notional architecture expresses the structured order of the world. Yet the phenomenologist reminds us that we daily experience how this architecture nevertheless misses the wealth of the world so that we are forced to conclude that the notion is wholly blind to the brute fact of existence. Far from reconciling these two readings, they should be further distinguished along their divergent paths to better assess the consequences for textual analysis.

With respect to the minimal reading, if the predominant rationale for utilizing particular textual evidence is to illustrate a larger thesis, a certain false rigor is lent to the overall project. For even when the intent is critique, such evidence is never used in so radical a manner that it would seriously jeopardize its critical stance; if it did the minimal reading of the particular would simply call for a change at the theoretical level to resynchronize it with the evidence presented and so ensure that the critical thesis achieves the highest possible reality coefficient. This latter possibility, whereby the textual evidence necessitates adjustments to the notional architecture, is actually a secondary movement under the minimal reading. As seen in foregoing discussions, in theory it is possible to begin the inner movement of the hermeneutical circle with the particular. But this happens precisely only *in theory*, for it is always already the case that the notion organizes the experience of particular existences even when one 'starts' with the latter level. In this sense the minimal reading does not take the notion in its simple symbolic dimension but rather views it as

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

an accurate reflection of reality. Here it is fair to associate, as Le Gaufey has done, the notion with the Platonic Idea according to which existence is but its shadow.⁴⁰ Certainly academic standards dictate that the judgment of a text is to proceed according to whether its use of referenced textual material from primary sources is in line with its intended thesis. This paradigm, firmly entrenched in academia for some time now, quite simply judges a work of interpretation a success if it demonstrates through textual evidence what it says it will demonstrate. Here it becomes clear that cited textual material is much more than a mere adornment for an interpretation. Through its recourse to authoritative texts, both primary and historically significant secondary ones, the interpretation gains a certain legitimacy. Moreover, along with greater legitimacy comes an assurance that these references index the essential core of the matter, thus reflecting the interpreter's treatment of the reference as a sign which indexes the real. In this sense references act as anchoring points for the entire interpretive venture, lending it both credence and an authoritative weight. So an interpretation, making ample references to passages where Gadamer utilizes Heideggerian phraseology, effectively says to the reader "See, it's really like I purport it to be: Gadamer is Heideggerian!" The reader leaves with the distinct impression that the entire opus of Gadamer so reflects this thesis that, as per the law of large numbers, even a *randomly* selected set of references would suffice to demonstrate it. Thus the minimal approach to interpretation severely restricts the relation one can strike with the text, for the victor seems to be thoroughly determined in advance, it being ruled out that a passage might be presented that would contradict the thesis. The suspicion here that the 'deck has been stacked' thus already works against its own aims. But the minimal approach suffers another setback in the other direction. To this 'too much' stands a 'too little' whereby the thesis cannot be made to account for the wealth of details which begin to mount as the number of references increase. On this point the strategy of the minimal approach might be captured by the motto 'less is more' so as to counter the suspicion that the interpretive effort is grossly inadequate to the task at hand.

These problems with the minimal approach to textual interpretation become much more severe when the lessons of the maximal particular are reintroduced back into the discussion. The terms above were intentionally kept as simple as possible to ease the discussion and to better distinguish the two approaches. To this end it should already be suspected how the potential suspension of meaning in textual analysis as reflected in the asymmetrical space of the Lacanian logical square is only obtained by starting from the maximal particular which invalidates the universal affirmative. This right away problematizes the use of textual material for the sole purpose of illustrating the veracity of theoretical statements such as an interpretive thesis. If an existent textual passage does inadvertently

⁴⁰ Ibid., 20.

confirm the universal notion, it is at the cost of the loss of the emergence of the Not-all as a particular which maintains a minimal separation between its existence and essence. So utilizing the maximal particular reflects a far greater mistrust of theory than the one held by the more minimal-minded hermeneutical phenomenological approach; this is the case despite the latter's well-vocalized call to move away from theory toward the immediacy of meaningful experience. In contrast to the maximal, it is the minimal approach of the classical logical square which quite rigidly points to reality in its attempt to seamlessly connect its knowledge to such experiences without a gap. Here lies the conception of an all-encompassing common space, much like what is had in the right deixis of the Lacanian logical square in contrast to the reading by the left which purports instead an asymmetrical spatiality. This discontinuity between the two logical squares, which in large part is reflected *within* the Lacanian version itself, must be maintained if interpretive theory in its maximal setting is to be understood.

With respect to the Lacanian logical square, the affirmation of existence at the level of the two particulars each contradicts the two universals. What must be better appreciated is the precise status of the universal without considering (its relation to) the actual existence of the particular. This can be approached by recognizing how the existent constitutes an exception to the universal only in the qualitative, not quantitative, sense. To think in terms of the latter would make of the particular affirmative a rarity and this is simply not warranted, for the universal affirmative does not imply any existence. In other words, it is not the case that we are dealing with an existing minority *qua* detracting exception to the existing majority subsumed under a common law. Le Gaufey discusses the graph of the hyperbolic function (*cf.* Figure 4.3) once again to demonstrate this point. The previously noted reservations on his analysis aside,⁴¹ Le Gaufey is correct to note how the graph is misleading as it reverses the expected existential weightings of the two propositions in the right deixis. That is, the particular affirmative is what should carry such weight, yet in the graph this is the zero of the ordinate axis; while the curve representing the universal affirmative has determinate values for all its points when these values should not be so easily implied.⁴² In light of these failings and to resist the temptation to quantitatively treat the universal and the particular on the same existential footing, it is worthwhile to follow one or two of Le Gaufey's alternative recommendations on how to conceive the dislocation of the universal from existence. One

⁴¹ Once again Le Gaufey seems to discuss this graph as if Lacan intended it to capture both sides of his logical square. But as noted, its introduction in *L'étourdit* comes when Lacan first takes up the two propositions of the right deixis. For this reason we may assume that it is only meant to illustrate their relation. See *ibid.*, 25–6.

⁴² Moreover, the impression from the graph is that the exception $x = 0$ is singular when clearly the existential quantifier of $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ reads as 'at least one' or 'some' and can thus be understood not just as a singular exception but as a plural exception as well.

enlightening way comes by considering the valid elemental inference from traditional propositional calculus called *modus ponens* [Latin, mode of placing]. Often called a hypothetical syllogism, the first of its three lines begins with a hypothetical proposition usually written in the form ‘If p then q ’ where p is held to be in the position of the antecedent and q in the position of the consequent. But precisely as a hypothetical, nothing else follows until a subject affirms the antecedent p , at which point the proposition unfolds its truth and allows for the concluding line ‘therefore q ’ to be written. The point here is that if the existence of p is not affirmed, the implication remains inert.⁴³ It does express a certain knowledge at the level of the conditional relations between the two terms or elements, but without the actualization of the antecedent this knowledge remains unrealized.

This same epistemological status can be seen in Frege’s revolutionary move to predicate logic, which Lacan follows as discussed in the previous section. Recall that with Frege the function takes logical precedence as it presents an empty place for an object-term which might later come to fill it. But it is important to understand that it must be so filled for the function to take on its value and give birth to a meaning. To reach an understanding of the universal as such, the task here is to ask what the mode of subsistence is of the Fregean function prior to its being filled by an object-term. Just like with the inference of *modus ponens*, the answer is that until the function is so endowed by an object-term it possesses a not-yet-full existence. Le Gaufey cites W. V. Quine to provide a poetic sense to this precarious status, referring to ‘functions waiting for their objects as “semi-twilight entities.”’⁴⁴ We can move a step further in this analysis to also inquire after the status of the object-term apart from the function. Certainly it has existence but not yet an essence, as essence is only granted to it when it comes to fill the empty place in the function. Here is yet another way to understand how existence takes precedence over its essence. Moreover, affirming the existent object-term and thus submitting it under the semi-twilight function also brings to mind Husserl’s moderate Platonic notion of the ideality of meaning whose creation is similarly had through the meeting of

⁴³ Note that not affirming the existence of the antecedent term is not the same as actively denying it, for the latter would lead to the fallacy known as ‘denying the antecedent.’ To illustrate, consider the hypothetical proposition ‘If there is fire, then there is oxygen.’ By affirming there is fire, it is sufficient to conclude there is oxygen, but by denying there is fire, one cannot conclude that there is or is not oxygen. For completeness sake, there are two other possibilities. What is known as ‘affirming the consequent’ similarly leads to a fallacy, for by affirming there is oxygen, one cannot conclude that there is or is not fire. But the hypothetical syllogism which denies the consequent leads to an entirely valid conclusion. Called *modus tollens* [Latin, mode of taking away], by denying there is oxygen, one can conclude there is no fire, for the consequent is a necessary condition of the antecedent.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 27.

two. In a comparable fashion, for Husserl a subjective meaning-intentional act is needed to instantiate the possible universal into a fully existent particularity complete with a meaning and with what Frege would call a truth-value. To this series of traditional logic, Frege, Quine and Husserl, one may add the Lacanian notion of the symbolic which similarly provides a way to conceive the status of the universal *sans* the particular. As the internally fractured treasure-trove of signifiers, the symbolic prescribes a knowledge of inferences, conditional relations and rules of validation in a way which also grants to this epistemological realm a certain independence. In this sense it enjoys a sovereignty from both the register of the real and the imaginary order of meaning.

It now becomes clearer that the maximal reading allows for universal notions to go their own way and interact with one another in a relatively independent fashion from the reality of existing objects. They can thus be read, as the foregoing has shown, without the need to precipitate one's own subjectivity so as to offer them an existential grounding. For the lifeless meaning they convey at the denotative level momentarily suffices in its promise of full expressive sense to come once subjectivization occurs by an affirmation of a *p* or the performance of a meaning-intentional act. At this level the notion *quia* spoken word is a pure declaring about something outside itself which nevertheless escapes its designation. Here is the basis of life philosophy's romantic complaint about the limits of representation. But what this theoretical disposition itself misses is how that which refuses to be subsumed under a universal notion has to do with the Not-all particular. It is towards this understanding the maximal particular invites its reader. Already the right deixis clearly separates out the exception of the particular affirmative $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ as that which contests the universal affirmative $\forall x \Phi x$. But this is to consider it qualitatively as the manifested existence which gives form to the function. In contrast, with the minimal particular affirmative the function takes precedence over the existence of this form " $\exists x \Phi x$ " since it blends in with its universal model. Thus the universalized mark of 'being Heideggerian' takes a position of ascendancy over the existence of the passages in which they are found when it comes to minimally affirming 'Some of Gadamer is Heideggerian.' But with the maximal particular affirmative this ranking is reversed since the affirmation of existence finds its way to the foreground without the need to justify itself by bearing the universalized mark. Yet nothing can be said about this exception. Consider the affirmation of existing passages of Gadamer which form an exception to the universal claim 'All of Gadamer is Heideggerian.' Because it negates the function 'being Heideggerian,' it is only permissible to affirm this exception in the form of the proposition 'Some of Gadamer is not Heideggerian' and nothing more.

The decision by Lacan to clearly distinguish existence from the function has its historical roots again with Frege and this can be appreciated by clarifying and

expanding the discussion originally had in Section 4.2 above. There it was seen how the function ‘() is Heideggerian’ takes on its value when an object-term like ‘Gadamer’ comes to occupy its empty place. Now, the discussion in the present chapter has consistently treated ‘Gadamer’ not as a proper name designating the actual existence of a singular man who once went by that name; rather, ‘Gadamer’ has effectively been treated as equivalent to ‘the texts of Gadamer.’⁴⁵ But the presentation moved too fast by overlooking how Frege’s first move was precisely to make this distinction. In doing so, his solution effectively led to a conception which eliminates the singular from consideration. Taking the second of the two designations above, the universal affirmative can be written as ‘All the texts of Gadamer are Heideggerian.’ What Frege does is treat this as a complex proposition involving two functions, ‘() is a text of Gadamer’ and ‘() is Heideggerian,’ between which a certain relation is stated to have been obtained: whatever truthfully satisfies the former also satisfies the latter. If this is represented as ‘For all x , if x is a text of Gadamer, then x is Heideggerian,’ the two propositions can be regarded as ‘ x is a text of Gadamer’ and ‘ x is Heideggerian’ and further linked together by a propositional connective and bound by the universal quantifier $\forall x$. This reasoning can similarly be applied with respect to the singular designation which considers Gadamer as a man, as in the proposition ‘Gadamer was Jauss’ teacher.’ But the affirmation of such a proposition confuses in the name ‘Gadamer’ a conviction about his existence and the fact that he was Jauss’ teacher. This duality is what concerns Frege and thus what comes to pass is the distinction of the *factum brutum* of existence from the predicates which might be attributed to it. In order to help conceive of this existential *a priori* without further consideration, the proposition could be placed into a form like ‘There exists an x such that x is Gadamer and such that this x was Jauss’ teacher’ which would formally be written with the existential quantifier $\exists x$. With Lacan’s division of the right deixis into two propositions, one written with the universal quantifier and one with the existential quantifier, this distinction becomes clearly expressed. For the work of the maximal particular affirmative $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ distinguishes the existent (with its propositional connectives to the symbolic mark and the function) from their negation. In this way the existent is posited separately from the symbolic determinations that it supports, yet finds itself submitted to their determination. This is similar to how

⁴⁵ As already indicated, this is in keeping with the practice in academia that when an author’s name is invoked, it is tacitly understood that the speaker/writer is referring to the body of work penned by that author. The following discussion provides the logical underpinnings as to why such an understanding can remain unspoken; that is, what Frege and then Lacan inscribe in logical terms is the very possibility for such a conventional shorthand. The usual explanation that this shorthand is culturally-contextually determined stands as a secondary consideration which only concretizes this *a priori* possibility.

the asymptotes support the hyperbolic function through a point where its calculation is undefined; yet nevertheless this precise point is what determines the graphical position of the asymptotes. In a maximal reading, textual references in an interpretation would be treated asymptotically, in contrast to the more forced minimal reading which fails almost in principle. For if the *x qua* textual reference is only so summoned because of the relevant symbolic marks it displays, it is nothing more than the shadow cast by the notion whose affirmation it defends. Such an existent would no longer find itself in the position of an ambiguous outlier; rather, it would be entirely determined as a well-defined point on the graph of a function whose domain is continuous. Between the 'done deal' of the minimal particular and the romantic bemoaning (or celebration) of the failure of every representation of reality stands the maximal particular interpretive strategy. But what exactly does such an interpretation look like?

As will be appreciated from the foregoing, this strategy cannot be directly 'illustrated' as it would then readily slip into the minimal order of the particular. That in some sense it can only be approached through what it is not is indeed readily seen in the very writing of the particular proposition at the level of its quality, for it negates the function affirmed in its universal. Thus it is quite appropriate that Le Gaufey would have us study a case from classical Freudian psychoanalysis only as a first approximation to the maximal approach: in the end he rules it as indirectly endorsing the minimal approach of the clinical vignette and so it is accordingly rejected.⁴⁶ But as it does provide a case where Freud takes up the challenge of evidence that directly contradicts one of his theories, it does bear brief examination if only to underscore the falsity of the notion that a maximal approach seeks only to realign the theoretical to better account for the existence of contradictory evidence. In simple terms and without entering into the specific details of the case, Freud theorized paranoia to have a homosexual foundation and this implied that the persecutor must be of the same sex as the persecuted paranoiac. All cases which Freud came across confirmed this theoretical notion but one: he became acquainted with a female patient whose persecutor was a man. The existence of this exception for Freud takes precedence over his theory and he accordingly investigates further. What he eventually finds is that the true persecutor is in fact a woman. So this case only appeared to form an exception, for in the end it was compatible with his thesis on paranoia. The lesson here seems to be the same lesson imparted by an aspect of hermeneutical phenomenology which teaches that harmony is found if one simply digs deep enough beneath the apparent opposition. In terms of Freudian dream analysis, this lesson amounts to the recognition of how the manifest face of the text hides another latent text beneath it. But Freud does not halt his interpretation after the manifest content yields up its latent content. He further

⁴⁶ See *ibid.*, 33–7.

inquires after this very displacement, endeavoring to account for the structured passage from the latent to the manifest which indexes the real and also allows for adjustments to the theory predicting the manifest content.⁴⁷ In the present case he does follow that passage and makes appropriate adjustments to his theory. So as Le Gaufey points out, the temptation is to read this case as do his usual critics who accuse him of harboring theories so sophisticated that they can always be maneuvered out from any contradiction. Yet we do well to note that the universal affirmation of the theory was initially put into question not only through contradictory manifest content, but through the subordinate (and, unfortunately, subalternate) role Freud assigns to the latent content found 'beneath' it, for he treats that latent content as only a stage in deciphering the text. This alone makes Freud's technique superior to the strict minimal approach that deals only with non-contradictory textual evidence confirming the thesis. However, at least with respect to the present case Freud does not deal with an existent fact resistant to *all* theoretical explanations which on that basis alone would be able to negate the theory. Such an exceptional point is what $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ makes plain with its writing in its opposition to $\forall x \Phi x$.

Yet on this basis alone one cannot conclude that every existence eludes the set of notions which frame it. Believing otherwise might lead to interpretive practices which simply point out those textual passages that remain resistant to the commonly accepted understanding of the primary source material. What stops such a simplistic demonstration of the failing of the universal notion is

⁴⁷ To exemplify this, the author of the present work is acquainted with a former analysand who recounted to his analyst a memory he had as a child defacing the surface of a wall in his childhood home. He had drawn a multi-celled structure and in each cell had written a name of one of his family members including his own. The explanation to his analyst was the same one given to his father at the time: "It's a place where we can leave and pick up messages from the others." For the analysis to be successful, it had to follow this latent thought through its transformation into the manifest content of the drawing and for argument's sake, let the operating thesis within which this proceeded be stated as 'All sons want to be like their fathers.' Indeed his father was a postman and the possibility that this episode was nothing more than a charming example of a young boy unknowingly emulating his father was the conclusion both the analysand and analyst initially arrived at in the analysis. Yet the troubling detail of distinct and isolated cells within which the names were written returned time and again to the analysand's speech. The latent thought eventually gave way to a much more troubling thought, that the drawing emphasized how no one in his family was truly talking, as if everyone had somehow been silenced into their own separate worlds. The work of analysis linked this silence to the silence that would ensue upon his father's arrival home from work each evening, a time when each family member became afraid of making too much noise for fear of upsetting him. The drawing of the analysand thus also reflected his father's desire for silence as much as it formed a protest against it. Accordingly, a new thesis would have to be written, one that would perhaps also encompass the less cheerful fact that sons often emulate their fathers even to the point of conflicting desires.

that $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ does not stand alone in its contradictory opposition. In fact, without factoring in the contribution played by the two propositions in the left deixis of the logical square of the maximal particular, it becomes rather difficult to make full sense of the contradiction inherent in the right. For his part Le Gaufey takes up the contradiction in the right deixis through the traditional 'liar paradox' Lacan himself raised on the November 11, 1961 session of his ninth seminar. Le Gaufey's discussion⁴⁸ presents a way to conceive of this contradiction that aids in understanding the discussion first had in Section 4.2 with respect to the elemental universal affirmative 'All men are mortal.' But it is interesting that while his discussion begins by strictly making use of the two propositions in the right deixis, there is an eventual turn to those of the left in order to better reveal the true status of the exception. Again this must be read as a move which demonstrates how the left deixis takes logical priority over the right.

Often simply conveyed by the statement 'I am now speaking falsely,'⁴⁹ the liar paradox has been known since antiquity and has traditionally been attributed to Epimenides the Cretan in the form 'All Cretans are liars.' If Epimenides affirms that all Cretans are liars, what are we to make of his assertion given the fact that he himself is a Cretan? It seems this is precisely the dilemma inscribed by the two propositions in the right deixis. The universal affirmative 'All Cretans are liars' ($\forall x \Phi x$) is a theoretical statement purporting a truth about a generic All of Cretans ($\forall x$) stated by Epimenides (x) who does not claim to escape from either the All to which he belongs or from the law (Φx) he states is true and according to which he is also a liar. In so stating, his full intention is to tell the truth in this respect. Yet in doing so he positions himself in direct contradiction to this universal as soon as he states it ($\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$). While it suffices for many to simply mention these paradoxes, treating them little better than amusements in logic, the advantage of Lacan's formulae is that it allows for a better understanding of the mechanism which structures them. This concerns a certain

⁴⁸ See *ibid.*, 38ff.

⁴⁹ A paradoxical statement because if I speak truly when I say I am speaking falsely, I am speaking falsely. But if I am speaking falsely when I say I am speaking falsely, I am speaking truly. So what I say is true if (and only if) it is false, which seems absurd. Sometimes written in the form 'This statement is false' which is equally paradoxical as it seems to be false if true, and true if false, the advantage of the form 'I am lying' is that it highlights the subjective elements which allow for the Lacanian 'solution' to this paradox to more readily be appreciated, *viz.*, the Lacanian notion that the subject is split between his enunciation and his statement. That is, it is only to the extent that these two levels are confused that we find ourselves in a paradox (as in the case of traditional logic which fails to make this distinction, in contrast to the Lacanian square which endeavors to inscribe this very confusion itself in logical form). In everyday discourse the comprehension of such statements is usually had without any difficulty. They are entirely admissible precisely because we implicitly make such a distinction between these two levels whenever we hear or read these statements.

redoubling at the level of quality in propositions which generate such a paradox over-against what is had in classical logic. With respect to the latter it has been seen that a logical proposition claims to be either true or false according to whether its subject bears the predicate or not and since Frege this has been called its truth-value. Here truth is taken as strictly subsisting at the level of the entire statement regardless of whether one affirms, say, the Heideggerian-like quality of All or Some passages by Gadamer or whether one denies that they bear this mark. That is, all four propositional cases have a truth-value: in the first two cases the truth-value is true and in the second two cases it is false. But it has also been seen that while Lacan's version of the logical square maintains a classical structure, his interests have led him to thoroughly subvert it. In the terms of the present discussion this subversion is understood as an endeavor to inscribe the paradox which results when the question of truth itself takes up the position of predicate in the classical framework. This is the situation of Epimenides who, by telling us that 'All Cretans are liars,' in effect also claims 'At least one Cretan (Epimenides) is not a liar (is truthful).' The paradox results because truth is doubled, for a mode of relationship of Cretans to the truth is affirmed in an assertion which itself also bears a truth-value. If the predicate were instead 'tall,' no such paradox would result if Epimenides were in fact short and had said 'All Cretans are tall.' In such a case he would constitute an exception by simple contradiction which would not at all trouble the formation of the set of Cretans composed of those who bear the predicate and those who do not. But with truth split between its position of truth-value subsisting at the level of the statement ('S is P') and its position of predicate ('S is truthful') in the very same statement, it seems a choice must be made between the two poles. In which position should one consider the truth of a statement? Classical logicians have opted to consider truth only as truth-value. They of course recognize the paradox that results by also positioning truth in the position of predicate yet only seem to invoke this paradox as an interesting logical exercise. Faced with this same choice, Lacan's answer is a resounding "Yes, please!" which acknowledges how the *choice itself* must be chosen. It is *this* choice that is inscribed into the writing of his logical square.

But exactly where in the logical square this inscription ultimately lies is rather vague. If anything it appears that suddenly what is at stake concerns the *a priori* logic inscribed in the left deixis despite the fact that the analysis of this paradox was initiated in the right. That this analysis effected a movement from right to left is confirmed by Le Gaufey's own conclusion that this paradox is 'the paradox formally presented by the structure of Russell's paradox'⁵⁰ which was located in discussions above as subsisting in the left deixis. To see this, consider that if Epimenides tells the truth, his exclusion from the universal proposition makes it false ($\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ and $\forall x \Phi x$ are contradictories), and so he is telling a

⁵⁰ Ibid., 39.

falsehood when he is being truthful; but if he tells a falsehood, he rejoins the lying Cretans which makes the universal proposition true and so he is telling the truth when he is lying.⁵¹ In a word, by telling the truth, he lies and by lying he tells the truth. The source of the difficulty lies with how truth designates the nature of the link between subject (or argument) and predicate (or function), just as in the case of the paradoxical ‘set of all sets that are not members of themselves’ where ‘membership’ is taken as a noun designating the link between sets and their elements. In most cases no issues arise. Sets that are not members of themselves certainly exist⁵² and it is perfectly acceptable to utter how ‘All Cretans are liars’ when one is not in fact a Cretan. But fold the properties of membership and truth back onto themselves and paradoxes result.⁵³ Through its

⁵¹ The two positions alternately occupied by Epimenides quite effectively illustrates the difference between obsessional neurosis and hysteria which Žižek has characterized in the following fashion:

‘[T]he obsessional neurotic *lies in the guise of truth* (while at the level of factual accuracy his statements are always true, he uses this factual accuracy to dissimulate the truth about his desire...), while the hysteric *tells the truth in the guise of a lie* (the truth of my desire articulates itself in the very distortions of the “factual accuracy” of my speech: when, say, instead of “I thereby open this session,” I say “I thereby close this session,” my desire clearly comes out...).’ See Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies*, 36–7.

