

"LACAN'S DEBT TO DURKHEIM: SOCIOLOGY BEFORE LINGUISTICS"
from *Disseminating Lacan*, eds. Raffoul and Pettigrew (SUNY Press, 1995)
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Shrinking Expectations

Recently an analyst friend put the question to me bluntly: "It's been more than a decade since his death and forty years since his first seminars. If Lacan effected a *revolution* in analytic theory, then why after so many years can't it be communicated intelligibly to a fellow analyst?"

It seems uncontroversial to remark that between Lacan and a potentially friendly but increasingly wary psychoanalytic and academic readership there has developed something akin to what Sandor Ferenczi called a *confusion of tongues* between adult and child: while Lacan's writings are often suggestive and stimulating, even seductive, for the analyst or philosopher---full of innuendo and implication--in the end they remain incomplete and enigmatic, like a command or promise made in a language not fully understood. Luckily, Lacan's readers tend to be less infantile than he allows and the trauma tends to be less serious than that of the child's seduction. Yet the number of authors seeking to debunk, discredit or simply take revenge on Lacan suggests that its effects are not negligible. My friend's wait-and-see skepticism is in fact a healthy exception in this regard: extreme responses are more easily provoked, not only in former adherents but also in those hostile to psychoanalysis as well as to the strain of post-structuralist thought Lacan is seen to represent. For these critics, Lacan's inaccessibility testifies to the fact that there is *nothing to access*--no thought or position of any substance behind a screen of hyperbolic mumbo-jumbo.

How is the failure of Lacan's assimilation to intellectual life to be accounted for? To begin, one must admit that standard explanations have left something to be desired. The most common view--that his *tortured syntax* conceals and as it were protects his real meaning--appears less and less plausible with the passage of time; the burden of Lacan's style has been significantly mitigated by numerous commentaries, glossaries, and translator's prefaces. Though style has clearly played a role, this confusion of tongues would not seem to be *reducible* to stylistic difficulties.

Another popular explanation is that, like Ferenczi's notion of childhood seduction, Lacan's inaccessibility is structural and necessary: on this view, his ideas are simply too *radical* to be grasped or tolerated by the intellectual mainstream. This interpretation too, however, falls to the same criticism: there is now no shortage of books on Lacan, more and less mainstream, from various disciplines. Witness, for example, the discussion of (what are tentatively assumed to be) Lacan's views in a recent book by an analytic philosopher of mind. ¹ If Lacan remains an anomaly to analysts and an enigma to philosophers it would not seem to be for a lack of exegeses and commentaries, but because the history of critical debate one might expect has not developed out of these studies. As my skeptical friend

observed after familiarizing himself with some of the literature, each author seems compelled to confront the Lacanian goliath alone, with no help from his or her predecessors, a trend which has nourished the illusion that Lacan's work is so unique as to stand outside the history of ideas in which standard intellectual debates take place.

Between the extreme views that Lacan's ideas are too profoundly meaningful and that they are entirely devoid of meaning, it seems reasonable to seek a middle path. Let me suggest the following: There are substantial discrepancies between the received picture of Lacan's enterprise and its actual accomplishments. While, admittedly, this picture has its roots in Lacan's own exaggerated assessments of the revolutionary character of his work, these claims have seeped into the literature and form a kind of subtle lens that magnifies and distorts Lacan's intentions and significance, setting forth criteria that his ideas are unable, and in some cases unintended, to meet; reader's expectations are thus unrealistically inflated (whence feelings of frustration and anger).

My general goal in this essay is to correct certain aspects of this received picture by proposing a less grandiose but more fitting account of certain components of Lacan's undertaking: one that sets his ideas into contexts where they make sense as contributions, though not necessarily radical *solutions*, to particular historical problems and questions. ² Before turning to the picture I want to propose, however, I should first specify the main components of the received view.

The standard image of Lacan is based in two attractive but misleading assumptions. First, there is the premise that his work forms a self-standing *theoretical system* which must be approached on its own terms. This may be called the *timeless system* view. Lacan's seamless, ahistorical style of presentation and his insistence on the revolutionary nature of his thought have encouraged this myth and have often led his disciples into a quandary: ³ If Lacanism represents a theoretical *revolution*, how could it ever have *evolved* in the history of ideas? French analyst Maud Mannoni provides an example pertinent to my following remarks when she proclaims that Lacan's categories of the symbolic, imaginary, and real were "introduced" at the start of his analytic career in 1936 and "developed from 1946 to 1951," after which they presumably were subject to no emendations. ⁴ What compels her to this highly inaccurate conclusion is, again, the premise that Lacan's thought forms a system whose foundations must have been present from the start. In a similar fashion, many commentaries have been vitiated by the assumption that Lacan's work must be expounded whole cloth, like Euclid's geometry. If anything, these accounts prove that the more assiduously one tries to weave *Desire*, the *signifier*, the *Other*, the phoneme, the *mirror-stage* and the Moebius strip into a theoretical whole, the more forced, artificial, and abstract Lacan's ideas become and the more a charlatan he appears. ⁵ It may be added that even critics as penetrating as Jacques Derrida have perpetuated the assumption that Lacan's thought necessarily forms a single *system* of ideas and that it must stand or fall as such. ⁶ The possibility that his ideas may have changed over time, and that he may be right in some, wrong in others, has until recently been rarely entertained.