An example of the obsessional neurotic would be the office prankster who is accused of pulling a well-orchestrated prank which he did not, in fact, commit. When he rationally explains to his accusers how he was not even in town when the prank occurred and so cannot possibly be held to account, at a factual level he tells the truth, yet this ‘truth’ is propagated to conceal the fact that the prank realized his desire. The not-quite-repressible smile that might emerge during his self-defense bears witness to this lie and would be visible to all, but it could easily be misread as proof that the lie subsists at the factual level.

⁵² For instance: the set of all cats is not a cat, the set of all guns is not a gun...

⁵³ This is the same with the predicate ‘Heideggerian’ which is less like ‘tall’ and more like ‘membership’ or ‘truth’ in being doubly-inscribed. Recall from Part I how ‘being Heideggerian’ was to express a concern with the *a priori* dimension to any subject-object dichotomy, a mark which was clearly borne in some fashion by the likes of Bultmann, Ebeling and Gadamer. In linguistic terms, the subject-object dichotomy translates as subject-predicate. But the sense in which the object or predicate ‘overtakes’ the statement within which it finds itself (and thus doubles itself by being in two positions at once) is not unique to the predicate ‘Heideggerian.’ For after Heidegger’s conception of such an *a priori* dimension, all other predicates can potentially be read as doubly-inscribed and so threaten their propositions by a similar paradox. The difficulty here is to conceive these predicates as Fregean functions which release this potential the moment the interpreter no longer overlooks his own subjectivity in the matter at hand. Thus it must be recognized that to judge whether a particular passage of Gadamer can or cannot be subsumed under the universal ‘All of Gadamer is Heideggerian’ is to set into

ultimate recourse to the left deixis where no set can be determined, this analysis thus unmask the ultimately phantasmatical dimension of the particular affirmative $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ to the right. This proposition alone simply cannot form an acceptable exception by refusing to submit to the function in question, for All are so submitted.

To reemphasize, the proper (maximal) understanding of the particular affirmative $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$ is arrived at by taking into consideration those propositions subsisting in the more radical deixis of the left. It should therefore not be conceived as a singular exception (there is no meta-language), nor quantitatively as if it forms a minority to a majority of elements in the universal affirmative $\forall x \Phi x$ which it contradicts. Rather, it should be thought of as arriving on the scene of the logical square through its contradiction to the universal negative $\overline{\exists x \Phi x}$ whose writing has been shown to inscribe a 'nothing,' an absence of any predicable subject. The particular affirmative thus affirms what exists with respect to the predicate (or function) without bearing its mark (or satisfying it). What the logical paradox of Epimenides shows is not a rare aberration (as classical logic would consider it) but the much more common regime every speaking being finds himself within whenever he lends his voice to the establishment of an All to which he is a member but whose completeness he prevents by this very declaration – although he will not do so without simultaneously arranging for himself the exceptional point of a meta-language to occupy *sub rosa* and to which we must judge from the left as ultimately phantasmatic. If this phantasmatical dimension to the declaration of the All is taken into account, it is better appreciated how the status of that entity collectivizing elements into an All carries no existential weight, subsisting as it does more on the side of the signifier than on any ontologized thing (contrary to what the hermeneutical phenomenologist would have us believe). The paradox of Epimenides also underscores the ambiguity of the term 'membership' in the formation of a set. Using the universal quantifier $\forall x$ necessitates a set populated with elements said to be members of this set. But if it is affirmed that (at least) one x exists which does not satisfy the function and thus forms an exception to the All of the universal, an ambiguity immediately arises as to whether it ceases to be a member of this All or not. Classical logic cannot tolerate such an ambiguity and on this point Lacan *seems* to concur, constructing his maximal logical square in such a fashion so that either the universals are true or the particulars are true while the contradictory relation linking them appear to assure that they cannot be true at the same time. However, a proper reading of the

play the interpreter's own Heideggerian-ism, such as it is. These considerations were implicitly in place during the examination above of the predicate 'mortal' which put into play a similar paradox the moment the speaker recognized the incongruence between his own pretensions to immortality and his uttered statement 'All men are mortal.'

particular and the universal as inscribed in the right deixis reveals that the very ambiguity in question is actually preserved there in such a way that the contradiction between them does not strictly imply that the truth of one level annihilates the truth of the other. Rather, since the particular affirmative establishes the universal affirmative precisely through its objection to it (providing it as it does with the existent that declares it), the possibility is raised that these two propositions in the right deixis can be simultaneously true *despite* their contradictory relation.⁵⁴ Such an inscription clearly departs from classical logic.

A fuller picture emerges by looking to the top proposition of the left deixis where the exception in the right finds itself denied, at once shutting down any lingering aspirations to be the One. The very writing of the universal negative $\overline{\exists x} \Phi x$ exposes the charade of a meta-language, affirming as it does through its use of a double negative that there does not exist any x which does not satisfy the function. Coupling this with the bottom proposition of the particular negative $\overline{\forall x} \Phi x$, the paradoxical result is that the x elements which do satisfy the function nevertheless do not collectivize into any All set. Based as it is on this All, the universality of the notion takes its first hit from the right (as it is founded on the existence of exceptions), but is then delivered a fatal blow from the left (insofar as there is no exception and what does exist cannot form into an All). Pitting the All against the Not-all, the latter emerges as the clear victor. It could be said that the Lacanian logical square is the square of the Not-all in the sense that the exigencies of this left-leaning proposition have guided the writing of each of the other propositions to optimize the attack directed against any universal notion that would presume to possess existential weight. In its most consequential reading the notion is thoroughly split. However, this does not imply that the universal notion is thereby rendered entirely ineffectual, for its symbolic status does carry a certain interpretive weight by readily consigning elements to its sphere – indeed interpretation could not proceed without this initial send-off by its minimal particular reading. But the move to an interpretation based on the maximal particular that would break free of the hermeneutical circle would recognize that what ultimately effectuates such interpretive weight is the Not-all which thoroughly resists being subsumed

⁵⁴ This possibility that both propositions in the right deixis are true despite the contradiction between them is a reiteration of Copjec's original finding which Žižek has thoroughly followed in many of his books: since there is a structural homology between Kant's dynamical antinomies and Lacan's masculine set of sexuated formulae, the latter can be handled in exactly the same way Kant resolved the former in the *Critique of Pure Reason*; roughly speaking, Copjec invites us to view the two formulae as inscribing two radically different levels so that the truth of one does not necessarily interfere with the truth of the other, just as in the case of the phenomenal and noumenal realms in Kantian philosophy. See Copjec, "Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason," 228ff.

under any universal thesis. Maintaining itself instead as an existence without essence, it is the Not-all which proves itself decisive in the interpretive endeavor by raising the possibility that meaning can be suspended. This claim is a central thesis of Chapter 5.

To help prepare for that discussion, some concluding remarks would be welcomed regarding the different global stances assumed by the minimal and maximal logical squares towards the interpretive endeavor. In hermeneutical terms, what assures that the two sides of the classical Aristotelian logical square are harmonized is meaning. The interpretive process begins by gaining entry into the hermeneutical circle by assuming a universal thesis such as 'Gadamer is Heideggerian.' Particular passages of Gadamer are then read and found to either affirm or deny this thesis. If affirmed, the meaning of Gadamer is firmly established: he is Heideggerian and this meaning encompasses both sides of the square. Or more accurately the left deixis effectively collapses into the right, for if Gadamer is not 'not Heideggerian,' the left deixis is removed from consideration. The hegemony of meaning is not tapered in the slightest if the particular passages are found instead to deny the universal thesis. In fact it is arguably strengthened in this case. For judging Gadamer to be 'not Heideggerian' equally unites the two sides although this time under the authority of the left deixis. But since this judgment comes in the form of a negation, it amounts to an abrupt 'No' which plays the part of a scansion that precipitates concluding moments in the mind of every reader. If Gadamer is not Heideggerian, then what is he? How should his work be positively characterized? Opening infinite avenues for future exploration, this meaning-to-come for the present moment nevertheless stabilizes any inherent tension in the minimal logical square by removing all affirmative stances to be had in the right deixis to favor instead the left. The analysis here that only a single deixis is put into play during any single turn of the hermeneutical circle, so that this circle could be said to nourish itself across both sides, confirms the findings above that the minimal logical square operates within a singular, symmetrical and unified space.

With the asymmetrical space of the maximal particular logical square, this harmonization through meaning thoroughly breaks down. For each side is not to be treated as one pole of a binary couple so that the choice of one simply equates with the negation of the other. This is not to say that meaning does not subsist in this square altogether but rather that it seems to be confined to just one of its sides, that of the right. But already the hermeneutical circle is problematized in the right deixis in that it is no longer clear which level, the universal or the particular, initiates its circular movement. Keeping to the discussion of Epimenides above, one could issue an existential challenge to the always already status of the universal notion by arguing that such a notion must always be articulated with respect to a particular existence. In this case the voice which a particular passage of Gadamer lends to the interpretive proceedings becomes the necessary condition for the declaration of any universal thesis such

as 'Gadamer is Heideggerian.' But in so doing this textual passage withdraws itself so as not to be swept up in this universal. As seen above, the particular declaration supports this universal by its own defection at this level. This would produce the essence of the being of the text while simultaneously maintaining its objection by its very existence. The castrating 'No' isolated to the left deixis of the classical square thus has a presence in the right deixis of the Lacanian square, but in the latter case the negation does produce a determinate meaning at the level of the universal. This donation of the meaning of Gadamer as Heideggerian might be brought about by a lengthy citation from one of his texts. Its special handling (indicated by changes to font size, line spacing, etc...) assures its exceptional status with respect to the interpreting text and more importantly, to Gadamer's own body of work, will not be missed. What often follows such citations are lines like 'This means that...' or 'What Gadamer is saying...' that immediately engage in explication, as if the cited passage cannot entirely be trusted on its own to demonstrate the thesis in question. In terms of the right deixis the worry here is unwarranted. For it is precisely through its withdrawal, at its very point of exclusion from the thesis it is intended to demonstrate, that the existence of this passage is best poised to declare it in its symbolic-virtual dimension and affirm the notion that 'Gadamer is Heideggerian.'

Yet in terms of the left deixis the worry that such a particular passage might disappoint is justifiable. Not only at the level of its content where elements can always be found contradicting the interpreter's official explication which might call for critical rebuttal; indeed at this level the hermeneutical task is endless and expansion to the secondary literature is assured. Rather, at a much more consequential level the left deixis of the maximal square fatally attacks the right at the very level of its existential exceptionality and thereby undermines the grounding of the universal thesis. For in the left deixis those existing elements which satisfy nevertheless do not form any thesis and so do not generate any exception. The contradiction here is even more troubling than the contradiction to be had in the right deixis: it is affirmed in the left that there is no exception yet those elements present cannot form a thesis; each one to the left is not an exceptional One as on the right. The Not-all affirms each existence through the use of a negated universal quantifier so as to display its restrictive aspect and here is why cited passages may incite concern that they are either in default with respect to the unity of the thesis or else appear overly eager in excessively displaying their thematic markings. This wavering between a too little and a too much prevents such passages from being identical to themselves. A minimally consistent self-identity is needed to integrate elements into a thematic unity, but the Not-all disturbs this unity from within and so prevents the collectivization of particular textual passages under a unified meaning.

This dissonance should not be seen as a weakness of the left deixis in contrast to the symbolic unity to be had in the right but rather as its undeniable strength which grants to it its logical priority. To the initial difficulties which the

right introduces into the smooth operation of the hermeneutical circle, the left complements by further introducing the Not-all which thoroughly disturbs the unity and cohesiveness of the hermeneutical field. Insofar as it is the Not-all which ultimately suspends this field, the left deixis could be said to complete the work started by the right. In this way no unified field of meaning traverses the maximal logical square and its two sides could in no way enter into a relationship. That this square inscribes a non-unified hermeneutical field is underscored by the fact that the same x is utilized in the writing of the propositions on both its sides. Had an x been used to the right and a y to the left so as to designate two different spaces or two aspects of the same space, one would be justified in entertaining the notion that the two sides enter into some relation. But the use of the same x , everywhere valid, calls on the reader to try to think the one and same space as self-undermining. Consider that from one perspective the x is taken as excepted from the All-space that it presupposes and within which it is a member, and from another perspective this same x is taken as existing without being a member of some All. Again if this x denotes a particular textual passage of Gadamer, the interpreter must consider both these functionings. First, this passage could be conceived as harboring an essential meaning for All of Gadamer's work while the second functioning of this very same passage refuses to authorize any such essence but would instead be based entirely on an existence which remains resistant to any meaningful unity whatsoever. Together they establish and then immediately undermine the set of signifiers of a text along with whatever meaning they carry. However, it should be cautioned that the terminology of 'perspective' is perhaps rather misleading. The danger is to read this as a binary, as if there were determinate x -right and y -left perspectives. What must be kept in mind is how it is the same textual passage that is being examined from both these 'perspectives' and that a proper interpretation must consider both at once: as a text which ultimately bears no relation to itself due to the nonsensical Not-all preventing a set of common terms from coming to subsume the putting into relation of the 'two' perspectives under a unified meaning. It can hardly be stressed enough that no relationship is possible since at the level of essences one is lacking and the existences from either perspective are incommensurable to the other.

The logical priority of the left deixis over the right in the maximal logical square is not only expressible by the different argument forms of the same element x . It is expressible by the phallic function Φx as well, for it too makes an appearance in each of the propositions. Given that the phallic signifier Φ is exceptional to the field of signifiers, it is legitimate to approach this rather enigmatic function which bears its name as involving the status of the exception in the logical square. Yet as the link between signifiers and *jouissance* is also involved, the phallic function can fruitfully be taken as equivalent to the function of castration which states that a certain *jouissance* must be given up by

every user of signifiers. It not only serves to distinguish and disconnect the two irreducible functionings of the element x , but its use in each proposition allows for the two sides of the logical square to be read has having inscribed the two different relationships that can be struck with this function. Accordingly, in the right deixis this function is affirmed by the One excepted from it while making itself the nucleus of the movement of signifiers which fails to deliver the promised *jouissance*; while in the Other deixis this impossibility is supplemented by an experience of dissatisfaction preventing closure through meaningful unity. Interpreting with the One holds out promise that the elusive meaning of a textual passage can eventually be cornered and be made to corral the infinite slide of signifiers. But as far as the Other is concerned no such relation could be struck and here lies the sobering truth of the One which might exclude itself so as to uphold a meaningful unity. This truth equally holds for anyone wishing to be excluded from the Lacanian logical square itself so as to find there a meaning. But as its two sides stand in thorough non-relation, ultimately only its suspension will be found there.

CHAPTER 5

SEXUATED TURNS AND THE SPACE OF MEANING

Well then, you are going to take up L'étourdit again and off you go, give us what will be, not your reading, but the way in which you are going to follow it.

—Charles Melman

As the derivation, explication and relevance to textual theory of the Lacanian logical square are the primary aims of the previous chapter, the thesis of Part II that this logical square can be used to think the suspension of meaning has not yet been satisfactorily demonstrated. Nevertheless, by establishing the spatial asymmetry of the logical square important groundwork has been laid and the present chapter seeks to expand on this understanding by turning to *L'étourdit*. For in this text Lacan takes up topology in a manner suggestive of the further spatial manipulations to be had with his sexuuated formulae. Indeed topology permits thought to aim beyond the set theory at stake in the logical square as presented above. This is a crucial step towards demonstrating our thesis since thinking in terms of set formation is what largely restricted the previous discussion of the logical square to its hermeneutical horizon. As was seen there, in the circumstance where well-defined sets encounter elements of the same order existing in domains refusing to similarly collectivize into meaningful entities, one could at best speculate that these entities *might* be suspended. That is, approached from the perspective of set formation alone the precise mechanism of such a suspension remains elusive. However, by amalgamating the four discourses with the four sexuuated formulae, the Lacanian logical square effectively begins to revolve and the spatiality it inscribes becomes transformed. Following these spatial twists and turns makes it apparent that the hermeneutical circle rotates in a field which is itself suspended from a singular point. In Part I this suspension point was spoken of alternately as a sublime object or a nonsensical point. But in sexuation theory it is identified with the Not-all. The wager of the present chapter is that topology leads thought to this suspension point by effectively equating the Not-all with the subversive structure of the cross-cap. The recent major commentary on *L'étourdit* by Fierens proves invaluable and is closely considered.

Section 5.1 introduces a twofold path or circuit through the Lacanian logical square leading up to the suspension of meaning. This introduction is first made

using the logic of negation and then by making use of the Kantian table of nothings. Comprised of an initial trajectory with a subsequent reversal, the two legs of this circuit are expanded upon in the following sections. Section 5.2 establishes the hermeneutical circle in the right deixis by integrating the four discourses into the logical square in order to demonstrate the breakdown of the meaning-relation. Section 5.3 explicates Lacan's use of topology and then integrates it into the logical square to demonstrate the suspension of meaning.

5.1 Counting Nothings in the Land of Nyania

If the Lacanian logical square is to be used to demonstrate the suspension of meaning, it must ultimately be placed into motion. Hence a major effort of the present chapter is to establish how each of its four propositions should not be thought of as isolated to its respective quadrant but rather as inscribing elements and spatial relations that overflow one from the other. Certainly the previous chapter has already taken a significant step in this direction by establishing their interrelation. But as each proposition was explicated in turn through the others, what may have been lost is how these relations are not chaotic but do have a certain order or ranking beyond what has already been said regarding the status of the exception and the *a priori* nature of the left deixis. This chapter suggests one way to conceive this ordered movement and the present section provides an introduction to it, sketching out the suggested twofold path to follow so that the suspension point of meaning can be unveiled. Laying all our cards on the table, this path is none other than the movement through quadrants $\boxed{1} \rightarrow \boxed{2} \rightarrow \boxed{3} \rightarrow \boxed{4}$ of the logical square, with a return trajectory that underscores how the Not-all of $\boxed{4}$ plays a part in the constitution of each of the other three while itself being constructed by them. These two trajectories are taken up in more detail in Sections 5.2 and 5.3. While this section is largely introductory, by tracing out the entire circuit once via the logic of negation and once more via Kant's table of nothings, it nevertheless does prove valuable in underscoring the importance of both prohibition (*i.e.*, the prohibitive 'No' of negation) and spatiality (*i.e.*, inscribed nothings) to the Lacanian logical square.

One way to understand the movement $\boxed{1} \rightarrow \boxed{2} \rightarrow \boxed{3} \rightarrow \boxed{4}$ is by recognizing how it proceeds as a series of successive negations. Simply stated, the universal affirmative $\forall x \Phi x$ is negated by the particular affirmative $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$, which in turn is negated by the universal negative $\overline{\exists x \Phi x}$, followed by a further negation by the particular negative $\overline{\forall x \Phi x}$. This succession of three negations (necessitating the use of the bar of negation four times) is indispensable for entering the space of the Not-all. In more detail, the movement begins with the 'No' said by Epimenides to the phallic function Φx . This effectively divides the right deixis into two halves and what is at stake in this division can be reduced to

the logic of sets. That is, where quadrant [1] holds the set of the phallic, in quadrant [2] there exists the set of that which is not phallic. Yet this neat division is upset as soon as a move is made into quadrant [3]. For the proposition found there, identical to the one proceeding it but with a negating bar over the existential quantifier, affirms that ‘There is no x that is not phallic.’ This additional negation calls the bluff of the One and thus effectively empties the Epimenidean set. But this does not leave the set of the phallic intact, for the further movement into quadrant [4] finds there a proposition which negates the universal as well. Thus the phallic set turns out to be Not-all there is.¹ So at the

¹ Incidentally, this sequence of negations articulates the overall logic in play in the present work. Roughly speaking, the first chapter presents hermeneutical phenomenology *qua* universal methodology of textual analysis, which is then negated by disciplines in the second chapter which delimit exceptions to the reign of this universal. But with the third chapter on Lacan, the contradiction between the first two poles is *itself* negated. The sequence thus proceeds Herm Phen \rightarrow not Herm Phen \rightarrow non-Herm Phen. (Note that the negation which denies the exception cannot be filled with a positive term and is thus impossible to represent; that is, it must itself vanish in order to function as that which ‘clears the space’ for the presence of the other terms). The difference between the two negations should be clear: where the first negation results in something definitely ‘not hermeneutical phenomenological’ such as structuralism, the further negation has indefinite results. Žižek argues that such a difference was originally captured by Kant’s distinction between infinite and the negative judgments (see Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A71/B97). As Žižek explains, any positive judgment like ‘the soul is mortal’ or ‘he is dead’ or ‘he is human’ can be negated by directly denying the predicate to the subject. Accordingly, ‘the soul is not mortal’ and ‘he is not dead’ and ‘he is not human.’ This is the negative judgment and it does result in something definite. For instance, ‘he is not human’ externalizes the subject with respect to humanity, positing him as either animal or divine. But the infinite judgment negates by affirming a non-predicate. Accordingly, ‘the soul is non-mortal’ and ‘he is un-dead’ and ‘he is inhuman.’ With the infinite judgment an indefinite third domain is opened up which undermines the distinction between the previous two judgments. Hence to be ‘undead’ is to be neither alive nor dead but the monstrous ‘living dead’ well-captured by the figure of the zombie of popular culture (just as to be ‘inhuman’ marks the subject neither as ‘human’ nor ‘not human’ but with a terrifying excess inherent to being-human – something explored by Lyotard in his similarly titled book). See Žižek, “Fichte’s Laughter,” 162.

Thus, insofar as the present work seeks to theorize a non-hermeneutical phenomenological approach to textual analysis, this should not be read as taking an external distance from hermeneutical phenomenology by championing a method either already established like structuralism or one it seeks to newly develop. But neither is the distance taken a simple doubling of that initial external distance, as if the addition of another ‘degree of freedom’ (*i.e.*, the positioning of another methodological parameter between itself and hermeneutical phenomenology) would affect the proper methodological stance. Rather, the two negations resulting in non-hermeneutical phenomenology is the alignment with that which is already inherent to hermeneutical

end of this trajectory what exactly is left? The present chapter endeavors to show that here lies the sought-after sublime object, a contingent piece of the real capable of suspending the structured rotation of the hermeneutical circle whose meaning subsists in the imaginary register articulated in the deixis to the right. This can already be understood by more consequentially following the third arrow of the above succession. In this case [4] directly negates [3] and this can fruitfully be conceived as the impossible ontologization of the void inscribed in the latter quadrant.² As seen below, this ontologization becomes a crucial factor when it comes to the question of the suspension of meaning.

For the present moment, the suspicion that the last two negations in the above succession have effected a departure from set theory is well confirmed by Lacan himself in *L'Étourdit*.³ In introducing the two propositions from the left deixis, he notes how

[t]heir inscription is not usual in mathematics. To deny, as the bar over the quantifier marks it, to deny that *there exists one* is not done, and still less that *forall* is fornottalled (*pourpastoute*). It is here nevertheless that there is revealed the

phenomenology. Any subversion of the latter's methodology would then come from within so that if one must speak of 'distance,' this must be understood as a self-distance. The additional consequence of this strategy is that nothing definitive can be said of the non-hermeneutical phenomenological approach. Here the Heideggerian stance of 'active passivity' which eschews holding out hope for a positive determination recommends itself – certain to frustrate any reader whose expectations are otherwise. For the approach championed here is rather parasitic, putting into play the terms of the field it seeks to undermine and subvert (and thus tears a page out of the book of Lacan who follows the methodology of Plato and Kant in taking the sophistry of his time and using it against itself and who, as we know, has inspired men like Badiou and Žižek to do much the same). To the extent that this approach is already in play in the present work, the impact on its reader moves beyond frustration towards unleashing that excessive *jouissance* which attends any infinite judgment.

² This raises an interesting possibility. If the epistemological dimension could be said to oppose from the right deixis the ontological dimension inscribed in the left, this would legitimize using the logical square to frame the debates in hermeneutics over the question of methodology.

³ As written, the title *L'Étourdit* is a neologism. Derived from the substantive form of the adjective *étourdi*, the noun *l'étourdi* (without the 't') refers to someone who is thoughtless, dazed, dizzy, inattentive, or distracted. In common parlance such a person might be referred to as a scatterbrain or a blunderer. Now, the addition of the final 't' at the written level amounts to little more than a spelling error. So to begin understanding what is captured by the term *l'étourdit*, one might instead turn to the phonetic level. But as spoken the neologism effectively disappears, for *l'étourdit* and *l'étourdi* are pronounced exactly the same because the final 't' is silent in French. In the end the reader is forced to hear the title as *les-tours-dits* (similarly pronounced, this literally translates as 'the-turns-said') in order to grasp a modicum of its meaning without, of course, losing sight of the fact that those who complete such a circuit of 'sai'ds' are blunderers nonetheless.

sense of the saying, from the fact that, combining there the *nyania* (thereisnotonewasdenied)...it supplies for the fact that between them, there was no relationship (*de rapport nyait pas*).⁴

What Lacan draws attention to is the fact that the writing of $\overline{\exists x}$ and $\overline{\forall x}$ departs from ordinary mathematical usage to arrive elsewhere. In terms of the present discussion this is a shift from the theory of simple set formation (in play in the previous chapter) towards a dimension best served by topology.⁵ This is also a shift from the fact of enunciating (*i.e.*, that of the Epimenidean order) to the fact of saying. Either way it is a shift from the right deixis of sets to the specific topology inscribed in the left, a shift caused by the *nyania* which inscribes the fact that there is no relationship between the two sides. This term *nyania* is a neologism by Lacan and provides a sense of the extraordinary difficulty of following *L'Étourdit*. But as is generally the case, even such mysterious signifiers can be understood provided one is prepared to *work through* the Lacanian text.⁶ As it turns out this *nyania* is rather simple to unwind. It is composed of two negations. The *nia* [was denied] refers to the exception in the right deixis, the One who enunciates a 'No' and thereby exempts itself from the set of the phallic. Epimenides, the man who enunciates how 'All men are mortal' and the Freudian primordial father all fit this bill. The second negation, *n'y a* [is not], is the negation of the existence of this exception which creates an exit out of the logic of sets and an entrance into the specific topological domain of the left deixis. With *nia* equivalent to $\overline{\Phi x}$ and *nya* to $\overline{\exists x}$, the combined *nyania* is thus none other than $\overline{\exists x} \overline{\Phi x}$. According to Figure 4.2, this proposition is equivalent to $\forall x \Phi x$, while the Not-all is equivalent to the existence of the exception so

⁴ Lacan, *L'Étourdit* (First Turn), 18.

⁵ A clarification is in order. As already noted, topology is a branch of set theory so strictly speaking the shift in question is not from set theory to topology but from that aspect of set theory which concerns the formation of sets. This specific aspect was chiefly the extent to which set theory was put into play in the discussions of the logical square in Chapter 4.

⁶ It is a generally held belief amongst Lacanians that Lacan's writings should be deciphered as rebuses. But it has often been said that *L'Étourdit* stands out as his most difficult. Le Gaufey speaks of it as Lacan's 'ultra-cryptic écrit.' Le Gaufey, *Lacan's Notall* (Ch 2), 47. Fierens also notes the exceptional status of *L'Étourdit* on the opening page of his commentary, telling us that this 'particularly obscure and enigmatic' text for years 'resisted decipherment.' See Fierens, *Reading L'Étourdit* (First Turn).

An indication of its difficulty is also provided by the colorful account of Melman who had originally received from Lacan this 'repugnant' text with the desire that it be published in his own review *Scilicet* (which it eventually was). Melman reports how he 'had given it back to [Lacan] telling him that it was an absolutely unreadable, impossible text; that no one would ever understand anything in it; and that the sense of such a publication seemed to me to be absolutely not obvious.' Melman, "What Thrilled Me in Fierens' Book," 121.

that a set might exist part phallic and part not phallic. Distance from such an understanding was taken soon after the Lacanian logical square was formally presented in Chapter 4, but the path suggested by *L'étourdit* allows one to truly bury the notion of such equivalencies. For traversing the logical square as $\boxed{1} \rightarrow \boxed{2} \rightarrow \boxed{3} \rightarrow \boxed{4}$ thoroughly breaks with any and all symmetry between the two sides. The crucial moment arrives with the movement into the left deixis beginning with the *nyania* which clears the space to allow 'everything' to be said of the element x 'even if it proceeds without reason.' Yet this 'everything' does not return us to the All, for 'it is an all (*tout*) outside universe, which is read right away from the second quantifier as *notall*.⁷ As the text proceeds it becomes clear that 'reason' concerns the way the exception limits the universal affirmative, providing it with a boundary that effectively makes of the right deixis the place of the One. But what happens when reason fails, that is, when the exception is denied? In this case it is not so much that the All is suppressed; rather, it immediately begins to overflow the confines which rendered it a universal One, an overflow which can be conceived as occurring in the space cleared by the *nyania*. This all that is not All is the Not-all. The Not-all is what exceeds the All, being 'outside' or 'greater than' the universe and the universal All.

But there is a surprise awaiting the reader on the following page. Contrary to what one might expect from studying Figure 4.2, the fact that the Not-all negates the universal nevertheless does not make it a particular. Lacan instead characterizes the Not-all as 'the singular of a "confine" ("*confîn*")' which he immediately links with *jouissance*. Now, in English as well as in French, the term confine suggests a bounded region and if this term stood alone it would certainly fail to distinguish the Not-all from the All, the latter of which must precisely be conceived as such a region kept within the limits set by the exception.⁸ The Not-all must of course be conceived differently and Lacan achieves this conception quite precisely with the expression just cited. Understanding this requires a brief etymological digression. In both French and Old French the noun of this expression is always said in the plural, as *confins*, which additionally translates as a 'border' or 'boundary.' Its Latin roots are found with *confinium* [boundary, limit] derived from *confinis* [bordering on] which in turn is derived from *com-* [with] and *finis* [an end, limit]. By unconventionally dropping the final 's' the endeavor here is to return to a sense better captured by its etymological roots and by further stating how we are to take the singular of this term, Lacan doubly marks this fact to ensure it will not be missed. His reading of 'confine' in the singular thus frustrates the conception that the Not-all *qua* confine is a region restricted to set limits. Instead we are effectively asked to recognize in the Not-all the very limit *as such*. Now, by embodying the very limit itself the Not-all completely subverts

⁷ Lacan, *L'étourdit* (First Turn), 18.

⁸ This is graphically seen in Figure 4.3 where the curve of the hyperbolic function occupies a region bounded by its asymptotes.

the logic of the universal and of the particular. For it directly negates the former but cannot be equated with the latter either, having attained itself by passing through the *nyania* which negates the exception. Since the singular is usually conceived in the sense of 'the one and only' and since the exception can legitimately be read as affirming the existence of just that, this cannot be what is captured by the Not-all. If it did the Not-all would reduce to the exception. But the Not-all only comes to be through the denial of the exception. Thus the Not-all must be radically reconceived: the singular of a confine is that which paradoxically carries within it the universal, the exception which unifies and limits, and the negation of this exception. That is, all of the propositions in the Lacanian logical square are effectively comprehended in the space of the Not-all. As Fierens says, what is at stake with the Not-all 'is a new way of thinking, which no longer classifies in boxes or logical places, but whose logic, since it is a journey, is constituted from changes of logic.'⁹ So initially the path proceeds quite linearly through the quadrants of the logical square, but upon reaching the Not-all the path suddenly takes a paradoxical twist. Here a return trajectory commences, underscoring how the sequence $\boxed{1} \rightarrow \boxed{2} \rightarrow \boxed{3} \rightarrow \boxed{4}$ had taken place within the space of the Not-all of $\boxed{4}$ all along.

Neither universal nor particular, the Not-all is singular. The importance of having arrived at this result cannot be overemphasized for the project of suspending the hermeneutical circle of meaning. This singular element, suspected to exist in certain aesthetic theories, identified by Freud as the dream navel and generally theorized by Lacan, is now established as occupying quadrant $\boxed{4}$ of the Lacanian logical square. What should be recognized is how the Not-all of $\boxed{4}$ is an element doubly-inscribed, operating both as part of and the space within which the sequence $\boxed{1} \rightarrow \boxed{2} \rightarrow \boxed{3} \rightarrow \boxed{4}$ proceeds. The Not-all thus schematizes an element which overlaps content with form, an element found in the sequence yet paradoxically embodying the very sequence which disclosed it. To identify with this element would thus be to identify with a suspension point to the sequence. This has direct implications for textual analysis. Although it has not been directly shown how the classical hermeneutical circle is confined to the right deixis, already the fact that the Not-all breaks with the particular makes it highly likely that this is the case. For where else could the dynamic between the universal and particular play out if not between the first two quadrants? The third quadrant is thoroughly empty and the fourth contains a singular element. If this is the case, it might be conceived how the universal (whole) and particular (part) turn in an empty space, generating a singular element that simultaneously embodies the very form of their reciprocal exchange. Extracting out and identifying with this element would then suspend the circular turn. In more concrete terms the circle begins with the

⁹ Fierens, "The Fact of Saying Notall with Reference to Le Gaufey's Work," 11.

provisional possibility of the universal notion (perhaps an interpretive thesis like ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian’) and the necessity of its particular constitutive exception (‘At least one text of Gadamer is not Heideggerian’), continues through the recognition of the impossibility of any such exception (‘There is not one text of Gadamer that is not Heideggerian’), only to conclude with the final contingency of the interpretive act, the act which underscores each of these moments and forever ensures the inaccessibility of meaning and the indetermination of interpretation. The point here would be that the very approach of the interpreter to the text must be paradoxically embodied in an element of that text. Identification with this textual element would then necessarily suspend the interpretive process and the associated hermeneutical pursuit of textual meaning. Before turning to a more detailed discussion, the path and return trajectory through the quadrants of the logical square can be repeated in another (Kantian) way.

Lacan recalls at the bottom of the first page of *L’Étourdit* how ‘it is from logic that [analytic] discourse touches on the real by encountering it as impossible, which is why it is this discourse that raises it to its final power: science, I have said, of the real.’¹⁰ This investigation of the real *qua* impossible is exactly what one should expect of the Lacan of the 1970s and Fierens intriguingly suggests linking it with Kant’s own investigation into the impossible which comes on the final pages of the Transcendental Analytic of his first *Critique*.¹¹ The ‘Table of Nothings’ found there is something which Lacan himself made references to a decade earlier. The link is established through the identification of each of the four Kantian nothings with one of the four propositions of the Lacanian logical square.¹² Accordingly, the nothing that Kant calls an *ens rationis* [Latin, a being of reason] is an ‘empty notion without an object’ and is to be associated with the pure essence of the universal of quadrant **1**. It can be grasped by considering the ontological status of the hypothetical proposition ‘If *p* then *q*’ when no particular *p* is affirmed to exist. What results is a *Gedankending* [German, a thing of thought] which is the status Kant assigns to the noumenon – that which cannot be known but can be thought. It is a nothing which no positive feature can fill out. In Fregean terms it is a function without an argument and in Lacanian algebra it is S_2 when S_1 is barred to it, or $\frac{S_2}{S_1}$. The classic Kantian examples include the soul, God and the universe as a whole. The point here is that these are easily imagined but are never actually encountered since they transcend the limits of our experience. Slightly less graspable is a *nihil privativum* [Latin, a privative nothing], an ‘empty object of a notion’ and this is to be situated at the level of quadrant **2** which harbors a particular element that says

¹⁰ Lacan, *L’Étourdit* (First Turn), 1.

¹¹ See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A290–2/B346–9.

¹² See Fierens, “The Fact of Saying Notall with Reference to Le Gaufey’s Work,” 13–4.

'No.' Here the corresponding matheme would be the exceptional S_1 secretly supported by the void of $\$,$ or $\frac{S_1}{\$}$. The term legitimately brings to mind the passage from *Summa Theologiae* (1256–72) where St Thomas Aquinas cites St Augustine of Hippo's characterization of evil as the privation of good¹³ and this is itself a good starting point since the nothing in question does concern a positive notion with a positive object that just happens to be missing, like the holes in a sponge. Yet a better approximation of this nothing can be had by considering it as a real opposition, as the result of the conflict between two positive forces. This nothing is not the absence or lack of a positive force, but the 0 which results when two positive forces of equal strength cancel each other out, like the rope which remains stationary in a tug-of-war match when two groups of men of equal strength pull it in opposite directions. However, the problem with these examples is that they are too determinate, readily providing images which 'fill in' the nothing. Thus what is lost is how the *nihil privativum* which emerges as the outcome of the mutual privation of two opposing forces has an ontological status somewhat 'less than' that of the *ens rationis*.

The purest evacuation of existence, however, is the nothing Kant calls an *ens imaginarium* [Latin, an imaginary being]. This 'empty intuition without an object' is of the order of quadrant [3] since both are clearly concerned with the absence of all substance. Hence in Lacanian terms it would be written as the void of $\$$ without *objet a*, or $\frac{\$}{a}$. Less than either of the previous two nothings, this absence nevertheless functions as the form of intuition without itself being an intuitable object. The classic examples are pure space and pure time and Kant opens his first *Critique* with a discussion of each of these in turn since they are the very condition of possibility of all representation. But by reaching this point the journey through nothings has not yet ended. There is still one more to be considered, one which is somehow 'less than nothing,' if 'nothing' is most consequentially defined as the pure absence of the empty set \emptyset named by the *ens imaginarium*. The nothing in question is a *nihil negativum* [Latin, a negative nothing], an 'empty object without a notion' which correlates to quadrant [4]. The corresponding matheme is the empty *objet a* devoid of its notional S_2 , or $\frac{a}{S_2}$. This occurs when the very notion of an object contradicts itself and thereby cancels itself. The object which results is a nothing of this type, what Kant calls an *Unding* [German, a non-thing]. Such self-contradicting notions not only fail on the notional level but cannot be grasped through our imagination either; that is, in no way can we imagine what a 'square circle' looks like. So it cannot be approached either through the logic of the universal or of the particular but is rather to be experienced as the impossible ontologization of the empty space within which the universal and particular subsist. In previous terms it is singular,

¹³ See Aquinas, *Introduction to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, 533.

a punctuated point paradoxically found within the very field it itself discloses. The most elusive nothing of the four, one can say nothing of it except by keeping silent.

In terms of ontological ranking, the four nothings thus follow the same sequential path through the logical square as that forged by the logic of negation. Starting with that which harbors the highest being, it proceeds as: [1] (*ens rationis*) → [2] (*nihil privativum*) → [3] (*ens imaginarium*) → [4] (*nihil negativum*). The ‘naturalness’ of initially proceeding along this path can be confirmed by attempting to grasp these nothings through the imagination, the hermeneutical phenomenological faculty *par excellence*. For instance, the hypothetical ‘If *p* then *q*’ occupying the Platonic heavens is as easily imagined as the souls of the departed and God Himself in the Christian Heaven, but less imaginable are the holes without the delimiting sponge material or the nothing of a motionless rope. Still less can pure space and pure time be represented by an image since by definition these are the *a priori* of representation itself. And although Lacan tells us that *objet a* is not without its imaginary dimension, whatever image does come to attach itself to this real object is more fleeting than any other, as is witnessed whenever one attempts to imagine what the object of a self-contradictory notion like a square circle might look like. In following this sequence what should not to be overlooked is how the very movement of encountering the impossible ends up in actually constructing this final paradoxical object or alternatively, how the other three moments are but different forms of this object. To sense this construction a theoretical application of the fruitful scientific technique of ‘reverse engineering’ might be made. Consider that by attempting to grasp the object of the negative nothing directly, one inevitably slips backward into an imaginary being. But whatever comes to represent the empty set (*e.g.*, \emptyset) fails on that count alone, for the *a priori* of representation cannot be represented. Thus the slide into a privative nothing is equally inevitable since it seems that the object can only be approached at a glance, as if a minimal representation were necessary to delimit its contours (*e.g.*, empty parentheses { }). Yet again this image fails to satisfy for long and eventually gives way to the temptation to treat the object as a transcendent being of reason, as an object safely stored away in the noumenal beyond. At every stage the form of the object to be grasped is reduced to the preceding one. What this movement underscores is how the *objet a* of [4] permeates all the others while simultaneously being constructed by them. Its double presence is why there is a persistent viscosity to the sequence, preventing a smooth run through the logical square.

Having traced out the path through the Lacanian logical square twice, once by tarrying with the negative and once more by pursuing a series of lesser and lesser nothings, a more detailed discussion can now be had to better account for the topological twisting of space that is the movement from one quadrant to the next which ends in the suspension of the hermeneutical field of meaning. The

following section integrates the theory of the four discourses with the logical square to establish how this square concerns the production of meaning, the hermeneutical circle and the potential suspension of this circle, while simultaneously showing the passage between its quadrants in the revolving light of discourse theory. The final section then provides an account of the path through the logical square by making use of the topological figures discussed by Lacan in *L'Étourdit*. It is held that topology functions heuristically, teaching the interpreter who engages in its study that the hermeneutical pursuit of textual meaning is not all there is to interpretation. Topology, much better than structuralism, aesthetic theory or set theory alone, accesses a dimension which can answer the obvious question of “What now?” that arises after the proper initiatory interpretive stance has been struck, a stance well-captured by Fierens’ excitable introductory exclamation: ‘Interpretation is in no way to be reduced to explaining the meaning of the text!’¹⁴ Here it must be stressed how the insights of *L'Étourdit* will be lost to anyone not willing to clear his workspace of the usual tools of interpretation and instead take up a pair of scissors, a spool of tape and some sheets of paper to make the requisite cuts and sutures to produce Lacan’s sexuated topological figures – this said in the full spirit of Freud who often admonished his readers that his own discoveries would not be properly recognized if they neglected the analysis of their own dreams.

5.2 The Breakdown of the Meaning-relation

At the start of the final section in the chapter Žižek sets aside to discuss the Lacanian notion of sexual difference in his monumental book *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (2012), he writes the following:

‘So, to conclude, one can propose a “unified theory” of the formulae of sexualisation and the formulae of four discourses: the masculine axis consists of the master’s discourse and the university discourse (university as universality and the master as its constitutive exception), and the feminine axis of the

¹⁴ Fierens, *Reading L'Étourdit* (First Turn), 5. Fierens is well aware of this dimension and the privileged place this text of Lacan’s occupies in this respect: ‘*L'Étourdit* is the primary form that diverts us from our conscious semantics, it is the apparition of the unconscious in the dimension of non-sense, and it opens up a beyond of common meaning’ (5). Moreover, ‘*L'Étourdit* will deal with psychoanalytic interpretation. How will it deal with it? In what manner? In the manner of an interpretation: *L'Étourdit* interprets interpretation’ (11). This nonsense, this dimension which involves interpreting interpretation whose objectivity is conditional on not hearing it from meaning alone, is readily approachable through topology and Fierens’ work here is superb. Indeed, the present work is in as great a debt to Fierens for having worked through Lacan’s topological moves as it is with Le Gaufey for his account of the Aristotelian heritage of the Lacanian logical square and for his explication of the intricate relations between the propositions of that square.

hysterical discourse and the analyst’s discourse (no exception and non-All). We then have the following series of equations:

$$\begin{array}{ll}
 S_1 = \text{Master} = \text{exception} & S_2 = \text{University} = \text{universality} \\
 \$ = \text{Hysteria} = \text{no-exception} & a = \text{Analyst} = \text{non-All}
 \end{array}$$

We can see here how, in order to correlate the two squares, we have to turn one 90 degrees in relation to the other: with regard to the four discourses, the line that separates masculine from feminine runs horizontally; that is, it is the upper couple which is masculine and the lower one which is feminine.¹⁵

As his interests run in a decidedly different direction, Žižek does not further develop his unified theory. But the little that has been written here is highly suggestive and permits the Lacanian logical square to be entirely expressed in terms of the four discourses. This is captured in Figure 5.1.

$\overline{\exists x \Phi x}$ $H_d : \uparrow \frac{\$}{a} \xrightarrow{\quad} \frac{S_1}{S_2} \downarrow$ <div style="text-align: right;">$\\$ \boxed{3}$</div>	$\forall x \Phi x$ $U_d : \uparrow \frac{S_2}{S_1} \xrightarrow{\quad} \frac{a}{\$} \downarrow$ <div style="text-align: left;">$\boxed{1} S_2$</div>
<div style="text-align: right;">$a \boxed{4}$</div> $A_d : \uparrow \frac{a}{S_2} \xrightarrow{\quad} \frac{\$}{S_1} \downarrow$ $\overline{\forall x \Phi x}$	<div style="text-align: left;">$\boxed{2} S_1$</div> $M_d : \uparrow \frac{S_1}{\$} \xrightarrow{\quad} \frac{S_2}{a} \downarrow$ $\exists x \overline{\Phi x}$

Figure 5.1: The Lacanian Logical Square and the Four Discourses (Combined)

A momentary glance at the Lacanian logical square as originally presented in Figure 4.2 will confirm that its overall structure has been carried forward to Figure 5.1 to allow for direct comparison. This is because the placement of the four quadrants and their propositions has been strictly maintained across the two versions. The differences between them thus extend only to their respective contents. As can be seen, the arrows designating the relations between the quadrants have been dropped from the new logical square, as well as all verbal descriptors. But that which is subtracted is nevertheless still operative behind the scenes and indeed the analysis of the logical square undertaken in Chapter 4 and Section 5.1 is still valid. So the two additional ways in which each quadrant is marked simply enhances what can be understood of the logical square. First,

¹⁵ Žižek, *Less Than Nothing*, 794–5.

each quadrant can now be referred to by one of the four mathemes from discourse theory. Second, each quadrant is now inscribed with one of the four discourses. These writings should all be familiar from the discussion in Section 3.3 except for the three arrows and parallel lines which now attend each discourse. The significance of each of these additions is taken up in turn.

It should be readily recognizable from the foregoing chapters why S_2 , S_1 , $\$$ and a should come to mark quadrants $\boxed{1}$, $\boxed{2}$, $\boxed{3}$ and $\boxed{4}$ respectively. Recall how S_2 denotes a series of signifiers which inscribes both meaning and knowledge within its chain, but a chain which only ‘completes’ itself when the phallic S_1 constitutes it as such. Together they constitute the contradiction inherent to the right deixis between All signifiers and the One signifier which nevertheless eludes this universal dimension through its exceptional particularity. In the Other deixis to the left there is no better matheme than the subject $\$$, the empty lack between signifiers devoid of any substantive meaning, to designate the void of the upper quadrant. While the *objet a* as the impossible objectal correlate to the empty subject functions in a similar fashion as the Not-all of the lower quadrant which directly negates or impossibly ontologizes the void of the *ens imaginarium*.

With the four mathemes thus distributed to the four quadrants the entire logical square can effectively be treated as a single discourse; that is, so long as each quadrant is taken as one of the four places of discourse theory (*cf.* Figure 3.4). Subsequent rotations of the entire square, 90° at a time, would then produce each of the remaining three discourses in turn. This is provided, of course, that quadrants $\boxed{1}$ and $\boxed{2}$ are interchanged.¹⁶ Thus, with no rotation the logical square is read as the $H_a: \frac{\$}{a} \rightarrow \frac{S_1}{S_2}$, but by making a 90° counterclockwise turn the $M_a: \frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$ emerges. Two additional turns will produce first the $U_a: \frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\$}$ and then the $A_a: \frac{a}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{\$}{S_1}$. These substitutions can also be inverted,

¹⁶ It will be recalled from Section 4.2 how the ordering of the propositions of the two quadrants in the right deixis were reversed from Lacan’s popular presentation of them in Seminar XX in order to construct a logical square directly comparable to the classical Aristotelian version. By interchanging them once again they revert back to the way they are usually presented as per the table of sexuation. (This interchange will be assumed from now on whenever the Lacanian logical square is spoken of *in toto* as a discourse).

Of course Žižek need not worry about *these* particular details, working as he does directly from the table of sexuation and not the logical square. Yet in doing so another problem arises. For by reading directly off the table of sexuation the arrangement is “ $\frac{S_1}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{\$}{a}$ ” which is not one of the four discourses. No matter how many 90° turns are made, no legitimate discourse will emerge. But by simply reversing the two sides of the table of sexuation this problem is instantly resolved – yet another advantage for having done just that from Section 4.2 onward.

inscribing instead the propositions themselves into the discourses. This has the advantage of bringing into discourse theory what is known of the relationships internal to the logical square. For instance, the M_d would be written as $\frac{\exists x \overline{\Phi x}}{\exists x \Phi x} \rightarrow \frac{\forall x \Phi x}{\forall x \Phi x}$ and here it is clearly seen how the proposition occupying the position of truth exposes the utter pretense of the master's claim to be the One since it directly negates the exceptionality of his position of agency. Similar substitutions could be made for the other three discourses and already much could be fruitfully read from these writings. To take the fullest advantage of them, however, a better theoretical understanding of the relations in play within a discourse is needed.

Before turning to such a discussion, it should be noted how the above has effectively isolated the hermeneutical field of meaning to the two quadrants of the right deixis and, moreover, delimited the potential suspension of this field to the subversive quadrant of the Not-all in the left deixis. To recognize this, rotate the logical square 90° counterclockwise so that these two quadrants appear across the top. What results is the M_d : $\frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$ and suddenly the analysis of meaning with respect to this discourse (*cf.* Section 3.3) is readily applicable to the logical square: there is the retroactive trajectory of meaning production which swims against the tide of signifiers moving left to right ($S_1 \rightarrow S_2$), the subjectivization of the subject $\$$ which emerges at the end of this trajectory fully imbued with meaningful content, and the uncovering of the *objet a* which falls out of the signifying chain and which can potentially put an end to meaning production. However, because of this falling away only the three mathemes of alienation (recall how Figure 3.1 only references S_2 , S_1 and $\$$) are effectively in play. To put *objet a* into play would require an additional 180° turn. Doing so results in the A : $\frac{a}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{\$}{S_1}$ or $\frac{\overline{\forall x \Phi x}}{\forall x \Phi x} \rightarrow \frac{\overline{\exists x \Phi x}}{\exists x \Phi x}$ where the potential of *objet a* to suspend meaning becomes actualized. But note that while all four mathemes of separation (*cf.* Figure 3.2) are now in play, the placement of *objet a* in the position of agency places the two quadrants associated with meaning along the bottom of the discourse. The significance of occupying these bottom positions is only had by making sense of the three arrows (and parallel lines) which denote the direction (and termination point) of the mathemes as they turn from one discourse to the other.

The significance of one of these arrows is already generally known. This is the arrow which links S_1 and S_2 running across the top of the M_d . Taken together the matheme $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ represents the chain of signifiers within which meaning subsists. The split between these two levels, between what psychoanalysis calls the symbolic and the imaginary registers, could readily be acknowledged by structuralism itself. This split provides a valuable clue on how to read this matheme newly found in each quadrant of the logical square, a square now defined in terms of discourse theory. Since the logical square

concerns the phallic function Φx , the question to ask is how one might understand $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ in relation to this function. The answer is approachable by recalling that to speak is to be symbolically castrated. Whatever we say we often experience how our saids fall short, failing to articulate our intended meaning with any kind of precision, while simultaneously also recognizing how these saids say too much, carrying meanings entirely unintentional. Actually experiencing or consciously recognizing the castrating effects of language is not strictly necessary; this phenomenon is registered in the Other regardless. Examples abound, from Epimenides who fully intends to include himself in the fact that ‘All Cretans are liars’ yet does just the opposite by uttering it, to the man who likewise unknowingly castrates himself when affirming how ‘All men are mortal.’ Being submitted to the Φx thus involves the disjoint between what one intends to say and what one actually says or in matheme terms, between the ‘betweens’ of signifiers (marked by the arrow) and the level of the signifiers themselves (S_1 , S_2). The three mathemes of alienation thus stand quite appropriately arranged as $\frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{\$}$, which is Lacan’s definition of a signifier as that which represents a subject for another signifier (cf. Figure 3.4). This arrangement visually confirms how the subject presenting himself in his own words is out of synch with the meaning of those words. Having reached this point it can now be speculated that if the relation between S_1 and S_2 somehow breaks down, if the arrow suggesting their relation gives way instead to parallel lines which block that relation, the meaning inscribed between them breaks down as well. This would put into play a full separation of the subject from meaning.

Thus far only one of the three relational arrows which accompany discourse theory has been discussed, the one which links $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ across the upper horizontal plane of the M_d . Given that this upper level arrow is found in each of the discourses which have now come to define the quadrants of the logical square, what can be generally said of it? The answer is that the relation between the agent and the other in any of the four discourses should be characterized by the modality of impossibility. This is a defining modality of discourse theory and Fierens equally observes how the social bond between the two partners in a discourse is fundamentally disparate such that no true dialogue can take place between them.¹⁷ This is easily seen in the M_d of quadrant **2** where the fact that an exceptional S_1 must articulate an S_2 to actualize the latter’s potential meaning is truthfully revealed by $\$$ to be impossible; that is, with no such exception any hopes for a full actualization of this potentiality are dashed. Faced with this

¹⁷ Fierens, *Reading L’étourdit* (First Turn), 21. Intriguingly, it was through his formulation of discourse theory, in particular the M_d , that Lacan first uncovered his famous formula: *Il n’y a pas de rapport sexuel* [There is no such thing as a sexual relation]. See Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 116.

impossibility each of the two sides of a discourse must sustain itself on its own. For its part the agent is sustained by a truth which necessarily determines it in its address to the other. The arrow to the left that marks the relation between the truth and the agent in any discourse thus marks a relation characterized by the modality of necessity. Illustrating again with $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$, the basic matheme of the meaning-relation, we find this pair related in the mode of necessity in the U_d of quadrant [1]. The necessity of this relation in this discourse is easily understood as well, for an S_1 is clearly needed to actualize the potential meaning of a battery of signifiers S_2 if that meaning is to be addressed to the other (in the same way that a p is needed to release the essence of 'If p then q '). Because of this, meaning and the being of meaning subsist in the quadrant of the universal affirmative more than in any other single quadrant, which also implies that the single most basic matheme of discourse theory concerning meaning is S_2 . On the other side of the divide within a discourse is the other, which can only respond to the agent's address by producing a contingent product. Here is the arrow to the right marking the relation between the other and the product of each discourse, a relation characterized by the modality of contingency. The H_d of quadrant [3] inscribes the pair $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ in such a contingent relation, with S_1 in the place of the other and S_2 in the place of the product. This S_2 can be read as a meaning produced by the S_1 in an attempt to appease the hysterical provocation by $\$$, but a meaning immediately lost since the desire behind that provocation cannot be satisfied. More generally speaking this product is always simultaneously also a loss since it is merely a possible result dependent on the truth which originally determined the agent. But in being characterized by the modality of possibility this relation between the product and the truth of any discourse is ultimately marked by powerlessness or impotency. For this product is utterly powerless to return to the truth of the discourse which produced it. The symbol of such a relation is thus no longer an arrow but parallel lines // which visually confirm the blockage in effect between any two mathemes that find themselves occupying the lower horizontal plane of a discourse. Now, it is the A_d of quadrant [4] where the meaning-relation thoroughly breaks down, so instead of $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ we find there $S_2 // S_1$. With this discourse of the nonsensical Not-all where an S_1 is produced but cannot return to the S_2 which occupies the place of truth, the meaning-relation is thoroughly exhausted. This is certainly connected to the fact that S_2 and S_1 are ontologically distinct due to the former's lack of existential import. But what the A_d captures is a more primitive dimension which provides the *a priori* force behind the fact that saying cannot return to the level of the said prior to it having been said.

By way of summary of the immediately foregoing the turn of the discourses proceeds as per the direction of the arrows, moving through the quadrants sequentially [1] \rightarrow [2] \rightarrow [3] \rightarrow [4], whereupon it reaches the A_d which puts an end to the meaning-relations to be had in each of the previous three discourses.

Yet it is already known from previous discussions of this sequence (discussions which took up this sequence in terms of the logic of negation and the Kantian nothings) that upon reaching the fourth component the analysis in a sense has only really just begun. For that which paradoxically comes at the end of the sequence is to be recognized as having haunted the previous three components which lead up to it. This is still the case when this sequence is defined in terms of discourse theory. Recall that Lacan in his late period considers the real *qua* impossible. Each discourse thus concerns the real inasmuch as a real relation runs between agent and other in the form of the impossible. This also makes the A_d the privileged discourse. With *objet a* as its agent and *objet a* being real, the A_d should be seen as haunting or manifesting itself in the other discourses through their impossible (and impotent) relations. It is the very science of the real, the science of the discourses as they revolve around the real. More specifically, the A_d pushes each discourse to constitute itself from its impossibility and to further demonstrate its ultimate impotence. Faced with its impotence each discourse is then lead to reverse itself and attempt a new social bond. The logic of this reversal is further discussed below. For now it is enough to get a sense of the A_d as the real engine of the (clockwise, and then counterclockwise) turns of the discourses which constitute it. And again it should be acknowledged how Lacan stands in stark contrast to classical Aristotelian logic which does its best to avoid logical impossibilities and impotencies. Instead, Lacanian discourse utilizes a logic which attempts to accommodate itself to these aporia and further tries to establish the impossibility of each discourse so as to demonstrate its impotence. In this way all roads lead to the A_d just as readily as they lead away from it.

An initial discussion is now complete of the discourses found in each quadrant as well as how the Lacanian logical square may be taken *in toto* as a discourse. This provides an adequate backdrop for a more detailed examination. For instance, the legitimacy of beginning the sequence with the U_d of quadrant **1** should be better established. By making reference to the psychoanalytic rule of free association, Fierens quite rightly reasons that since a signifier is always differentiated from itself, this implies that 'a signifier (S_1) becomes necessarily other, it is always transformed into another signifier (S_2).'¹⁸ This he names the 'preliminary rule' and as already seen, the necessity of $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ is found in the U_d . The further implication of self-differentiation is that any signifier whatsoever carries within itself this entire meaning-relation $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$. This provides an additional justification for treating the Lacanian logical square as one 'giant' rotating discourse with four 'smaller' discourses harboring its individual quadrants. That is, each signifier of $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$, which together constitute the meaning-relation circling within the right deixis, harbors within itself a discourse making use of the same meaning-relation form in necessary and impossible ways. This double inscription of the meaning-relation certainly makes Figure 5.1

¹⁸ Fierens, *Reading L'Étourdit* (First Turn), 22.

more complex, but with greater complexity comes greater flexibility and an increased potential that it can be utilized for diverse purposes. But there is a general lesson to be had from this double inscription *as such*. In terms of textual analysis, this is the very inscription of the aporia existing between the whole and the part of the hermeneutical circle: should meaning be approached by considering the whole (by adhering to the level of the logical square) or the part (by adhering to the discourses within its quadrants)? More specifically, while the preliminary rule places the U_d of quadrant **1** at the start of the sequence due to the modality of necessity, in terms of temporal order S_2 (which also marks the same quadrant) comes *after* S_1 of quadrant **2**, as is clearly seen in the matheme $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$. The ambiguity here does not stem from failing to distinguish a matheme coming to mark an entire quadrant and this same matheme occupying a place in a discourse within a quadrant. Additional symbols are entirely unwarranted and would mistakenly remove that which should instead be preserved. The ambiguity of Figure 5.1 in this respect is thus reflective of the self-differentiated nature of the signifier or in the specific terms of Chapter 4, of the status of the exception in its contradiction with the universal in the right deixis. Effectively what is witnessed here is the presence of a real disruption in the hermeneutical circle of meaning.

Nevertheless this circle turns, as do the discourses. The arrows of the latter point out their clockwise rotation along a specific modal path concurring with the path forged by the logic of negation and the series of vanishing nothings. As was said, reversing this rotation is equally possible. Coming up against the impotence that is the powerlessness of its product to rejoin its truth, the other of any discourse may swim against the tide of arrows to become its own agent. This sets off a new discourse. The only requirement is that the other recognize his impotence and decide to act. In this way the other of the H_d (S_1) becomes the agent of the M_d , while the other in this new discourse (S_2) can effect an additional turn by becoming the agent in the U_d . In the face of the real disruptions which drive these turns and counterturns, what is it that allows a discourse to maintain minimal cohesion? The answer is that the meaning-relation $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ stabilizes each of the three non-analytic discourses.¹⁹ This relation might fruitfully be thought of as covering over impossibility and impotence with the substance of meaning. For instance, the meaning of the knowledge (S_2) communicated in the U_d can be seen as that which binds the teacher and student; yet this bind is not permanent since the hysterical subject that is produced cannot return to the truth of this discourse (S_1). More concretely and in different terms, advocating a thesis such as ‘Gadamer is Heideggerian’ is always (and often secretly) supported by the textual work of

¹⁹ ‘Each of the three non-analytic discourses is established thanks to its own meaning-relationship: the academic discourse finds its stability in the necessary, the master discourse in the impossible, the hysterical discourse in contingency.’ *Ibid.*, 24.

master-interpreters like Palmer or Betti, just as a Lacanian thesis can establish its own authority through the masterly interpretations of Le Gaufey, Fierens, Žižek or Lacan himself. Putting such authorization directly into play, as the agent in the M_d , would be equivalent to offering up some Gadamerian passages in order to demonstrate their Heideggerian-like quality, despite the imperfections of these passages inclusive of their partial contradiction of this thesis. Again meaning attempts to bridge the impossible which here takes the form of the contradiction between S_1 (who, in truth, is no master) and S_2 (who responds to this contradiction by producing a contingent product). A further turn to the H_d would establish another impossible relation to which meaning would again be called upon to resolve. As already stated the former master, now an other, produces meanings so as to mollify the hysteric's embrace of the truth of the master's pretence of occupying a meta-position able to offer neutral assessments of the Gadamerian opus. Of course the rotation $U_d \rightarrow M_d \rightarrow H_d$ just followed²⁰ could at any point be reversed. For the other of the H_d might choose to abandon contingent meaning-relations to instead settle for those that are impossible. Yet whatever stability is provided by this latter meaning-relation might itself be disturbed by the other of the M_d when he recognizes his impotence and decides to assume the position of agency. In this case the U_d emerges, a discourse which achieves stability through a meaning-relation in the mode of necessity.

As already noted the A_d prevents the two partners of any discourse from engaging in a full dialogue. Moreover, the disruption it introduces into a discourse is what rotates it into a new discourse. Because of this, ultimately any stability a discourse does have is precarious at best. The paradox is that its (counter)clockwise rotation is both caused by and constitutes the A_d . Indeed the A_d is included in the very rotating path it itself propels. Yet in providing illustrations above of how meaning provides stability to a discourse by covering over its inherent impossibility and impotence, a corresponding illustration for the A_d was conspicuously missing. The reason for this should be obvious. For the meaning-relation utterly fails with the A_d , straddling as it does the impotent relation between truth and product. Instead of another transformation of S_1 by S_2 , the two are here radically disconnected; that is, instead of $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$, the

²⁰ More directly stated in terms held from Chapter 4 onward, the thesis 'Gadamer is Heideggerian' (S_2) becomes the agent in the U_d on condition that it takes up again its truth that 'There is (at least one) text of Gadamer that is not Heideggerian' (S_1). With a quarter turn to the M_d this problematic passage of Gadamer that is not Heideggerian puts the thesis to work in the sense of offering it a challenge. While another quarter turn produces the H_d where this passage is itself put to work to produce the very thesis in question. This illustrates the *a priori* nature of this discourse which subsists in the left deixis of the logical square, as well as its productive capacity to extend the epistemological field – something which Freud was one of the first to recognize.

(non)relation is now written $S_2 \parallel S_1$. Note that when $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ takes on the modality of impossibility in the M_d there is not a similar breakdown of meaning. For an impossible meaning can cover over impossibility and impotence just as well as a contingent or necessary meaning. But this is not the case with a meaning-relation that operates in the modality of possibility. To be more precise, the meaning-relation in the A_d has no functional mode. For in the A_d of quadrant **4** there is a thorough breakdown in the meaning-relation. Here meaning can no longer cover over impossibility and impotence in any sense since the meaning-relation is *itself* rendered impotent.

It should be clear how non-hermeneutical phenomenology is at once an interpretive approach that aligns itself with the A_d where the meaning-relation breaks down. Such an approach situates itself at the place of impotence in each of the three non-analytic discourses so as to upset their stability-through-meaning and further drives them to tip over to a new discourse where a new impossibility makes an appearance. In this way psychoanalytic interpretation can be characterized as the science of the rotation of the discourses, a rotation which leads back to itself, the A_d , where no meaning is offered up as a stabilizing force for the interpretive endeavor. Along with the breakdown of the meaning-relation there is here the *objet a*, a singular point from which meaning is suspended. Before turning to a discussion of topology to better illustrate this suspension, it is worthwhile to further distinguish the psychoanalytic approach from those which become entrenched in one or more of the non-analytic discourses making use of the stabilizing meaning-relation $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$. It is especially important to appreciate the distance it takes from those discourses which naïvely hold out hope that this meaning-relation can be avoided altogether and accordingly strive to make definitive relationships directly out of incongruent meanings already in existence. Consider, for example, how the theory of the four discourses is 'universal' in the sense of being able to characterize all interpretive groups and thinkers discussed in Part I. Thus the profound challenge to the medieval Church's centuries-old dominion over interpretive technique by the Protestant Reformers, and the subsequent response to this challenge known as the Counter-Reformation, could be characterized as so many turns and counter-turns playing out between the M_d and the H_d . Or else Deleuze and Nancy can be seen turning away from the H_d that typifies contemporary aesthetic thought by analyzing paintings within the A_d , a discourse whose dimensions first emerged with Freud in his original polemic with the hysteric. More generally, the distinction in question is useful in drawing a significant line of demarcation in the history of thought on meaning at the dawn of the 19th century. This line is marked by Schleiermacher and concerns his transcendental turn to hermeneutics. Very broadly speaking, it was only after this time that interpreters can be said to properly concern themselves with the meaning-relation $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$.

At stake in the period prior to this time, from the exegetical thought of the medieval period up to and including the rationalist hermeneutics of Chladenius,

is the bringing together and the putting into relation anomalous meanings caught up in two or more signifying chains. Here the effort is not to orient the meaning-relation $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ into a modality best able to provide stability but rather the mediation of differing series of S_2 through the particular subjectivization of the interpreter. In other words a meaning-filled interpreter acts as a conduit, setting out to resolve disparate meanings by making appeals to a realm of ultimate meanings that have already subjectivized him and stabilized his universe. Thus pre-Enlightenment biblical exegetes resolve textual difficulties in the name of the one true God who assures the wholeness of Scripture, while Chladenius' unwavering faith in reason similarly guarantees that the rational whole of a work is never in question. But this faith in reason soon becomes seriously shaken in the hands of Kant. Indeed there are good grounds for holding Kant to have closed out the Age of Reason. The very title of his revolutionary work of 1781 alerts his reader to the fact that what will be contained therein is nothing short of a critique of the pure objects of this faith, and in accomplishing just that Kant delivers a fatal blow to the legitimacy of any effort to reconstruct a limited number of primordial meanings from which all other meanings might flow. In simple terms Kant recognized that reason – a faculty of the mind whose work stands at the apex of the cognitive enterprise such that if the desired grand unity were attained, this would constitute the completion of knowledge – aims at the unconditional. In the first book of the *Transcendental Dialectic* he writes how the unconditional can 'be arranged in three classes, the *first* containing the absolute (unconditioned) *unity* of the *thinking subject*, the *second* the absolute *unity of the series of conditions of appearance*, the *third* the absolute *unity of the condition of all objects of thought in general*.²¹ Kant calls these the transcendental ideas which accordingly break down into the objects of psychology, cosmology and theology, *viz.*, the soul, the universe as a whole, and God. Yet far from endorsing unconditionals as missing links connecting all other meanings, Kant proceeds to demonstrate their illusory nature. These *Gedankendinge* [German, things of thought] are nothings of the type previously discussed: *entia rationis ratiocinatae* [Latin, beings of reason]. This is not to say that Chladenius and those who preceded him were simply duped so that a Schleiermacher or anyone else having read Kant simply avoids these errors in their own use of the universal. For Kant further argues how the appeal to such illusory objects is entirely natural and unavoidable. In his terminology the transcendental ideas are considered 'regulative ideals,' a set of principles that operates as a supposed knowledge of the inherent rational order. Although entirely unprovable, such unconditioned universals must be presupposed if we are to acquire a positive knowledge – and meaning – of our reality. In a word the transcendental ideas are necessary illusions and Chladenius completely fails to grasp universality as a regulative ideal. Overlooking the illusory and necessary

²¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A334/B391.

work of reason as it aims for ultimate meanings is a methodological defect generally shared by all hermeneutical approaches prior to the Kantian turn. In a world where meaningful existence is assured, their projects largely remain outside the meaning-relation $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ that seeks in contingent, impossible and necessary modes to cover over the real fault running through the otherwise ontologically consistent universe, a fault which makes its first sustained appearance only after the Kantian critique. So despite appearances that the pedagogy of Chladenius puts in play that most basic of the hermeneutical (and non-analytic) discourses, the university discourse with its necessary meaning-relation cannot be said to characterize his project (or else, his pre-critical thought renders the U_d so stable that it cannot be made to turn, which amounts to the same thing). Generally speaking, the best critiques of hermeneutical thought prior to Schleiermacher aim not at how it misses the illusory quality of the universal, but how it misses its *necessary* illusory quality. Such critique is at once self-critique and Schleiermacher's recognition of this effectively announced that the new interpretive era of discursive turns had arrived.

To clarify, the path travelled by pre-Kantian interpretation is not contingent, never merely possible and certainly not impossible. Rather, it is conceived as necessary. But since Reason and/or the Divine assures a complete Meaning, the Necessity involved here is quite different than the necessity at stake in discourse theory. After the Kantian turn it is no longer a transcendent entity but the subject who is held to account for meaning. A thesis such as 'Gadamer is Heideggerian' is thus not divinely inspired but enunciated by a subject in a meaning-relation that can, of course, be taken as necessary. But not strictly so, for it can also be seen as impossible or contingent, or even as having entered a dimension in which the very relation itself breaks down. As discussed, these four modes concern the meaning-relation $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ as it circulates through revolving discourses. Yet it is important to recognize how this relation is internal to the signifier itself. Such an insight only becomes possible after Kant. For the demonstration of the necessary illusory quality of the transcendent Signified implies that any signifier which comes to mark its empty place is itself rendered internally divided, as captured by the definition of the signifier as that (S_1) which represents for another signifier (S_2) its absence ($\$$). It may seem that the pre-Kantian concern for finding the Signifier has simply been substituted by a new conception of the infinite dispersal of signifiers; indeed there is no signifier which does not represent the subject, as implied by Lacan's definition. However, recall that the phallic signifier coincides with its own impossibility since it is nothing but the void opened up by its failed representations. Putting this notion into play places S_1 and S_2 on radically different levels and so allows for their relation $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ to take on different modalities. For instance, the relation of the enunciation (S_1) to its enunciated 'Gadamer is Heideggerian' (S_2) is in the modality of contingency when S_1 'dominates' in the sense of announcing the import of S_2 or in other words, when S_2 is conceived as the subject of S_1

(visually confirmed in the arrangement of the terms in the H_d where S_2 is positioned below S_1). Now, is contingency not the predominate mode the meaning-relation takes up today? We may readily grasp the meaning of the thesis an interpreter develops from his reading of a particular textual passage, but are we not quick to add that, in the end, this meaning is entirely dependent on *that* particular reading by *that* particular interpreter? All too often ending in a smug Nietzschean-like perspectivism from which meaning is deemed (absolutely) relative, what this assessment neglects in the meaning-relation is its necessity: in the U_d a thesis like 'Gadamer is Heideggerian' thoroughly eclipses its enunciation, making instead S_1 the subject of S_2 . However, the passage between contingency and necessity proceeds from the impossible, both in the sense of having to pass through the M_d where the meaning-relation is precisely in the modality of impossibility (concerning the contradiction between an enunciated thesis and its enunciation) and in the sense that impossibility deeply characterizes each discourse and links it internally to its own impotence, an impotence capable of provoking a turn into a new discourse.

This is at once to say that such a passage involves the A_d which, as already stated, is the very science of the rotation of the discourses. Now if it does act in this capacity, its own impotency becomes its resource. This impotency of course involves the thorough absence of the meaning-relation: S_1 fails to enter into relation with S_2 , a failure written as $S_2 // S_1$. Not reducible to a putting into relation of S_1 and S_2 , or to a putting into relation a series of established meanings, the type of interpretation concomitant to psychoanalytic discourse instead concerns the circulation of the meaning-relation as the U_d , M_d and H_d rotate and counter-rotate into one another; while at the same time such interpretation is also consciously aware that what drives these rotations is the failure of the meaning-relation to be definitively established. The fact that the relation between S_1 and S_2 is ultimately rendered impotent so that the meaning-relation thoroughly breaks down is part and parcel of the radical otherness inherent to the signifier as such. Moreover, the *tautological* nature of the definition of the signifier is what prevents finding in the A_d the promise of a meta-language since the inscription of the signifying pair as $S_2 // S_1$ in this discourse is a writing every bit as internal to the signifier as the meaning-relation $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ itself. This makes the A_d as caught up in the rotation of the discourses as any of the other three. Nevertheless, by writing the absence of this relation the discourse of the analyst does offer respite from the pursuit of meaning. For in its place of agency is the nonsensical *objet a*, a paradoxical point from which meaning can be suspended. The final section begins from where this section leaves off, from the breakdown of the meaning-relation $S_2 // S_1$, and proceeds by way of the meaningless twists, cuts and sutures of space that is topology to arrive at a conception of this nonsensical suspension point.

5.3 The Suspension of Meaning

About midway through *L'Étourdit* Lacan announces that it is time 'for a little topology.'²² In the ensuing pages the reader is guided through a series of operations to be performed on a few standard topological figures which transform them one into the next. This digression is nothing new. By this time Lacan has already devoted over a decade of study to this branch of pure mathematics as any glance of his seminars from the 1960s will confirm. This conforms to the methodological approach in play since his structuralist period and Lacan only increases his recourse to mathematical inscription and logical forms as he enters his final decade. But although this move to topology can be seen as a natural progression, here it is more important than ever to emphasize the *real* aspect of these methodological endeavors. The problem is that topological figures too readily lend themselves to the imagination and falling into this imagery is a temptation difficult to resist. The danger here is to treat topology as a metaphor which would miss the *n'espace* [nospace] into which mathematical discourse can lead us, as Lacan writes a couple of pages later. Much safer is to approach this *n'espace* through pure literal algebra, a mathematical writing which today seems to increasingly take second seat to the figural presentation centering itself on the page. In the past the topological figure appeared with rarity and the reader's only recourse was to work through its algebra. Indeed a survey would likely show that the vast majority of topology textbooks from decades past employ only algebraic expressions within their pages, refraining from illustrative material. No doubt due to prohibitive publishing costs of the past, from the Lacanian perspective the technological advances made in graphical design allowing for more illustrations in publications today is not a welcomed development. The lesson here – that topology ultimately depends on metaphor as little as do the mathemes of sexuation and discourse theory – should be kept ever in mind in this final discussion which does make use of topological images to illustrate the suspension of meaning.

Before turning to topology as it is found in *L'Étourdit*, an additional caution should be made which additionally serves to underscore the critical relation Lacan strikes with mathematics and logic. Undeniably his belief that mathematics can serve as a model for psychoanalysis places him squarely in the Enlightenment tradition. In this respect he echoes René Descartes' own project as per his unfinished treatise *Rules [Regulae] for the Direction of the Mind* (1619–28) which seeks to adapt the methodology of mathematics to the pursuit of philosophical knowledge. The *Regulae* argues that the successful advancement of arithmetic and geometry is due to the fact that mathematics deals with pure and uncomplicated objects which unproblematically lead to indubitable knowledge since the senses offer no resistance in grasping them. However, the senses do

²² Lacan, *L'Étourdit* (Second Turn), 1.

prove prejudicial in our grasp of the corresponding objects of philosophy. This problem is addressed in Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641). More specifically, his technique of hyperbolic doubt in the first meditation aims to purify the mind of sensory prejudice so that philosophical first principles can be purely grasped. In analogous fashion Lacan champions mathematical discourse as that which is founded on something other than meaning. He thus sees in it a model for a psychoanalysis taken as a non-hermeneutical phenomenology. But unlike the Descartes of the *Regulae* this is not a blind embrace of mathematics. Again it must be emphasized that Lacan is well aware of the impasses reached by classical logic whenever it is taken to the 'meta' level, just as he is aware of the limits of reason whenever it is employed in a similar fashion. That is to say, the writing of his mathemes of sexualization and discourse theory bear witness to his having read both Russell and Kant, inscribing as it does the very aporia of logic and reason that so many others merely treat as exceptional cases.²³ And his development of non-metaphorical topology performs precisely the same task, albeit in a different venue. Here one can already appreciate how topology might serve as a model for a psychoanalysis which sets aside a concern for meaning. For if Lacan speaks of making cuts into the surface of topological figures, this can certainly be read as equivalent to the cut preventing a universally consistent logic or even the cut which traverses reason as it aims for the unconditional, but it can just as well be read as the cut severing the meaning-relation $S_2 // S_1$.

So what exactly is topology? It is a branch of pure mathematics based on set theory. For its objects of study, called topological spaces, are effectively sets with extra structure. More precisely, topological space is a set each of whose points x is enclosed in a collection of subsets called open sets. Even in the most introductory of textbooks this rough conception is formalized via mathematical script in a foundational definition that begets a myriad of other definitions, theorems, lemmas, corollaries and formal propositions. Within the space of a few chapters a highly specialized algebraic writing quickly establishes itself and to the non-mathematician any illustration provided is a welcomed relief. As said

²³ Statements by Lacan himself that testify to this accomplishment abound throughout his later work. For instance, in discussing the dual nature of *objet a* as both real and imaginary, Lacan says in Seminar XX:

‘The affinity of *a* to its [imaginary] envelope is one of the major conjunctions put forward by psychoanalysis. To me it essentially introduces a point about which we must be suspicious. This is where the real distinguishes itself. The real can only be inscribed on the basis of an impasse of formalization. That is why I thought I could provide a model of it using mathematical formalization, inasmuch as it is the most advanced elaboration we have by which to produce signifierness. The mathematical formalization of signifierness runs counter to meaning – I almost said “à contre-sens” [counter meaning/direction]. In our times, philosophers of mathematics say “it means nothing” concerning mathematics, even when they are mathematicians themselves, like Russell.’ Lacan, *Encore*, 93.

above such writing inscribes the real, but in order to keep within manageable limits the discussion which follows refrains from topological algebra to instead highlight pertinent attributes of a few select topological spaces.

A more informal discussion of topology might thus begin by noting its etymological roots in the Greek word *topos* [place] or else cite from a dictionary of the American language that might define topology as ‘the study of geometric properties and spatial relations rendered unaffected by the continuous change of the shape or the size of the figures.’ In common parlance topology has been dubbed ‘rubber-sheet geometry’ in a phrase which nicely captures the intuition that geometrically quite distinct shapes like the coffee mug and the donut are topologically equivalent (or homeomorphic) since each could be stretched, twisted or otherwise deformed into the other without being ripped apart. Standard examples of topological spaces include the line, the circle, the plane, the sphere, the torus, the möbius strip and the cross-cap. The last four are of present concern and can be identified with one of the four quadrants of the Lacanian logical square. This is shown in Figure 5.2.

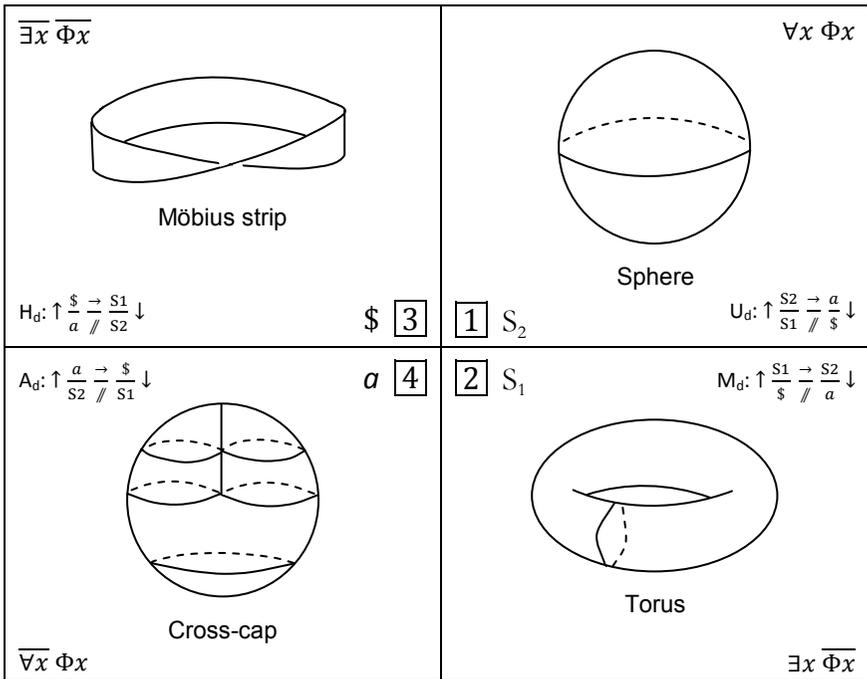


Figure 5.2: The Topology of the Lacanian Logical Square

Figure 5.2 simply adds to Figure 5.1 a standard topological space. Each of these topological spaces or figures is discussed in detail below. In summary fashion, one might begin with what is in many ways the simplest topological

figure of the four, *viz.*, the sphere. Now, by performing specific operations on the sphere it can be transformed into the torus, which can in turn be cut and sutured into the möbius strip, whose supplementation with additional topological features can then produce the cross-cap. In proceeding along these lines, a path is forged through the quadrants of the Lacanian logical square as per the familiar sequence $\boxed{1} \rightarrow \boxed{2} \rightarrow \boxed{3} \rightarrow \boxed{4}$. However, it must be stressed how for Lacan these transformative operations are not to be conceived as external interventions into the field of topology but rather as part and parcel of this very field itself. More exactly, the cuts and sutures are not operations to be performed *on* these figures so much as they are effectively *equivalent to* the figures themselves. Here again the privilege will go to the left deixis whose topological figures stand logically prior to those of the right. So although Lacan largely proceeds along this sequential trajectory in order to make himself initially understood, there is also discernible in his work an effort to have us recognize this trajectory as taking place entirely within the space of the cross-cap of quadrant $\boxed{4}$. Again this quadrant is the cornerstone of the logical square in the sense that it harbors a paradoxical point such that if extracted, the entire sequence is suspended. Furthermore, there is a theoretical and a practical advantage to now express the conclusions already drawn from the logical square in topological terms. The theoretical contention is that by engaging with Lacan's topological discussion in *L'étourdit*, one arrives at a purity of thought on these matters, but a thought which paradoxically only emerges through the initial mistaken immersion into the topological image. The image is thus not so much to be forgotten and set aside; rather, it is to be recognized as that which spits out its own suspension point. On the practical front the obvious advantage in turning to topology is that its imagery provides for nice visual presentations of different aspects of the phenomenological exploration of meaning, inclusive of its structural form as well as its breakdown and ultimate suspension. Generally speaking, such visuals help to stabilize that university discourse known as academic writing, from the simple essay to the full-scale book.

As suggested, forging a path through the logical square might begin with the sphere. The naturalness of this approach receives Lacan's tacit blessing when he writes how '[n]othing is more of a nature to take itself to be spherical.'²⁴ Yet Lacan does not begin his topological lesson with the sphere but rather with the torus. One explanation for this might be had by considering Lacan's claim 'that the sphere is what does without topology.'²⁵ This is a curious statement since the sphere is by all accounts a spatial figure well defined in topology. A clue as to what motivates this claim is found in the sentence which immediately precedes it: 'Naturally there are said that form the object of predicative logic and whose universalizing supposition belongs simply to the sphere, I say: the, I say: sphere,

²⁴ Lacan, *L'étourdit* (Second Turn), 5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

in other words: that precisely structure finds in it only a supplement which is that of the fiction of the true.' This seems to suggest that the sphere is to be associated with the imaginary covering over of the real or in terms of the foregoing analysis, of the fact that the logical square does not occupy uniform space. In more traditional sexuated terms the sphere would be equated with the attempt to compensate in the phantasmatic dimension for the traumatic fact that 'there is no such thing as a sexual relation.' Articulated in this way immediately brings to mind Lacan's analysis of Aristophanes' myth²⁶ which he takes up around the time of his Seminar XI.²⁷ Briefly, Aristophanes held the view that humans were originally spherical beings lacking nothing but unfortunately were split into two by a jealous Zeus; ever since then the human *qua* divided being has striven to find its compliment in the hope that it might provide complete satisfaction by returning it to the One. Historically it is notable that the notion of the harmonious perfection of the sphere was not confined to the level of individual fantasy. For instance, a similar notion informed the scientific understanding of the universe for centuries in the sense that the topological space of the sphere provided the standard by which the erratic movements of astronomical objects were to be reconciled. This does not imply that after Johannes Kepler the hope for a final reckoning with the ultimate meaning of the universe was abandoned. The existence of today's New Age philosophies and the ecological movement itself bear witness to the contrary insofar as they seek wholesome communion with the universe and/or nature. But such mythology continues to motivate the hard sciences as well, as in the case of present day physics in its effort to formulate a grand and unified Theory of Everything. The point here is that operating behind these projects is a 'universalizing supposition' to be associated with the topology of the sphere, whose universal quality Lacan highlights in the above citation by isolating out the definite article 'the' (*la*); that is, one should always speak of the sphere as *the* sphere. But whether these projects take the guise of (pseudo-)science or embrace the original platonic fantasy of the sphericity of primordial Man matters little, for Lacan would have us dismiss them all as so many efforts to harmonize the sexual divide.

That the sphere is to be associated with the universal²⁸ and that any aspiration for universality is ultimately phantasmatic is likely the reason why Lacan begins with the torus and not the sphere. Nevertheless its necessary and illusory quality makes the sphere the implicit starting point of any discussion. So

²⁶ See Plato, *Symposium*, 30–4.

²⁷ See Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 196–7, 205. Also see Lacan, "Position of the Unconscious," 716–7.

²⁸ Besides the above citation there are other passing references to the sphere in *L'Étourdit* that imply Lacan understands it as the topological figure of the universal. For instance, he writes that 'a spherical topology [is] the one that sustains the universal, the as-for-all: the topology of the universe.' Lacan, *L'Étourdit* (Second Turn), 4. (This citation is modified with the translation of *L'Étourdit* by Stone, et al).

for the sake of completion we should begin one step prior to Lacan's own discussion, one which offers a topological description of the sphere and the operation which would transform it into a torus and thus place it in line with the operations Lacan himself performs on the other three topological figures which move them one to the next as per the sequence $\boxed{1} \rightarrow \boxed{2} \rightarrow \boxed{3} \rightarrow \boxed{4}$.

One way to take up the sphere is to consider it a surface or, as the topologist calls it, a manifold. This is true for all four of the topological spaces now occupying the logical square.²⁹ To begin thinking in terms of such surfaces, it is helpful to contrast them with surfaces that are strictly flat. These are the

²⁹ More specifically, each of these is an example of a 2-manifold – a topological space that locally resembles 2-dimensional Euclidean space. This is easily understood in the case of the sphere by noting how the earth is sufficiently large so as to appear flat to the inhabitants on its surface. But in the other three cases this is not so easy. Yet moving away from the strict occupation of a meta-position which takes in the entire topological figure 'at a glance' to instead experience its local 2-dimensional surface is precisely what is needed to appreciate Lacan's work with these figures. This is why he often asks his listeners to imagine the perspective afforded to a small insect as it travels the surface of a torus or a Möbius strip and to contemplate what lessons this holds for us beings who nevertheless simultaneously occupy the meta-position perspective on these figures. Here the powers of the imagination become indispensable and supplement any experience gained through actively manipulating these figures as per Lacan's instructions.

It is interesting to note that many introductory topology textbooks contain a discussion of manifolds in the context of cosmology. The central question entertained concerns speculation on the very shape of the universe which is taken as a spatial slice of 4-dimensional space-time. Since space appears locally to be 3-dimensional the assumption is that our spatial universe is a 3-manifold, although which 3-manifold is cause for speculation. The examination of the leading 3-manifold contenders is thought to help in determining the actual structure of the universe, much like how ancient observations (e.g., the mast was the last part of a ship to disappear on the horizon as it sailed away from shore) indicated that the earth was not flat but curved. But knowing that locally the surface of the earth is 2-dimensional (implying it is a 2-manifold) did not preclude the shape of the earth from being, say, a torus rather than a sphere. Thus historically for a time speculation could theoretically ensue on the exact shape of the earth, just as it does now with the universe as a whole. Such is the current state of cosmological thinking on the shape of the universe. In the face of such speculation on which of the variety of 3-manifolds is the likely candidate for the actual shape of the universe, Lacan's work with manifolds of one dimension less appears quite modest. Or does it? Speculating on the ultimate shape of the universe seems to open itself to the Kantian critique which would indict it for overlooking the *regulative* aspect of the transcendental idea of contemplating the universe as a whole. In this sense Lacan need not move onto higher dimensions: aligning one's thought with the 2-manifold suffices to think the very shape of the universe itself. This is one way to understand a claim Žižek often makes of both Hegel and Lacan, *viz.*, that they are not to be understood as going 'deeper' than the philosophies which preceded them, but rather are thinkers who stick much more closely to the 'surface' of things.

prototypical surfaces in topology and are called Euclidean planes. While the plane is customarily understood to be a flat surface extending infinitely far in all directions, Euclid himself conceived it to be of finite (though arbitrarily large) extent. Euclid's own conception is closer to our spontaneous understanding of the disk as a plane circle with its interior. Extending finitely, the disk obviously has an edge or boundary. Now, what makes the sphere an apt topological space for the notion of the universality of meaning is the fact that it is an example of a surface completely lacking boundaries. A small insect traveling on the surface of a sphere will not fall off the sphere since it lacks an edge. It is also possible for it to travel in any direction and return to its starting point. Such a surface is said to be closed. This makes it appropriate to deem meaning to be spherical: any traveler finding himself on its surface is fully immersed in its substance as there are no boundaries to cross which could provide a minimal distance to make of meaning an external object. In a word, the spherical surface rules out the subject-object dichotomy and can only offer the subject meaningful subjectivization. The Heideggerian-Gadamerian brand of hermeneutical phenomenology dwells within the topological space of spherical meaning and so makes its home in the quadrant marked by the matheme S_2 . In a happy coincidence, topologists use the similar notation of S^2 to refer to the sphere (also written as 2-sphere) to mark its difference from the circular disk (a 1-sphere). But while the sphere is not homeomorphic to the disk, a cut can be made to its surface to make it so. Simply defined, the operation of cutting (or ripping or puncturing) introduces a discontinuity in the original surface and thus converts its space into a topologically nonequivalent one (while stretching or shrinking surfaces preserves continuity and thus topological equivalency). In the present case, by cutting the sphere in half two hemispheres result each of which is homeomorphic to the disk,³⁰ or else the sphere can be flattened into a polygon by a cut which stops short of splitting the sphere in two. These cuttings resulting in spherical disks become important below. For now the task is to inquire into the operation which transforms the sphere of quadrant **1** into the torus of quadrant **2**.

Two methods to accomplish this are suggested. The first begins by recognizing how the removal of at least one point from the sphere results in a space that is homeomorphic to the plane. Refraining from an algebraic proof, this might be grasped by imagining how all spheres, like an inflated beach ball,

³⁰ This explains the ambiguity regarding the precise shape that Aristophanes has in mind during his speech which seems to suggest both spherical and circular beings: primordial Man is spherical and when split, each of the two hemispheres are topologically equivalent to the disk which of course need not be perfectly circular. Hence the popular conception of this myth which has it that man occupies a semicircle whose jagged diametrical edge matches up with the complimentary edge of the semicircle of woman such that when the two meet up a perfect circle results.

have the feature of dividing space into a bounded region and an unbounded region so that it is impossible to travel within space from one region to the other without passing through the sphere. But if the beach ball is punctured (*i.e.*, a single point is removed) it ceases to divide space into two regions, just like a Euclidean plane. This becomes clearer if a large section of the beach ball is cut away so that the remaining surface can be easily stretched flat. Now, if this puncturing or cutting procedure is performed on the beach ball in not one but two places on its surface, what results are the homeomorphic spaces of the annulus or a disc with one hole or a cylinder (since a sphere with two holes is simply an inflated version of a cylinder which additionally flattens into an annulus or a disc with one hole). The final step to transform the sphere with two holes into the torus requires suturing (or gluing or taping). Generally speaking the operation of suturing is the reverse of cutting. If the edges of a cut are sutured back to the way they were joined previous to the cut, then the original (or an equivalent) topological space is recovered;³¹ but if different edges not originally together before the cut are instead sutured, then a new topological space may result. In the present case suturing the two ends of the cylinder together (or suturing together the outer and inner rims of an annulus or the outer and inner edges of a disc with one hole) results in the torus. This

³¹ Above topological equivalence or homeomorphism was introduced by way of defining topology as rubber-sheet geometry. The implication was that as long as a topological space was not cut, any stretching or twisting of the space results in a topologically equivalent space. Yet while our intuition and imagination confirms this to be true, nevertheless such a confirmation process is insufficient. For the notion of homeomorphism moves beyond what can be grasped by these human faculties. To appreciate this one must get their hands dirty and perform an actual topological operation. A simple exercise should suffice to demonstrate this (although it should be understood that this can easily be complicated so as to require using an accounting system to keep track of the changes being made): if a simple band of paper is cut, a narrow strip of paper results; but if the cut is sutured back together with points along either side of the cut matching as they did before the cut, the simple band of paper is restored. Of course this is quite obvious. But matching the points up as they did before the cut is equally satisfied if a full 360° twist (or whole multiples thereof) is made to the strip before the ends are sutured. The resulting band with a full twist is topologically equivalent to the original band with no twist; the former is simply a different embedding of the latter into Euclidean space. Yet it will be noticed how they *cannot* be deformed from one to the other as rubber sheets. For the cutting operation which momentarily destroys equivalence is necessary to move from one figuration of this topological space to the other. This fact takes on greater significance below when the cut *as such* is equated with the subject, reminding us interpreters never to overlook our own interpretive activity. But for the moment it suffices to note how intuition and imagination, which thrive in the meaningful realm of images, both fail to grasp an equivalence constituted in a realm holding no meaning. This reconfirms in topological terms the existence of a meaningless structural dimension.

doughnut-shaped topological space is another example of a manifold with no boundary. As in the case of the sphere, the torus is a closed surface and thus a small insect will similarly encounter no edges as it travels its surface.³² However, because what separates the two topological spaces is a suture which does not perfectly reverse the cut, the torus is not homeomorphic to the sphere.

There is another method of transforming the sphere into the torus. This method reverses the order of the two basic procedures operative in the previous method so that here it is suturing which precedes cutting. But there is a preliminary operation to be performed. This involves what we might call ‘pinching’ the sphere between any two nonadjacent points, perhaps between x and the antipode of x (the point that is opposite x through the origin). The two most northern and southern points occupying the polar regions of the sphere fit this bill, yet any two nonadjacent points will do. Deforming the sphere through pinching results in a surface which is homeomorphic to the non-pinched sphere, but this equivalence vanishes with the next two operations. The first step involves suturing. First, the x and antipode of x are sutured together; as well, all the points which immediately encircle x are sutured to those which immediately encircle the antipode of x . Second, the sutured x and antipode of x (now one point) is cut away. What results is the topological space of the torus. As with the previous method, this procedure becomes clearer if a larger section of points is pinched together, sutured and cut away; so as long as those points around the two edges of the removed section are also sutured together a torus is produced, although in this case the result is more in line with the typical visualization of this topological space as a donut with a ‘big’ hole.

This second method is more pertinent for present purposes. At first glance it appears that it makes no difference which method is used, for both produce the torus. As was said, the torus is a manifold with no boundaries and so it is a closed surface just like the sphere. Because of this similarity it is tempting to consider the topology of meaning to be toric to the same extent that it is spherical. Yet this would be going too far. Indeed meaning has something to do with the torus and the great advantage of taking up these topological surfaces within the context of the logical square is that such ‘somethings’ become more manifest. In general much of the analysis undertaken of the logical square with respect to meaning since Chapter 4 can now be rearticulated in topological terms. In the case of the sphere and the torus it is a matter of considering their

³² To clarify, a boundary is an edge which could be created with a cut. So as long as the surface of a torus or a sphere remains intact (closed), they are both examples of manifolds with no boundaries. Thus, for example, severing the ring of a torus in one place through its core would destroy this characteristic, as it would create two boundaries or edges at each end (this operation effectively transforms a torus into a cylinder); likewise puncturing or cutting the sphere in any way transforms it into a manifold with boundaries.

relation as the relation between the two quadrants of the right deixis, a relation which was articulated above using various elements and terminology. Considering the sphere and the torus with these in mind gives us a better picture of the topology of meaning. For instance, despite the greater clarity which ensues by removing a large section of sutured points from the pinched sphere so that a big-holed donut visually presents itself, it must be stressed how the successful transformation of the spheric into the toric surface simply necessitates *at least one x* (so sutured) to be cut away. This italicized phrase cannot but bring to mind the particular affirmative proposition of quadrant **2** which of course is the quadrant of the torus. This cut away x is the One, the exceptional Epimenides who refuses to submit to that function which collectivizes All x into a universal and spherical set. As cut away it thus confirms the truth of the M_d which has it that there is no such exception (much like how the center of gravity of the torus is ‘missing,’ positioned as it is at the heart of the empty space the torus encircles). Yet this nevertheless does not prevent it from forming a limit to the universalizing pretensions of the sphere of meaning (*i.e.*, even though missing the toric center of gravity still makes its ‘presence’ felt and thus carries a certain ‘material weight’ in topological space). That the existential particular affirmative operates as a limit to the universal was graphically presented in Section 4.3 when a hyperbolic function was examined. Specifically, the asymptote $x = 0$ was found to form a limit to $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$, although an ambiguity persisted as to whether this escaped x should be counted amongst the All of this function. In topology as well there is the concept of a limit point whose relation to the topological surface is often just as ambiguous. In the case of the torus this limit is its missing x towards which all the points on its surface converge. Again this might be visualized by imagining a small insect whose path of endlessly revolving in spiral fashion around the core of the torus simultaneously also encircles (yet never encounters) its central axis point of rotation.³³

In general an effort must be made to conceive the torus in contradictory relation to the sphere, as that topological space which constitutes universality in

³³ Fierens’ introduction to the topological discussion found in *L’étourdit* reminds us that Lacan in the 1960s had repeatedly utilized such a path traveled around the torus to visually illustrate the difference between demand (the repeated spirals around the core of the torus) and desire (the repetition of demands simultaneously carries out a turn around the central axis of the torus). See Fierens, *Reading L’étourdit* (Second Turn), 8–9. This also brings to mind how Lacan made use of the torus as early as 1953: the fact that its ‘peripheral exteriority and central exteriority constitute but one single region’ generally problematizes the distinction between inside and outside. More specifically, that the center of gravity of the torus falls outside the space inscribed by its surface makes it an apt illustration of the decentered nature of the subject. See Lacan, “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis,” 264.

its very stance as exception and limitation. This contradictory relation may be envisaged rather crudely by way of personifying these topological spaces. The universal sphere might be said to aspire to encompass the particular existential torus. Yet it finds that the best it can do is to fit itself into the latter's empty center. It is obvious that any stability derived from such an amalgamation would be short lived. On the one hand the universal cannot abide being demoted to an exception, which is precisely the status it would derive from its occupation as the toric center. On the other hand the torus cannot tolerate having been so 'completed;' indeed this is impossible since the very constitution of universal completeness is predicated on the existence of the exception. The two topological spaces of the right deixis of the logical square are thus forever at odds: the universal aspiration of meaning to encompass all aspects of existence is juxtaposed against the stance of the particular which attempts to extract itself from its universal grip to make instead a manageable object of meaning. What we have here are topological descriptions of that hermeneutical circle manifest in the right deixis but whose rotation is secretly driven by the spatial manifolds in the left which nevertheless do not refrain from offering up a suspension point to the rotation. To appreciate this, the torus of quadrant [2] must first be transformed into the möbius strip of quadrant [3]. It is with this transformation that Lacan begins his lesson in topology.

Lacan asks us to take a torus and deflate or empty it. This manipulation is a preparatory step in a series of cutting and suturing operations to come which will tear the torus out of the realm of the spherical (characteristic of the topological spaces in the right deixis) and plunge it into the topology of the aspherical surface (characteristic of those in the left deixis). However, this will not be accomplished by respecting the topological structure of the torus. A simple emptying which reduces the volume of the torus to nil and so results in the flat tire shape of the annulus will not do. For flattening the torus in this manner produces two separate folds along the two circumferences of the annulus and what is needed instead is a single fold which likewise completes two circuits around the central axis of rotation, but one which simultaneously completes a single circuit around its core.³⁴ As per Lacan's instructions, this can be brought about by running the length of the torus between our pinched fingers, but doing so in such a way that the finger on top at the beginning is on the bottom by the end of a single complete turn around its axis. This procedure places a one-half twist (180°) into the deflated torus and the resulting figure looks something like a möbius strip. However, this is in appearance only. The surface of a deflated torus still has both an inner and outer face even if its inner

³⁴ There appears to be an error in Fierens' text which reads that what must be produced is 'a single fold which goes through two turns of the core of the torus before coming back to its starting point.' It should instead read as '...two turns of the axis of the torus...'. See Fierens, *Reading L'étourdit* (Second Turn), 10.

face has been caved-in on itself as a result of the pinching operation. This is a characteristic shared by the torus and the sphere: as spherical surfaces, whether inflated or deflated, they both retain an inner and outer face.

Now, an actual möbius strip is obtained by this operation if the caved-in inner face is considered fused together. But Lacan follows another route to demonstrate this transformation ‘in a less crude fashion’ which leads up to what he calls his ‘conjuring trick.’³⁵ Beginning with a cut that follows the single fold of the deflated torus, we appear to end up with two pieces or laminas of the toric surface. Yet when this is stretched out the actual result is a single continuous strip. This strip, what Lacan calls the ‘bipartite möbius strip’ (or more simply the ‘bipartite strip’), has two sides and two edges and so should not be confused with the ‘true möbius strip.’³⁶ Obviously, if the edges of the cut just performed

³⁵ Lacan, *L’Étourdit* (Second Turn), 1.

³⁶ Although these distinctive operations we are asked to perform on the torus – from the pinching procedure that deflates it with a one-half twist, to the subsequent cut which follows the resultant single fold so that a bipartite strip is produced – are entirely possible, procuring suitable materials to actually carry them out nevertheless proves difficult. Yet it is crucial to physically perform as many of these operations as possible if we hope to continue following Lacan in his moves which from this point on only increase in complexity. Having a working model of the bipartite strip is especially helpful.

Now, like all figures encountered in the sequence $\boxed{1} \rightarrow \boxed{2} \rightarrow \boxed{3} \rightarrow \boxed{4}$, the bipartite strip can be conceived as an intermediate figure between the figure leading up to it and the figure following it. In the present case the bipartite strip is midway between the torus and the möbius strip. By suturing its edges in two different ways, it can either regress to the flattened torus that feigns to be the möbius strip or it can progress on to the topological space of the true möbius strip. This implies it can be constructed by a little ‘reverse engineering’ which proceeds not from the torus but from the möbius strip.

It turns out that this is quite simple to do. First, construct a möbius strip. Here is a quick way to do so: Take a strip of paper, say a foot long by one inch wide. Join the two ends to form a loop but just prior to doing so give one end a one-half twist (180°).

(In so doing we are momentarily ignoring Lacan’s expressed warning *not* to construct the möbius strip in this fashion; yet yielding to this temptation does have the advantage in providing an initial approximation to these difficult to imagine topological spaces and more importantly, in establishing a standpoint from which to better appreciate Lacan’s efforts at a more ‘real’ construction).

To arrive at the bipartite strip, simply cut the constructed möbius strip lengthwise down its center. This is known as the median cut. What results is the bipartite strip, a strip which appears to have two laminas but when stretched out is actually one strip twice the length of the strip before the cut.

This strip possesses two faces and two edges, so it is not homeomorphic to the möbius strip. Its lack of topological equivalence can also be assessed by noting that there are two full twists (720°) along its length. In general, a surface has two sides (is bipartite) if the number of half twists m is even, and has one side (equivalent to the möbius strip) if m is odd, where a half twist is defined as π radians or 180°.

are sutured back together with points along either side of the cut matching as they did before the cut, the flattened and one-half twisted torus is restored. But if one of the two laminas is slid out from under the other in either direction so that one edge lines up not with the other edge but *with itself* and this is then sutured together, what is produced is the one-sided, one-edged true möbius strip of quadrant [3].

What follows this conjuring trick is a series of cryptic sentences all of which may be viewed as leading up to and thus validating the paradoxical Lacanian claim that the möbius strip is nothing but its own absence. If this is indeed the case we can certainly appreciate Lacan's warning 'that it is not from the ideal cross-section, around which a strip is twisted in a half-turn, that the Moebius strip is to be imagined.'³⁷ That is, we are not to construct the möbius strip as topology textbooks often instruct. But while certain nuances of Lacan's lesson are lost by proceeding down this forbidden path which ends up placing a very present möbius strip into our hands, nevertheless certain operations can be performed on this construction so that the möbius strip *qua* absence is experienced. More specifically, a fleeting image of this absence is had by comparing two different types of cuts of the möbius strip. To see this, take a möbius strip constructed out of paper and cut it lengthwise a third of the way from the edge (any distance will do so long as it is not equidistant from the 'two' edges). Such a cut will not meet up with its starting point until it completes two circuits of the möbius strip. At the end of these two circuits three apparent laminas are produced but when stretched out, there are in fact only two strips. One strip is twice the length and a third the width of the original strip. This is the bipartite strip with its two sides and two edges, but what is remarkable is that the other strip is linked to it. Moreover, this second strip is identical to the original möbius strip before the cut and is in fact its central third. Thus a trisection of the möbius strip produces a narrower möbius strip linked to the

Note how the 'two' laminas immediately produced after the median cut of the möbius strip can be slid one over the other in either direction so that a 'single' loop is made of the same length as the original strip (although half its width). In this position a möbius strip would be produced if the two laminas are fused together; but a torus is instead produced if the two aligned edges of the two laminas are sutured and the interior space they now delimit is inflated.

This method of proceeding from a constructed möbius strip to the torus effectively reverses Lacan's own transformation of the torus into the möbius strip. To reiterate, this method involving a median cut of the möbius strip goes against Lacan's expressed wishes. Yet again in the present context the overwhelming benefit is that a bipartite strip is now in the reader's hands ready to be manipulated in the fashion recommended in *L'étourdit*. While Fierens, to his great credit, provides ample illustrations of the many figures Lacan discusses in this text, their value can only be enhanced whenever they are supplemented by workable 3-dimensional models.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

longer bipartite strip.³⁸ So far the only absence to speak of concerns the partial disappearance of the original möbius strip, transformed as it is into a bipartite strip due to the off-center cutting; but as its central portion is retained the möbius strip must be said to maintain a continual presence from start to finish.

Now, to conceive the möbius strip as absent requires making a different type of cut while simultaneously thinking the results of the off-center cutting operation. First, take another constructed möbius strip and make a cut down its center lengthwise. It becomes clear that instead of two circuits this median cut is complete in only one and that this results in a double-length bipartite strip with no other strip linked to it. However, if we treat this median cutting operation as an off-center cutting operation so as to require an additional circuit to be completed (that is, we are to effectively double the cut where none is needed by pretending to cut through the empty space opened up by the initial median cut), we can imagine producing the möbius strip linked to the bipartite strip. Of course there is no such linked strip. But that is Lacan's point: the möbius strip in its essence is absence and this absence is as much produced by the single median cut which imaginarily produces the möbius strip as it is actually produced by the doubled and off-center cut. This is why Lacan can claim 'that the Moebius strip is nothing other than this very [single median] cut, the one by which it disappears from its surface.'³⁹ The ramifications of equating the möbius strip to the cut run deep. For despite (or more accurately, because of) its absence from the spheric and toric topological spaces of the right deixis of the logical square, it nevertheless makes its 'presence' felt in them whenever they undergo transformations since these transformations necessitate the cutting operation. Recalling from Figure 5.2 how the matheme associated with the möbius strip is \$, this should not be surprising, for cutting is nothing more than the topological expression of the active intervention of the subject. Even better: the cutting operation *is* the subject. This is yet another way to understand the logical precedence the left deixis enjoys over the right despite only coming at the tail end of the sequential path through the quadrants of the logical square. Expressed in terms of textual analysis, the very act of interpretation is a cut into the topology of the text and by tarrying with these cuts the hermeneutical pursuit of meaning can be suspended.

But the nature of the möbius strip is not simply to be of the cut. It is of the suture as well. For a single median cut is equivalent to the suturing operation which transforms a bipartite strip into a möbius strip, an operation that works

³⁸ Interestingly, since the two laminas of the bipartite strip can be manipulated to overlap with each other so as to feign the möbius strip, it can additionally be inlayed with the true möbius strip that is linked to it, resulting in a triple-thick möbius strip (only one third of which, of course, is a true möbius strip).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2. Even more categorically, Lacan writes that 'this cut = the Moebius strip' (*ibid.*).

by making along the whole length of the bipartite strip only one of its front and back sides so that '[t]here is not one of these points where the one and the other are not united.'⁴⁰ If Lacan's use of the double negative, which effectively states how there is no exceptional point on the single surface of the möbius strip, is reminiscent of the universal negative proposition, this is quite appropriate given the quadrant the möbius strip occupies. Furthermore, the lack of exceptional points also implies that no exceptional line of points exists. This fact is lost when privileging a conception of the möbius strip as imaginarily produced by the median cut that follows a line of points thought to be somehow exceptional. For when it comes to the real möbius strip any single-turn cut following any one of its infinity of lines will produce this paradoxical unilateral surface. This makes Lacan's claim that such cuts are 'lines without points' understandable, for if the exception does not exist these lines cannot be conceived as composed of a set of points. Thus the möbius strip *qua* act of cutting and suturing thoroughly departs from those collectivized sets of points known as the torus and the sphere of the right deixis. Without exceptional points there is no way to orient oneself on the surface of the möbius strip, which is a problem not encountered on the latter two surfaces. Indeed orientability is a concept used by topologists to distinguish between topological surfaces. This concept can be grasped by imagining a circle with an arrowhead indicating its direction of rotation. If this oriented circle itself moves about a surface in an arbitrary manner and manages to preserve its orientation, the surface is said to be orientable. Orientability is a defining feature of the torus and the sphere of the right deixis. However, if the rotating circle moves along any path on the möbius strip, by the time it returns to its starting point its rotation will have reversed.⁴¹ The möbius strip is in fact the prototypical nonorientable space and if a surface can be said to contain an embedded möbius strip, this is enough to qualify that surface as nonorientable. As the surface of the cross-cap satisfies this condition, the line between the two sides of the Lacanian logical square can be newly expressed as that which divides the

⁴⁰ Ibid., 2.

⁴¹ Note that the metaphor of the small traveling insect will no longer suffice when it is a matter of understanding orientability. To grasp this concept, the traveler must be thought not so much as *on* the surface as rather *in* the surface. In other words when it comes to demonstrating orientability, 2-manifolds require 2-dimensional travelers. To retain the metaphor of the traveling insect, one might imagine it as infinitely flat. In another approach, an embedded clock face could be observed as it travels around a möbius strip constructed out of translucent material. In both cases the path traversed reverses the orientation of the traveling object. Moreover, in theory it is not possible to distinguish such a traveler from its reflected image. This fact alone helps us appreciate Lacan's turn to the möbius strip as the quintessential topological space of the subject, a turn foretold by his early mirror stage theory which concerns the role played by the initially quite confusing reflected image in the formation of the subject.

orientable spherical surfaces of the right from the more paradoxical nonorientable aspherical surfaces of the left.

This topologically expresses the fact that ‘there is no such thing as a sexual relation,’ or what Lacan often speaks of in *L’Étourdit* as ‘the *ab-sens* of the sexual relationship.’⁴² A French neologism translating as ‘lack-of-sense’ or ‘ab-sense,’ this term must not be confused with the absence that is the Möbius strip. But how exactly is ab-sense to be distinguished from absence? For Lacan clearly holds these to be different, as when he writes ‘that the ab-sense that results from the single cut, brings about the absence of the Möbius strip.’⁴³ By combining structuralist insights with the discussion of discourse theory from Section 5.2, a relatively straightforward answer to this question presents itself. As long as one maintains the elemental distinction between meaning and sense whereby meaning is that which is ‘caught between’ signifiers and sense is what adheres to the formal structural framework of signifiers, then the familiar matheme of the meaning-relation can again be utilized. Accordingly, the structural level inscribed by writing $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$ concerns sense, which implies that when this relation breaks down what results is ab-sense. Ab-sense is then to be equated with the matheme written $S_2 // S_1$ in distinction to the absence that is $\$$. Redefining ab-sense in terms of the (breakdown of the) meaning-relation makes it legitimate to speak of the line dividing the right from the left deixis as one which also concerns ‘the *ab-sens* of the meaning relationship.’⁴⁴ But while the transformation of the torus into the Möbius strip takes us across this line, this does not imply that the discourse first encountered there makes a practice of ab-sense. As already seen, the meaning-relation is still operative in the discourse associated with the Möbius

⁴² Lacan, *L’Étourdit* (First Turn), 15. See also pp. 11, 12 (*ibid*) and p. 19 of Lacan, *L’Étourdit* (Second Turn).

⁴³ Lacan, *L’Étourdit* (Second Turn), 2.

⁴⁴ The phrase Lacan actually uses is the ‘ab-sense of meaning’ and this within the context of critiquing Plato’s notion of true opinion. Here Lacan speaks of regret, of those clinging to meaning in the face of the non-meaningful domain the pure matheme opens up, a domain which progresses precisely at the expense of meaning. See *Ibid.*, 12.

It is worthwhile to reiterate that Lacan does not primarily concern himself with expressing the fact that ‘there is no such thing as a sexual relation’ in terms of meaning, non-meaning and nonsense – which would otherwise be a fair and concise characterization of Part II. At best it can be said that as Lacan finds various vehicles to express this fact, from topology and discourse theory to mathematics and the very formulae of sexualisation themselves, he does offer us the occasional statement on the implications his analysis holds for meaning. Such ‘one-offs’ are supplemented with equally irregular occurrences of declarative statements of a more global nature, as on the day of June 11, 1974 in his twenty-first seminar when he remarks: ‘Everything implied by the analytic engagement with human behaviour indicates not that meaning reflects the sexual, but that it makes up for it.’ Quoted in Copjec, “Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason,” 204.

strip. It is only with a further turn that meaning is put into parenthesis in a discourse which straight away goes beyond the meaning-relation. Indeed the very posing of the question of this beyond is to refer back to this discourse which at once proceeds from this beyond. This discourse is of course the A_d : $\frac{a}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{\$}{S_1}$ which, as evident in its writing, is a discourse founded on, operating from and aiming at the ab-sense of the meaning-relation. That such ab-sense is utilized as a resource in addressing the other *qua* absence helps keep these two distinct, but recognizing how the occupant in the place of agency is *objet a* further distinguishes both of these from nonsense. Each of these mathemes – $\$$ (absence), $S_2 // S_1$ (ab-sense) and *objet a* (nonsense) – only appear together in the A_d . As repeatedly emphasized, this discourse takes logical precedence over all others. The quote immediately above states one way this is true, claiming as it does that ab-sense is what brings about the absence of the möbius strip. For present purposes it remains to be seen how *objet a*, repeatedly identified with the paradoxical suspension point of meaning throughout this study, becomes isolated so that it can act in this capacity. To anticipate, this is accomplished by making a cut on the cross-cap of quadrant **4** which at the same time releases those elements constitutive of the topological spaces of the other three quadrants. But before turning to this operation and its results, the transformation of the möbius strip into the topological space of the cross-cap must first be briefly related.

In order to prepare for this transformation and to better appreciate the magnitude of what results, recall how the sphere and the torus of the right deixis are both manifolds with no boundary. Further, they are both capable of bounding the nothingness of space within their closed surfaces. But by turning to the möbius strip of the left deixis this trait is reversed. Instead of a surface with no boundary bounding space, the one-sided and one-edged möbius strip is a bounded surface thoroughly incapable of bounding space. It is simply nothing or as previously stated, it is nothing but its own absence. Now, it stands to reason that if this single edge was sutured somehow so that it no longer served as a boundary, a closed manifold would result which would again bound space. However, this reasoning is only half correct: a closed manifold does indeed result, but one which nonetheless is incapable of bounding space. To use terminology from Section 5.1, what results is not so much nothing as it is *less than nothing*. Far from being a defect feature, this is instead its undeniable strength and the ‘secret’ to its dominant influence in the logical square – provided, of course, that it is closed with the proper operation. So exactly how is the one-edged möbius strip to be closed? Actually, there are a number of ways in which this can be done and Lacan mentions one⁴⁵ before moving on to the

⁴⁵ The operation in question involves suturing the one-edge of a möbius strip to the one-edge of another möbius strip to produce the well-known closed topological manifold

operation that produces the topological space which most interests him. To arrive at this space, recall how a sphere can be cut into spherical disks. Whether a full hemisphere or portion thereof, such a cutting is a disk with a single circular edge which can be sutured to the single edge of the Möbius strip. Performing this suturing operation ‘caps off’ the boundary of the Möbius strip. The result is what is called the cross-cap,⁴⁶ a surface which has no true inside or outside. It looks rather like a dented, brimless hat. Unlike its companion surface in the left deixis, the surface of the cross-cap has no boundary and thus is a closed manifold, a feature it shares with the sphere and the torus. Yet it differs from those surfaces of the right deixis in not being capable of bounding space. What is important to note, however, is that this ‘failure’ to bound space is successfully accomplished by the cross-cap in an even more radical way than the Möbius strip which only does so through its absence. In Lacan’s words, the suturing of a spherical disk onto the edge of the Möbius strip is an operation ‘reduced to the point: out-of-line point which, in supplementing the line without points, happens to compose what in topology is designated as cross-cap.’⁴⁷ It is thus not so much absence as rather a curious ‘presence’ that is at stake in the cross-cap

called the Klein bottle. Like the cross-cap, it does not exist in 3-dimensional space without self-intersection, although it does present a better visual approximation of itself in our universe than does the cross-cap.

⁴⁶ The cross-cap is thus quite aptly named and the image evoked by characterizing this suturing operation metaphorically as ‘capping off’ is indeed helpful when attempting to grasp this difficult topological space.

To further explain this operation a Möbius strip constructed out of paper again proves useful. It will be noticed that the one-half twist to the strip which makes it one-sided and one-edged also effectively twists space itself. That is to say, the central hole of the Möbius strip is not simply an encircled empty space; it is rather an emptiness that ‘curves in’ on itself. It might be imagined that this hole is what is ‘capped off’ by suturing the single circular edge of a hemisphere to the one-edged Möbius strip, or else the curved space of this hole might be seen as having been ‘given body’ by the twists placed into the hemispheric cap as a result of the suturing process. Figure 5.2 attempts to provide an approximate representation of the cross-cap, but it should be noted that while the metaphor of a capping action gives the impression of a top-down operation, the representation found there appears to cap the Möbius strip from the bottom-up. By way of explanation, the cross-cap in Figure 5.2 mirrors the standard illustration of it given in many recent introductory topology textbooks. But of course there is no ‘up’ or ‘down’ when it comes to the two topological spaces of the left deixis since they are both nonorientable surfaces – which again reminds us of the failings of the image when dealing with such real objects.

⁴⁷ Lacan continues, designating the cross-cap which harbors this single point with other names: ‘This is the asphere...In other words, Desargues’ projective plane, a plane whose discovery as reducing its horizon to a point, is specified by the fact that this point is such that every line drawn to converge at it only passes through it by going from the front face of the plane to its back face.’ Lacan, *L’étourdit* (Second Turn), 2.

and this singularity, what Lacan here calls the out-of-line point, is what allows the cross-cap to suspend that which obligates other closed manifolds to bound space. Now, if the bounded space of the right deixis is the space traversed by the hermeneutical circle, then the singular out-of-line point harboring within the cross-cap is unique in its ability to stand outside meaningful space. Here is the topological expression for the *objet a*, the sublime object capable of acting as the suspension point of meaning once it is cut away from the cross-cap.

What is suggested here is that there are two operations to consider when taking up the cross-cap, this fourth and last topological surface of the logical square. On the one hand, there is the suture which reveals the surface and on the other, there is the cut which breaks with all continuity. Yet these are not two separate operations, as if suturing first constitutes the cross-cap and then cutting subsequently tears it apart; if this were the case it would be legitimate to ask what topological surface follows the cross-cap. Nothing follows. But this nothing is a nothing curiously ontologized. For the cornerstone of the logical square has indeed been laid upon reaching the cross-cap – provided of course that this stone is understood as the very embodiment of those cutting and suturing operations which have led to it. In the final analysis then the specific task will be to conceive the suture and the cut as simultaneous operations.⁴⁸ Yet despite being of the same gesture, these two operations can nevertheless be considered separately to appreciate how the cross-cap is privileged in the logical square in the sense of underscoring all the other topological spaces. Generally speaking, the suturing operation is what establishes the bounded topological space of meaning in the right deixis while the inverse operation cuts away a singularity capable of suspending meaningful trajectories through this bounded space.

More specifically, with respect to the suturing operation it is clear that what forms the singular out-of-line point is the spherical disk which infinitely curves in upon itself due to its suture to the one-half twisted möbius strip. Recognizing how the out-of-line point of the spherical disk is *objet a* while the möbius strip is \$, this suturing operation can be read as their elemental combing as per the fundamental fantasy that Lacan formally writes as $\$ \diamond a$. Roughly equivalent to the Kantian transcendental schemata, this matheme is to be read as the split subject in relation to *objet a*. This relation is what grants to the subject a meaningful grasp of reality and through it the subject achieves a phantasmatic sense of wholeness, completeness and fulfillment. In a word, this is the basic formula for the meaningful subjectivization of the subject. In addition, the constitution of the cross-cap bears on the object side of the subject-object divide

⁴⁸ Žižek's work is peppered with many helpful ways to approach tautological gestures. A particularly apt example is a passage he often cites from Richard Wagner's *Parsifal*: '[T]he wound is healed only by the spear which smote it.' See, for instance, Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 158.

by establishing the universal field of meaning in which the subject can either immerse or oppose himself. One might say that out from the singularity of the out-of-line point ‘grows’ spherical surfaces of meaning⁴⁹ and in terms of discourse theory this concerns the putting into relation the two mathemes associated with the spherical surfaces of the torus and the sphere. The relation in question is of course the meaning-relation $S_1 \rightarrow S_2$. The suturing operation thus assures a smooth and continuous surface bounding a universal space of meaning for the subject of the hermeneutical circle.

The cutting operation can be expressed in various ways on the cross-cap and its significance likewise extends across the larger logical square. On the subject side it will be recalled from Section 3.3 that the top half of the A_d : $\frac{a}{S_2} \rightarrow \frac{\$}{S_1}$ inscribes a halt to the incessant slide of meaning. But positioned as it is in this discourse the matheme $a \rightarrow \$$ also writes the impossible relation between the two elements which compose the fundamental fantasy. This would then mark the appearance, in discourse theory, of what Lacan calls ‘the traversing of fantasy.’⁵⁰ Here the temporally paradoxical move made by the subject ‘at the end of analysis’ is to inhabit the very cause of his split subjectivity and to thus depart from an existence requiring compensation for the split by way of meaning. In other words, traversing the fantasy is an active assumption of the very place of the cause of meaning and this opportunity arrives at the bequest of the cut –

⁴⁹ See p. 13 and 16 of Lacan, *L’Étourdit* (Second Turn), where Lacan writes that despite how the supplementation of the out-of-line point (a) to the line without points ($\$$)

‘makes of the sphere an asphere or a cross-cap...[w]hat it nevertheless makes happen in the cross-cap through being borrowed from the sphere, is that a cut that it makes Moebian in the surface that it determines in making it possible, restores this surface, to the spherical mode: for it is insofar as the cut is equivalent to it, that what it supplements itself with as cross-cap “projects itself,” as I have said.’

He continues, characterizing ‘the supplementary point’ as ‘able to sphericize itself’ and as having ‘the effect of resolving it into a spherically spreadable point.’ The point here is that despite harboring within the unbounded aspherical cross-cap, the *objet a* can nevertheless still bound a universal field of spherical meaning. There is no real secret to how this is done. The constitution of the universal is established through taking the position of the exception, as per the logic of the right deïxis. In Lacan’s words: ‘The object (a) in falling from the hole of the [möbius] strip projects itself after the fact into what we will call, from an abuse of the imaginary, the central hole of the torus.’ That is, seen from the perspective of the right deïxis, the *objet a* is (mis)read as the constitutive exceptional point which establishes a universal field of meaning. It thus acts as the ‘missing’ center of gravity of the torus, thereby forming a limit and constituting the universal sphere of meaning. (These citations have been modified or wholly replaced with the translation by Stone, et al.).

⁵⁰ One of the earlier references to the notion of ‘traversing the fantasy’ comes on p. 273 of Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*.

thereby demonstrating that the ‘impossible’ nevertheless does happen. Also previously expressed as a separation from the forced choice of meaning which attends alienated subjectivity, more simply said the cut is that which allows a movement away from subjectivization to subjectivity proper. On the object side the cut is most discernible as the shift away from meaning to the domain of non-meaning, encapsulated in Part I as the shift from Chapter 1 to Chapter 2. This cut breaks the continuity of the spherical surface and thus disallows it from bounding a universal space of meaning. With both the sphere and the torus severed, their relation also becomes one of discontinuity. Such severing is at once a severing of the hermeneutical circle or what has alternately been called the breakdown of meaning or ab-sense. As seen in the Λ_d this is concisely written as $S_2 // S_1$.

What is crucial to recognize is how this cut simultaneously offers up a ‘stable’ suspension point outside the purview of the hermeneutical circle it severs. Occupying this point would transform any failure to acquire meaning into ontological success. To explain this, consider how the cross-cap is produced by suturing the spherical disk to the möbius strip.⁵¹ Yet it will be noticed how this spherical disk only comes to be by having been first cut out of the spherical surface that is the bounded limit of meaning and as just discussed, this cut is the breakdown of meaning whose matheme $S_2 // S_1$ clearly pertains to the discourse associated with the cross-cap itself. This implies that the cut to the spherical space of meaning of the right deixis is at the same time the operative cut which constitutes the cross-cap of the left. Being at the tail end of the trajectory of transformations leading away from the meaningful realm of the right deixis, it should not be surprising that the cross-cap is constituted by an operation conceivable as either a cut or a suture. For performing an additional cut and suture to the cross-cap does not transform it into yet another topological space but instead fragments it into those spaces already discussed which, through a series of cutting and suturing operations, we have seen form a trajectory toward it. Here a moving away is a leading back, for the cross-cap is entirely singular in participating in its own constitution. The result is a topological space whose tautological aspect might be characterized as the ontologization of the fact that the möbius strip is nothing but its own absence. Yet despite being constituted by the tautological operation of a cut/suture, this ontologized nothing is nevertheless best understood by way of the cut. Recall how the aspherical surface of the cross-cap is nonorientable because it contains an embedded möbius strip. It then follows that by cutting away the interior of a disk from the

⁵¹ It is worthwhile to pause with Lacan and take note of this rather surprising transformation which, for present purposes, underscores the intimate connection that the left deixis has with the right in the logical square: ‘What is remarkable in this sequence is that the asphere...only arrives at the evidence of its asphericity by being supplemented by a spherical cut.’ Lacan, *L’écrouit* (Second Turn), 3.

cross-cap a möbius strip results. A cut thus splits the cross-cap into a spherical disk and a möbius strip. This result is well-established in the field of topology and can readily be seen in the $A_d: \frac{a}{s_2} \xrightarrow{\$} \frac{\$}{s_1}$ where such a cut is doubly-inscribed, first on the lower level in the form of ab-sense which captures the severing of the hermeneutical circle and second on the upper level where the absence that is $\$$ marks the cut *tout court*.⁵² Together these ‘two’ cuts release the *a*-spherical surface of *objet a*, the very embodiment of the nothing of this double-inscription: in a first move ab-sense voids a space of spherical meaning and kicks the subject outside the hermeneutical circle, while in a second move this newly opened domain of non-meaning is ontologized into a singular point such that if occupied by the subject, is capable of suspending the hermeneutical circle of meaning. Figure 5.3 provides a representation of this suspension.

⁵² Seeing as how the möbius strip is the only surface with an edge in the logical square, it is quite appropriate to conceive it as the sole cutting instrument in the Lacanian topological toolbox.

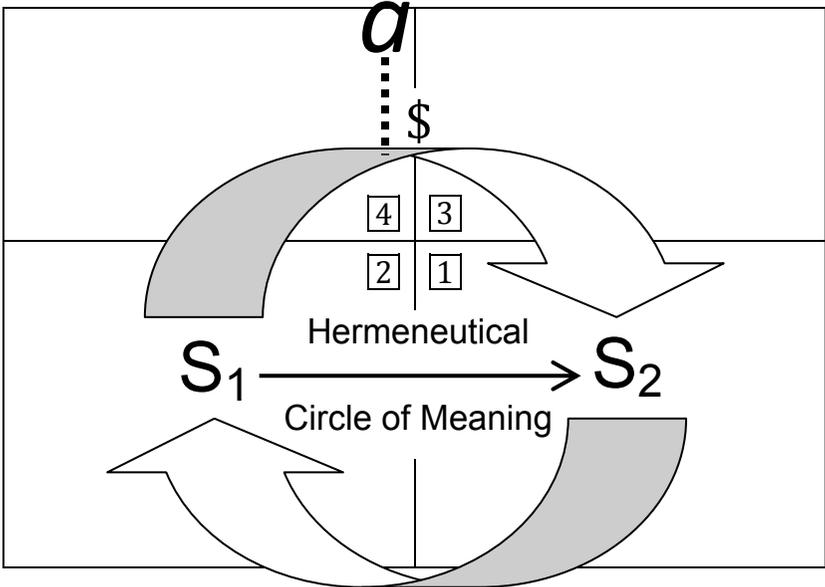


Figure 5.3: The Suspension of Meaning

In this figure the entire Lacanian logical square has been rotated clockwise a quarter turn from the way it was presented in its three previous incarnations. Since the matheme associated with each quadrant remains unchanged as well as the sequential order of the quadrants, this modification is entirely cosmetic. It has solely been made so that what it seeks to convey best strikes the eye. As can be seen, the hermeneutical circle in play between S₁ and S₂ of quadrants 2 and 1 is now at the bottom of the square with *objet a* of quadrant 4 now on top, which allows for the empty distance between them to be marked by \$ of quadrant 3. This arrangement visually confirms the existence of a ‘suspension’ point to the hermeneutical circle of meaning, a term which is to be taken as per the original emphasis given by its Latin roots.⁵³ In the present context, however, the noun form of the Latin *suspensio* (derived from *suspensus*) is insufficient, as the temptation here is to read suspension as ‘suspense’ which thus confers upon it

⁵³ While nevertheless maintaining some connection, the brief etymological discussion which follows should make it clear how the sense intended by the use of this term departs from many of the main senses listed in dictionaries for the verb ‘to suspend,’ inclusive of those which convey the sense of exclusion (to bar or forbid from an office or the performance of a usual duty or activity, especially as a penalty), the sense of making inoperative for a time (to cancel, halt, withhold, render inactive or invalid temporarily) and the sense of holding back, refraining from, putting off, deferring or delaying the making of a judgment, sentence, etc, until a later time.

the sense of ‘uncertainty’ or ‘indeterminacy.’ We have seen how such states are not at all foreign to the subject who finds himself *in* the hermeneutical circle where the final retroactive production of meaning is often anxiously awaited. Far better than simply resigning oneself to objective meanings is to recognize in their mode of *futur antérieur* a subjective stamp. This can be gathered by looking instead to the original verb form where the Middle English *suspenden* and Old French *suspendre* are found to both derive from the Latin *suspendere* – a verb often defined as ‘to hang up.’ Here, however, it becomes important to consider *suspendere* in its full compounded sense and resist further breaking it down into its two components, *sus-* [for *sub-*, under] and *pendere* [to hang]. For if its prefix is neglected and only its base word is considered, suspension is once again taken as the situation where the final production of an objective meaning pends for a subject who can, for that very reason, easily wash his hands of the entire affair. This is not to say that in order to suspend meaning it simply suffices to recognize its relativity since its point of origin can be traced back to the particular perspective of the subject. For treating meaning strictly as a subjective phenomenon is as deficient as its strict objective treatment. Rather, a curious mix of both the subjective and the objective is needed to reach suspension proper which in no way concerns a middle ground between the two: if the subject of the hermeneutical circle finds himself at the mercy of meanings retroactively produced by an objective mechanism beyond his control, this phenomenal experience *in toto* must of course be recognized as itself bearing his subjective mark; but the crucial point is that this recognition must be accomplished in an *objective* way.⁵⁴ In terms of Part I this objective experience moves beyond the objectivity of the non-meaningful mechanisms of structuralism to condense instead into a non-hermeneutical phenomenological singularity. Here is the ontological point from which the subject ‘hangs up’ the hermeneutical circle within whose turn meaning at any given moment hangs in abeyance.

This ontological point is of course *objet a* which suspends the endless circular relation of S_1 and S_2 . Figure 5.3 denotes this suspension by a short vertical line which ‘links’ *objet a* to the hermeneutical circle, but note that this line is dotted and that the void of $\$$ is positioned ‘between’ them. This figure can be

⁵⁴ This might be likened to a somewhat common experience: upon crossing the threshold of one’s home for the first time after an extended period of absence (say, after a two or three week vacation), the immediate surroundings are of course quite familiar and bear the subject’s personal stamp. But there is nevertheless the feeling of an eerie, cold ‘objectivity’ which seems to permeate each room and because of which, momentarily makes the subject a stranger in his own home. But perhaps this experience is less possible today than in previous decades. As Baudrillard laments (celebrates?) somewhere, the exit made by today’s moviegoer from a darkened matinee theater into the sunny afternoon of reality is no longer momentarily met with a similar disconcerting feeling as it once did in years past.

read in two ways. In a first approach, the non-hermeneutical phenomenological experience in question is one in which the hermeneutical field of meaning suddenly pulls away from the subject it just enveloped. Yet it does not disappear altogether but very much hangs nearby in the air, as if tethered just above the subject's head from some anchoring point still higher up. The nature of this anchoring point could be expressed in terms of the (barred) knowledge of the analyst⁵⁵ in a twofold manner: his insight into the ultimate impotency of the hermeneutical circle is certainly what keeps it suspended, yet his further insight that this nevertheless does not warrant a wholesale dismissal of meaning is what keeps it within his horizon. In other words, although the A_d leaves the hermeneutical circle thoroughly incapacitated so that it is unable to exercise its influence on the subject's experience of reality, this does not imply that it thereby dissolves into the void so that what remains of reality is the utterly absurd. Remaining close enough to ensure this does not happen, what is at stake instead with the Not-all of meaning is not the absurd but the nonsensical. So while the inability of the hermeneutical circle to intervene in the phenomenal field makes it tempting to deride the impotency of meaning – to point a finger at it and smirk as it dangles and kicks its legs helplessly above our heads – derision is not the proper attitude to strike.⁵⁶ For while derision successfully points out the inconsistency and failure of the hermeneutical circle to deliver meaning, it nevertheless overlooks how such a subjective stance is only made possible *because* the hermeneutical circle is not up to its task.

In broader terms, it is not that the domain of the nonsensical harbors some essential Thing which pre-exists meaning and thus causes it to stumble and fail; rather, nonsensical encounters happen due to the very inconsistency of the field of meaning. Indeed those non-hermeneutical phenomena experienced in the analyst's chair wholly take place within the very space opened up by the failure of meaning. Saying it this way places the crucial accent on the surplus objectivity of any situation and thus allows for a more consequential reading of Figure 5.3. Accordingly, where the first approach sees two distinct elements (what is hung up is done so through support from above), the second approach sees only one: what is to be fully acknowledged is the fact that the subject only ever achieves an *empty* distance – denoted by \$ – from the hermeneutical circle so that its

⁵⁵ It should be noted that Figure 5.3 directly reads as the A_d : $\frac{a}{s_2} \rightrightarrows \frac{\$}{s_1}$ (and thus in a writing which visually confirms knowledge to be barred to the analyst) provided that quadrants **1** and **2** are interchanged. Again this interchange simply aligns the quadrants of the Lacanian logical square with the four places of discourse.

⁵⁶ Such an attitude would have more to do with a subject still somewhat immersed in the field of meaning, or else should be thought of as a remnant of subjectivization – the analyst's ego – which casts an all-too-knowing and cynical glance from somewhere below the suspended field. In contrast, subjectivity proper is a 'full' occupation of the very point of suspension.

suspension is viewed as accomplished *without* attachment.⁵⁷ Here the suspension of the hermeneutical circle is to be read as *coinciding* with the sudden appearance of *objet a*, what might be called the surplus object of meaning.⁵⁸ Of course one need not be an analyst to experience its effects; the wavering, say, between a too much and a too little meaning is equally had by the analyst and the non-analyst alike. Yet such experiences will not halt the desire to acquire meaning until the subject begins forging a 'link' between the breakdown of meaning and its object-cause. Thus it might be understood that what prompts such wavering is the parasitic-like quality of this surplus object, its ability to attach itself to any textual or aesthetic work which, for that very reason, incites both an infinite production of meaning and prevents a final hermeneutical reckoning. But this link must be forged in such a way that only a non-relation persists, for at its most basic level *objet a* is a point where a cause is immediately its own effect. What is needed is not so much a link between the breakdown of meaning and its object-cause but rather the ontologization of the subjective experience of this link. This would move a mere subjective experience of this breakdown, which at best only ever 'negatively' confirms the existence of a persisting non-meaningful Thing, to its 'positive' registration in the analyst's discourse as the nonsense of *objet a*. Far from reaching some beyond of meaning, the move accomplished here is much more modest.⁵⁹ Absent from the hermeneutical field as a meaningful element, *objet a* is nevertheless present there as a nonsensical surplus object of meaning. And whenever this object makes its presence 'fully' known the hermeneutical circle of meaning is at once suspended.

⁵⁷ To hang by a support from above and to do so without attachment are two additional senses commonly found in dictionaries under their entries for 'to suspend.' Of those five or six in common use today, these two are closest to capturing the original sense of *suspendere*.

⁵⁸ In a Žižekian formulation, *objet a* 'is' the suspended hermeneutical circle.

⁵⁹ That Lacan is not interested in tapping into a beyond becomes clear in passages like the following which champions mathematics for its lack of meaning and for opening, through topological transformations, a field entirely devoid of that historical dimension so dear to hermeneutical phenomenology and which, moreover, harbors an ontologized point of nonsense:

'The matheme is uttered from the only real recognized from the onset in language: namely number. Nevertheless the history of mathematics demonstrates (saying it makes the case) that it can be extended to intuition, on condition that this term is as castrated as can be of its metaphorical use. Here therefore is a field in which what is most striking is that its development, over against the terms from which it is absorbed, does not [proceed] from generalization but from topological re-shaping, from a retroaction onto the beginning such that its history is effaced. No surer experience to resolve its embarrassment. Hence its attraction for thought: which finds in it the *nonsense* proper to being, or to the desire for a speech with no beyond.' *Ibid.*, 12.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Althusser, Louis. *The Future Lasts Forever: A Memoir*, trans. Richard Veasey, eds. Olivier Corpet and Yann Moulier Boutang (New York: The New Press, 1993 [1992])
- Apel, Karl-Otto. “Scientistics, Hermeneutics, Critique of Ideology: An Outline of a Theory of Science from an Epistemological-Anthropological Point of View,” trans. Linda Gail DeMichiel, in *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, pp. 321–45 (New York: Continuum, 2006 [1968])
- Aquinas, Saint Thomas. *Introduction to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Anton C. Pegis (New York: Random House, 1948 [1256–72])
- Aristotle. *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Volume One, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984 [4th c. BC])
- Ast, Friedrich. *Basic Elements of Grammar, Hermeneutics and Criticism* (§§69–93), trans. Dora Van Vranken, in *The Hermeneutic Tradition: From Ast to Ricoeur*, eds. Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift, pp. 39–56 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990 [1808])
- Augustine of Hippo, Saint. *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*, trans. Edward B. Pusey (New York: Collier Books, 1961 [397])
- Badiou, Alain. *Conditions*, trans. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2008 [1992])
- . *Handbook of Inaesthetics*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005 [1998])
- Baudrillard, Jean. *Conspiracy of Art: Manifestos, Interviews, Essays*, trans. Ames Hodges, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2005 [1996])
- Beaney, Michael. “Introduction” in *The Frege Reader*, ed. Michael Beaney, pp. 1–46 (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1997)
- Benjamin, Walter. “The Task of the Translator: An Introduction to the Translation of Baudelaire’s *Tableaux Parisiens*” in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt, pp. 69–82 (New York: Schocken Books, 1968 [1923])
- Betti, Emilio. “Hermeneutics as the General Methodology of the *Geisteswissenschaften*,” trans. Josef Bleicher, in *The Hermeneutic Tradition:*

- From Ast to Ricoeur*, eds. Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift, pp. 159–97 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990 [1962])
- Boeckh, Philip August. “Formal Theory of Philology,” “Theory of Hermeneutics” and “Theory of Criticism” from *On Interpretation and Criticism*, trans. John Paul Pritchard, in *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, pp. 132–47 (New York: Continuum, 2006 [1866])
- Bultmann, Rudolf. *History and Eschatology: The Presence of Eternity* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957)
- . “Is Exegesis Without Presuppositions Possible?” in *Existence and Faith: Shorter Writings of Rudolf Bultmann*, ed. and trans. Schubert M. Ogden, pp. 289–96, 314–15 (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1965 [1957])
- Butler, Judith, Laclau, Ernesto and Žižek, Slavoj. *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000)
- Chladenius, Johann Martin. “On the Concept of Interpretation” and “On the Interpretation of Historical Books and Accounts” from *Introduction to the Correct Interpretation of Reasonable Discourses and Writings*, trans. Carrie Asman-Schneider, in *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, pp. 55–71 (New York: Continuum, 2006 [1742])
- Copjec, Joan. “Sex and the Euthanasia of Reason” in *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists*, pp. 201–36, 259–60 (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994)
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Francis Bacon: the logic of sensation*, trans. Daniel W. Smith (London: Continuum, 2003 [1981])
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998 [1967])
- . “Sending: On Representation” in *Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy*, trans. Peter and Mary Ann Caws, eds. Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift, pp. 107–138 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990 [1982])
- Descartes, René. *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. and ed. John Cottingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996 [1641])
- . *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes, Volume 1*, trans. Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross, pp. 1–49 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967 [1619–28])

- Dilthey, Wilhelm. *The Formation of the Historical World in the Human Sciences in Wilhelm Dilthey: Selected Works, Volume III, Parts II–IV*, eds. Rudolf A. Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi, trans. Rudolf A. Makkreel and John Scanlon (Part II), Rudolf A. Makkreel and William H. Oman (Parts III, IV), pp. 99–367 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002 [1910])
- Droysen, Johann Gustav. “History and the Historical Method” from *Outline*, trans. E. Benjamin Andrews, “The Investigation of Origins” and “The Modes of Interpretation” from *Historik*, trans. Carrie Asman-Schneider, in *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, pp. 119–31 (New York: Continuum, 2006 [1857])
- Ebeling, Gerhard. “Word of God and Hermeneutic,” trans. James W. Leitch, in *New Frontiers in Theology: Discussions Among Continental and American Theologians. Volume II: The New Hermeneutic*, eds. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, Jr., pp. 78–110 (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1964 [1959])
- Fierens, Christian. “The Fact of Saying Notall with Reference to Le Gaufey’s Work: *Lacan’s Notall, Logical Consistency, Clinical Consequences*” trans. Cormac Gallagher, *The Letter* 38 (2008). Downloaded Feb 5, 2013. <<http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Autumn-2008-103-121-1.pdf>>.
- _____. *Reading L’*étourdit*: Lacan 1972 (First Turn)*, trans. Cormac Gallagher (c. 2010 [2002]). Downloaded Feb 5, 2013. <<http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/FIRST-TURN-ALL-CHAPTERS-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>>.
- _____. *Reading L’*étourdit*: Lacan 1972 (Second Turn)*, trans. Cormac Gallagher (June 2010 [2002]). Downloaded Feb 5, 2013. <<http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/SECOND-TURN-ALL-CHAPTERS-FINAL-VERSION.pdf>>.
- Fink, Bruce. *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)
- Foucault, Michel. “Nietzsche, Freud, Marx” in *Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy*, trans. Alan D. Schrift, eds. Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift, pp. 59–67 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990 [1964])
- Frege, Gottlob. “On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*” in *The Frege Reader*, trans. Max Black, ed. Michael Beaney, pp. 151–71 (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 1997 [1892])

- Freud, Sigmund. *The Interpretation of Dreams* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vols. IV and V (London: The Hogarth Press, 1958 [1900])
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*, Second, Revised Edition, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2003 [1960])
- Habermas, Jürgen. *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971 [1968])
- Hallward, Peter. *Badiou: A Subject to Truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003)
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996 [1927])
- . “A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer” in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter D. Hertz, pp. 1–54 (New York: Harper & Row, 1971 [1954])
- Hirsch, E. D., Jr. *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967)
- Humboldt, Wilhelm von. “The Nature and Conformation of Language” from *Introduction to the Kawi Language*, trans. George C. Buck and Frithjof A. Raven and “On the Task of the Historian,” trans. Linda Gail DeMichiel, in *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, pp. 99–118 (New York: Continuum, 2006 [1821, 1836])
- Husserl, Edmund. *Logical Investigations, Vol. 1*, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970 [1900])
- . *Logical Investigations, Vol. 2*, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970 [1901])
- Ingarden, Roman. “On the Cognition of the Literary Work of Art” from *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, trans. Ruth Ann Crowley and Kenneth R. Olson, in *The Hermeneutics Reader: Texts of the German Tradition from the Enlightenment to the Present*, ed. Kurt Mueller-Vollmer, pp. 187–213 (New York: Continuum, 2006 [1937])
- Iser, Wolfgang. “Interaction between Text and Reader” in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, eds. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, pp. 106–19 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980)
- Jakobson, Roman. Selections from “Linguistics and Poetics” and “Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances” in *The Norton*

- Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, First Edition, ed. Vincent B. Leitch, pp. 1254–69 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001 [1958, 1956])
- Jauss, Hans Robert. “Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory” in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti, pp. 3–45, 191–201 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982 [1970])
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987 [1790])
- _____. *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1965 [1781, 1787])
- Lacan, Jacques. *L’Étourdit*, trans. Jack W. Stone, et al., pp. 1–36 [1972]. Downloaded February 5, 2013.
<<http://web.missouri.edu/~stonej/L’Etourdit.pdf>>.
- _____. *L’Étourdit* (First Turn), trans. Cormac Gallagher, pp. 1–21 (July 2009 [1972]). Downloaded February 5, 2013.
<<http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/etourdit-First-turn-Final-Version2.pdf>>.
- _____. *L’Étourdit* (Second Turn), trans. Cormac Gallagher, pp. 1–24 (May 2010 [1972]). Downloaded February 5, 2013.
<<http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/etourdit-Second-turn-Final-Version4.pdf>>.
- _____. “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis” in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, pp. 197–268 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006 [1953])
- _____. “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud” in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, pp. 412–41 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006 [1957])
- _____. “Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty” in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, pp. 161–75 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006 [1945])
- _____. “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience” in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, pp. 75–81 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006 [1936, 1949])
- _____. “Position of the Unconscious” in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, pp. 703–21 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006 [1964])

- _____. “Presentation on Psychological Causality” in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, pp. 123–58 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006 [1946])
- _____. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud’s Papers on Technique, 1953–1954*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. John Forrester (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991)
- _____. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book III: The Psychoses, 1955–1956*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997)
- _____. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998 [1964])
- _____. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007 [1969–70])
- _____. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XIX: ...Ou pire/ ...Or worse, 1971–1972*, trans. Cormac Gallagher from unedited French manuscripts. Downloaded February 2, 2013. <<http://www.lacanireland.com>>.
- _____. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge, Book XX, Encore, 1972–1973*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998)
- _____. “Seminar on “The Purloined Letter”” in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, pp. 6–48 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006 [1956])
- _____. “The Signification of the Phallus” in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink, pp. 575–84 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006 [1958])
- LaCapra, Dominick. *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983)
- Le Gaufey, Guy. *Lacan’s Notall: Logical Consistency, Clinical Consequences* (Introduction and Ch 1: “Logic of the Sexual Fault-line”), trans. Cormac Gallagher (c. 2010 [2006]). Downloaded February 5, 2013. <<http://www.lacanireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Le-Gaufey-Prologue-and-Faille-of-Notall.pdf>>.
- _____. *Lacan’s Notall: Logical Consistency, Clinical Consequences* (Ch 2), trans. Cormac Gallagher (2008 [2006]) as “Towards a Critical Reading of the Formulae of Sexuation” from original French version in *L’Unebévue*, Paris: L’Unebévue ed. (2005), no. 22. Downloaded February 5, 2013.

- <<http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/TOWARDS-A-CRITICAL-READING-2506.pdf>>.
- _____. *Lacan's Notall: Logical Consistency, Clinical Consequences* (Ch 3: "Some Clinical Consequences of the Logical Difference between the Sexes"), trans. Cormac Gallagher (c. 2010 [2006]). Downloaded February 5, 2013. <<http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/Pastout-Clinic-09-2506.pdf>>.
- Liotard, Jean-François. *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991 [1988]).
- Melman, Charles. "What Thrilled Me in Fierens' Book," trans. Cormac Gallagher, *The Letter* 41 (2009) 121–29. Downloaded February 5, 2013. <<http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/CM-CG-Trans-Lettter-41.pdf>>.
- Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Ground of the Image*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005 [2000–4]).
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. "Interpretation" in *Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy*, trans. Walter Kaufman and R. J. Hollingdale, eds. Gayle L. Ormiston and Alan D. Schrift, pp. 43–57 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990 [1880–1900]).
- Palmer, Richard E. *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1969).
- Plato. *Symposium*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1999 [c. 384 BC]).
- Poulet, Georges. "Phenomenology of Reading," *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (October 1969) pp. 53–68.
- Rancière, Jacques. *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009 [2004]).
- _____. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. and ed. Steven Corcoran (London: Continuum, 2010 [1996–2004]).
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970 [1965]).
- _____. "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation" in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, trans. and ed. John B. Thompson, pp. 131–44 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981 [1973]).

- _____. “The Task of Hermeneutics” in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, trans. and ed. John B. Thompson, pp. 43–62 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981 [1973])
- Saussure, Ferdinand de. Selections from *Course in General Linguistics* in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, First Edition, ed. Vincent B. Leitch, pp. 960–77 (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001 [1916 posth.])
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich. *Hermeneutics and Criticism and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Andrew Bowie, pp. 1–224 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998 [1838 posth.])
- Szondi, Peter. *Introduction to Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. Martha Woodmansee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995 [1975 posth.])
- Thurston, Herbert, S.J. and Leeson, Norah. *The Lives of the Saints, Vol. III (March)*, originally compiled by the Rev. Alban Butler, eds. Herbert Thurston, S.J. and Norah Leeson (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne LTD, 1942 [1931])
- Urban, William J. “Giving Fichte a Chance: A Žižekian Defense of the I,” *International Journal of Žižek Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3. (2011).
<<http://zizekstudies.org/index.php/ijzs/article/view/323>>.
- _____. “The Topology of the Kantian Sublime: Lyotard, Heidegger, Rancière, Deleuze and Nancy,” *Avello Publishing Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2011).
<<http://avellopublishing.wordpress.com/journal/volume-1-issue-1/contents/>>.
- White, Hayden V. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987)
- Žižek, Slavoj. “Fichte’s Laughter” in *Mythology, Madness, and Laughter: Subjectivity in German Idealism*, eds. Markus Gabriel and Slavoj Žižek, pp. 122–67 (London: Continuum, 2009)
- _____. *Less Than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012)
- _____. *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997)
- _____. *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999)

INDEX

- ab-sense 175–6, 180, 181
absence 14, 20, 41, 112, 114–5, 117,
131, 145, 158–9, 172–3, 175–81
algebraic notation 60, 69, 75n56, 78, 81,
93n9, 94, 144, 160, 161–2, 166,
175n44
alienation 55, 62, 68–71, 73, 78, 150,
151, 180
Althusser, Louis 87n
analysis as deciphering 60, 127, 141n6
Analyst's Discourse (A_d) 73–7, 149–62,
176–85 passim
Anstoß 14
annulus 167, 170
Apel, Karl-Otto 8, 26, 27, 78
apophantic propositional form (S is P)
18, 33, 82–4, 86n, 89, 91–3, 97–8,
129
après coup 55–6
Aquinas, Saint Thomas 145
Aristophanes 164, 166n
Aristotle 4, 79, 81, 82–90
 difference from Lacan 90–3, 97,
 104–9, 116–7, 153
asphere 177n47, 179n49, 180n
aspherical surface 170, 175, 180, 181.
 See also möbius strip; cross-cap
Ast, Friedrich 8, 13, 15
Augustine of Hippo, Saint 11, 112, 145

Bachelard, Gaston 23
Bacon, Francis 47
Badiou, Alain 9, 31, 45, 140n1
Baudrillard, Jean 9, 32, 44–5, 183n
Being and Time 17–9, 20, 21
Benjamin, Walter 9, 44
Betti, Emilio 8, 24, 25, 26, 27, 78, 118,
155

bipartite strip 171–4
Boeckh, Philip August 8, 16, 25
Brunschwig, Jacques 90–1, 116
Bultmann, Rudolf 8, 19–20, 21, 22, 24,
113, 130n53
button ties 61–2, 72

castration 64, 95, 135–6
Categories 82–3
Chladenius, Johann Martin 8, 13, 15–6,
157, 158
Clavis Scripturae Sacrae 13
Confessions of Saint Augustine, The 11
Constance School of reception theory
8, 35–6
contingency in discourse 152–9 passim
Copjec, Joan 81, 132n
Counter-Reformation 13, 156
Critique of Pure Reason 132n, 139n, 157
 Ideas of reason 46, 144, 157; table
 of nothings 79, 138, 144–6;
 Transcendental Analytic 144;
 Transcendental Dialectic 157;
 transcendental idea 112n, 157,
 165n; transcendental schemata 46,
 47, 48, 178
cross-cap 137, 162, 163, 175, 176–81
cutting, definition of 163, 166, 173, 178
cylinder 167, 168n

deconstruction 40–1
De interpretatione 82, 83–90
Deleuze, Gilles 9, 32, 46, 47–8, 156
Derrida, Jacques 9, 32, 40–1, 55n12
Descartes, René 160–1
différance 41
Dilthey, Wilhelm 8, 17, 24, 25, 26, 27,
113

- Droysen, Johann Gustav 8, 15
- Euclidean plane 166, 167
- Écrits* 59, 63. *See also* Lacan, texts of
- Ebeling, Gerhard 8, 19, 20–1, 22, 24, 55, 130n53
- Ego-ideal 62
- empty speech 56
- Enlightenment 13, 15, 22, 27, 157, 160
- Epimenides the Cretan 128–31, 133, 138, 141, 151, 169
- exegesis 8, 12–3, 19, 54, 89, 100, 156–7
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb 8, 14
- Fierens, Christian 4, 110n28, 111n29, 137, 141n6, 143, 144, 147, 151, 153, 155, 169n, 170n, 172n36
- Fink, Bruce 102n
- Flacius 8, 13, 15, 16, 39
- Foucault, Michel 9, 32, 41–2
- Frege, Gottlob 8, 33, 34, 41, 78, 93–4, 95, 101, 102, 123, 124, 125, 129, 130n53, 144
- Freud, Sigmund 9, 51, 60, 74n52, 75–6, 126–7, 147, 155n, 156
 - Foucault's reading of 41–2;
 - hermeneutical approach of 52–3, 54–5; non-hermeneutical approach of 66–7, 70, 143; Ricoeur's reading of 27–8; structuralist approach of 57–8, 63–4
- Freudian slips of the tongue 95n
- full speech 56
- fundamental fantasy ($\$ \diamond a$) 178, 179
- futur antérieur* 55, 183
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg 8, 12, 21–3, 24, 25, 27, 28, 42, 43, 55, 78, 84, 113, 118, 125, 130n53
- Geneva School of phenomenological criticism 8, 37
- Habermas, Jürgen 8, 26–7, 51, 78, 118
- Hegel, G. W. F. 24
- Heidegger, Martin 8, 12, 17–9, 78–9, 88, 113
 - dialogue with a Japanese 19;
 - difference from Badiou 45;
 - difference from Husserl 32–4;
 - difference from Lacan 68–73;
 - hermeneutical critique of 23–9;
 - Protestant development of 19–21;
 - reflected in Lacan 54–5; secular development of 21–3
- hermeneutical circle: Aristotelian 79, 81, 87–90, 108, 133; classical articulation of 8, 12, 15–7, 24–9; Heideggerian 18–9, 23; impotency of 184; and Lacanian logical square 4, 31, 78, 79, 81, 92, 100, 108, 120, 132–6, 137–8, 140, 143, 147, 154, 170, 178–85
- hermeneutics, definition of 12
- Hirsch, E. D., Jr. 8, 24–5, 26, 27, 42, 78, 88, 118
- homeomorphism, definition of 162, 167n
- Humboldt, Wilhelm von 8, 15–6
- Husserl, Edmund 8, 32–4, 37, 55n12, 74n50, 123–4
- hysteria 76, 130n51
- Hysteria's Discourse (H_d) 75–6, 148–62 *passim*
- Ideal-ego 53, 62–3
- Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel* 151n, 164, 175
- imagination 15, 36, 46, 47, 48, 145, 146, 160, 165n, 167n
- impossibility in discourse 74, 151–6, 158–9, 179
- impossible, real as 52, 68, 73–4, 144, 153
- impotency in discourse 152–6, 159
- Ingarden, Roman 8, 34–5, 36, 37, 62
- interpretation 12
 - ambiguity of 13, 39, 42, 48, 54, 62, 90; asymptotic 14, 126; Badiouian 45; code shifting 43; of dreams 52–3, 57–8, 66–7; endless 16, 42; grammatical 14; Heideggerian 18–9, 23, 28; historical 15; objectivity of 24–6, 34, 36, 37, 39; philological 13, 16, 21, 25, 26, 38; Protestant 12–3, 19–21, 22; psychological 14–5, 25; sexuated textual analysis; 60, 69, 70, 71, 76, 78, 81, 100, 118–9, 121–2, 126–7, 130n53, 132–6, 144, 147, 155, 156–9, 167n, 173

- Interpretation of Dreams, The* 52–3, 57–8, 66–7
- Iser, Wolfgang 8, 34–5, 36, 37, 62
- Jackson, Michael 64n33
- Jakobson, Roman 9, 32, 39–40, 66n36
- Jauss, Hans Robert 8, 35, 36, 125
- Jesus Christ 20
- jouissance* 64, 70, 72, 135–6, 140n1, 142
- Kant, Immanuel 8, 15, 17, 20, 24, 32, 34, 112n, 132n, 138, 139n, 144, 145, 157, 158, 161
aesthetic theory of 14, 32, 45–6, 47;
transcendental idealism of 14, 53;
transcendental logic of 28
- Kantian sublime 9, 44–9. *See also*
sublime object
- Kepler, Johannes 164
- kerygma* 21, 28, 38
- Kierkegaard, Søren 24, 109n25
- Klein bottle 177n45
- Lacan, texts of: *L'étourdi* 4, 110, 122n41, 137, 140n3, 141n6, 142, 144, 147, 160, 164n28, 169n, 175;
“Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis” 54–6, 169n; “Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious” 60–3; “Logical Time” 56; “Mirror Stage” 53, 62, 174n41; “Presentation on Psychical Causality” 53–4; “Seminar on ‘The Purloined Letter’” 59–60; *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (XI) 67–72, 73, 164; *Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (XVII) 68, 72–6; *On Feminine Sexuality...Encore* (XX) 77, 96, 149n, 161n; “Signification of the Phallus” 63–5
- Lacan's Notall* 90, 91n5
- LaCapra, Dominick 9, 42–3
- la langue* 38
- lamina, definition of 171
- la parole* 38
- Le Gaufeys, Guy 4, 81, 90–3, 96–9, 101, 104–6, 108–13, 117–29, 141n6, 147n, 155
- Less Than Nothing* 147–8
- letter 62
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude 103n
- logic, ambiguity in 90, 106, 116, 126, 131–2, 154, 169
- Logical Investigations* 32–4
- Liotard, Jean-François 9, 46, 47, 48, 139n
- man, sexual classification of 65, 94, 96–7, 103n, 107, 108n, 112n, 132n, 147–8, 164, 166n
- manifold, definition of 165
- Master's Discourse (M_d) 73–5, 148–62, 169 *passim*
- matheme *see* algebraic notation
- Melman, Charles 141n6
- meaning of being 11, 19, 28, 45, 68, 69, 73
- meaning, cause of 3, 9, 52, 58, 63, 67, 70–1, 179
- meaning, forced choice of 68, 73, 180
- meaning *qua* object 1–3, 8, 11, 13, 19, 21, 24, 25, 26, 28, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 77, 166, 170, 183, 185
- meaning *qua* universal/primordial/spherical substance 1–3, 17, 19, 21, 28, 35, 39, 40, 41, 53, 55, 57, 62, 77, 154, 157, 164, 166, 169, 170, 179, 180, 181
- meaning-relation (S₁ → S₂) 138, 152–9, 161, 175–6, 179
- meaning, sexual nature of 78, 79, 94, 175n44
- Meditations on First Philosophy* 161
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice 23
- metaphor 40, 62, 66n36, 160, 161, 174n41, 185n59
- methodology 7, 31, 78–9, 82, 115n33, 139n, 160
aesthetic 43, 45; Heideggerian 12, 17, 23, 24, 140n2; hermeneutical 8, 12, 14, 16, 19, 24, 26, 27, 28, 140n2, 158; phenomenological 32–7; psychoanalytic 9, 51, 52, 57, 70, 118, 160; structuralist 38, 42
- metonymy 40, 63, 66n36, 76
- möbius strip 70–1, 112n, 162, 163, 165n, 170–81

- modus ponens* 123
- Nancy, Jean-Luc 9, 32, 46, 47, 48, 55n12, 156
- necessity in discourse 152–9 *passim*
- n'espace* 160
- New Hermeneutic, The* 20–1
- Nietzsche, Friedrich 8, 16–7, 24–5, 41–2
- non-meaning 31, 38, 43, 68, 69, 175n44, 180, 181, 183, 185
- nonsense 31, 48, 69, 73, 75n55, 79, 147n, 175n44, 176, 185
- Not-all 94, 96, 100–110, 115–7, 122–4, 132–43, 149–52, 184 *passim*
- objet a* 3, 33, 52, 70–6, 145–61, 176–85 *passim*
- One 115, 132–42, 149–50, 164, 169 *passim*
- Organon* 4, 82, 91
- orientability, definition of 174
- obsessional neurosis 130n51
- Other 64, 68, 69, 70, 71, 115, 115n, 136, 149, 151
- out-of-line point 177–9
- Palmer, Richard E. 8, 12, 25, 118, 155
- Parsifal* 178n
- Pascal, Blaise 109n25
- parousia* 20
- Peirce, Charles Sanders 98–9
- perspectivism 16–7, 159
- phallic function (Φx) 94–101 *passim*, 110, 114, 128, 135–6, 138, 151
- philology 16, 25, 38
- Plato 140n1, 175n44
- points de capiton* *see* button ties
- possibility in discourse 152, 156, 158
- Poulet, Georges 8, 37, 73n
- Prior Analytics* 82n, 91, 93
- psychologism 8, 14, 33, 34, 36, 78
- Quine, W. V. 123, 124
- Rancière, Jacques 9, 32, 46–7, 48
- rebus 57
- Reformation 3, 8, 11, 12, 19
- Regulae* 160–1
- Ricoeur, Paul 8, 27–9, 51, 55, 79, 118
- Roman Catholic Church 8, 11, 13, 156
- Romanticism 14–7, 20, 22, 26, 87
- Russell, Bertrand 78, 101–2, 107, 161
- Russell's paradox 102, 107, 129
- Sartre, Jean-Paul 23
- Saussure, Ferdinand de 9, 32, 38–9, 40, 41, 43, 60, 63
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich 8, 17, 25, 89, 113
- transcendental turn of 14–5, 156–8
- Scilicet* 141n6
- Scripture 1, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 19–21, 38, 44, 157
- sense 31, 44, 47, 48, 58, 61, 62, 73, 75n55, 79, 175
- separation 62, 63, 69–70, 71, 75, 150, 151, 180
- set theory 45, 70, 79, 101, 102n, 114n33, 115n34, 137, 140, 141n5, 147, 161
- sexual difference, early theory of 65
- sexuated algebra 94–6
- short sessions 56
- sign 39, 40–2, 60, 121
- signification 13, 39, 40, 58, 61, 64, 69
- signified 39, 40, 60, 61, 63–5, 158
- signifier 39, 40, 52, 54, 56–76, 108, 114, 124, 131, 135, 136, 141, 149–54, 158–9, 175
- phallic (Φ) 64–5, 70, 75n56, 94–5, 135, 149, 158; signifier (S_1) 68–75, 114n32, 144–62, 175–83 *passim*; signifier (S_2) 68–76, 114n32, 118n37, 144–62, 166, 175–83 *passim*
- Sophocles 18, 24
- sphere 162, 163–9, 170, 171, 174, 176, 177, 179, 180
- spherical surface 166, 170, 171, 175, 179, 180. *See also* sphere; torus
- sublime object 47–9, 67, 70, 137, 140, 178
- subjectivity: abstract 18, 19, 24, 74n50; aesthetic 43–9; critical 26–7, 28; *Dasein* 18, 20, 21, 23, 26; Kantian 14, 18, 27, 112n, 139n, 157; Lacanian 3, 5, 9, 31, 53–6, 59–65, 67–76, 115, 151, 154, 158, 159, 167n, 169n, 174n41, 183–5; and

- language 14, 63; meaningful 2, 31, 53, 54, 56, 71, 73, 75, 76, 113, 166, 178–9, 183–5; Nietzschean 24; phenomenological 32–7, 124; subject (\$) 68–76, 106n22, 115n34, 117, 128n49, 145–62, 173–84 passim; religious 11, 21, 112; and sexual categorization 65; structuralist 38, 41–3; vacillating 1, 65, 69, 70, 71
- subject-object schema 24, 26, 28, 31, 32, 33, 35, 37, 77, 130n53, 166, 178
- subjectivism 24–5
- subjectivization 73, 76, 124, 150, 157, 166, 178, 180, 184n56
- Summa Theologiae* 145
- suspension 178, 182–3
 - of hermeneutical circle/field 4, 5, 79, 92, 113, 135, 137, 140, 143, 146–7, 150, 163, 170, 180–5; of meaning 3, 51, 78, 79, 82, 108, 121, 133, 136, 137–8, 140, 150, 156, 159, 160, 163, 176, 178, 183–5; of meaning of being 68, 73; of meaningful subjectivity 3, 71, 75, 76, 144, 173, 180–1, 183–5
- suturing, definition of 163, 167, 178
- symbolic order 52, 54, 59, 60, 64, 65, 70, 95
- Szondi, Peter 7
- tautological gesture 109, 178n, 180
 - of the signifier 70, 159
- Thing 46, 47, 184, 185
- topology, definition of 101, 141, 161–2
- torus 162, 163, 164, 165, 166–72, 174, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180
- trauma, real as 52, 68, 70, 71, 74, 164
- translation 12, 44, 57, 61
- Truth and Method* 21–3
- understanding 7, 12, 14–29, 31, 35, 45, 48, 56, 71
- universe, shape of 165n
- University Discourse (U_d) 75–6, 148–63 passim
- Visitation* 48
- Wagner, Richard 178n
- White, Hayden V. 9, 42–3
- woman, sexual classification of 65, 94, 96–7, 103n, 107, 108n, 110n27, 147–8, 164, 166n
- Žižek, Slavoj 81, 99, 103–4, 130n51, 132n, 139n, 147–8, 149n, 155, 165n, 178n48