Thankfully, in the last fifteen years or so the timeless system view has given way to recognition of complex intellectual influences and evolution, and the image of grand theoretical demiurge has shrunk to humbler proportions. Finally, there seems to be general agreement that Lacan is primarily concerned with psychoanalysis, not philosophy,

mathematics, or some kind of generalized semiotics, and that his flights of theory make best sense as responses to problems in ongoing analytic debates. Works by Clément, Roudinesco, Macey, and Borch-Jakobsen, ⁷ among others, have begun to piece together Lacan's historical development and to situate him in relation to his contemporaries, from whom he borrowed freely: Kojève and Kojève's Hegel, French psychiatry, Surrealism, Sartre, Bataille, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and phenomenology, as well as Lévi-Strauss and the anthropological tradition. Thanks to this research, one is no longer free to succumb to the illusion that his thought is without antecedent or internal development. And it is no longer tenable to approach it as an autonomous *system*, only contingently related to psychoanalysis.

A second misleading assumption, however, one more deeply rooted in Lacan's self-understanding, has proven more resistant to criticism. This is the premise that Lacan's uniqueness and importance derives largely from an application of *structural linguistics* to the material of psychoanalysis: that Lacan saves Freud from the pitfalls of biology and classical psychology through the intervention of a Saussurean theory of the sign. Lacan repeated the idea frequently enough for it understandably to have become dogma: the cornerstone of the Lacanian edifice is an unprecedented yet preordained marriage of Freud and Saussure. The fruit of this union, what David Macey aptly calls a "mystical marriage," ⁸ is an ostensibly formal *theory of the signifier* which claims to furnish the scientific foundation for psychoanalysis sought vainly by Freud and his followers in biology and psychology.⁹

Though subjected to a number of thoughtful critiques, ¹⁰ Lacan's story about the predestined meeting of Freud and structural linguistics continues to frame readers' assessments of his work. One finds it, for example, faithfully and concisely retold in the editor's introduction to a popular collection of Lacan's writings on femininity:

Freud's ideas should be set within a cohesive framework that they anticipated but which, for historical reasons, Freud himself could not formulate. The development of linguistic science provides this framework. ¹¹

The tale ends on an ironic twist, however: after twenty years of flirtation, Lacan finally called off the marriage to Saussure, or at least admitted that it had never been properly consummated. As is by now well-known, in his 1969-70 seminar he conceded that his linguistic formulations are not to be confused with those of linguists in the strict--that is, the scientific--sense. "My own saying, that the unconscious is structured like a language, is not of the field of linguistics." ¹²

My following remarks, then, take their departure in what I have come to see as a set of inflated expectations surrounding Lacan, a kind of revolutionary aura which turns initially well-disposed individuals like my friend into frustrated skeptics, or worse. I will pursue several related aims. First, I hope to point up the inadequacies of a linguistic picture of Lacan's enterprise, specifically of the premise that structural linguistics provides the framework that brings psychoanalysis to theoretical fruition or completion. Secondly, in its place, I will maintain that the French tradition of *sociology* and *social anthropology* play the determinative role in the development of Lacan's mature thought: that it is not a theory of the sign but a new *picture of the social* that constitutes one of Lacan's major contributions to analytic theory; and that his appeal to linguistics is less a substantive addition to than a

seductive reformulation of sociological insights. The mainstay of this sociological picture is Lacan's pivotal category of the symbolic, in its opposition to the "imaginary" and the "real." By suggesting a series of connections to the sociological and anthropological traditions, I also hope to give better purchase on the notion of the symbolic than is furnished by the "framework" of "linguistic science."

Finally, while commentators have long remarked upon the crucial influence of Lévi-Strauss on Lacan, they have largely ignored the important philosophical parallels between Lacan and Emile Durkheim, Lévi-Strauss's spiritual predecessor. Though Lacan would certainly have balked at the idea, I want to suggest that there are virtues in viewing him as heir to Durkheim rather than Lévi-Strauss, especially when the latter is seen as the ambassador of a new scientific method, based on that of structural linguistics. Durkheim brings to light in exemplary fashion the paradigm shift I will refer to as Lacan's *symbolic turn*--a renewed understanding of the primacy of collective categories over individual experience and of the importance of the social or "symbolic" status of the human environment as opposed to its grounding in organic or physical reality. Yet he does not hold out the false hope of a formal science of psychoanalysis and he is not a hyper-rationalist (he leaves room, for example, for positive notions of affect and emotion in sociology). The general result of a Durkheimian affiliation is thus to diminish the *revolutionary* character of Lacan's enterprise and instead to stress its evolutionary continuity in the history of ideas. If placing Lacan in this light dims the allure of an unprecedented *science of the unconscious*, it allows one to perceive more clearly the need to reconsider certain sociological dimensions of mind and mental illness that Freud did not fully grasp or embrace, for reasons I will now turn to.

Psychoanalysis and Sociology

Freud and Durkheim

Freud and Durkheim, born only two years apart, were in many respects kindred spirits with similar intellectual goals. Jews attracted less by religion than by the universal ideals of science, in their scientific careers they both had to negotiate a path between the abstract systems of neo-Kantian philosophy and the reductionist program of positive science and each met considerable resistance in his attempt to transform his respective domain of study--mental dynamics for the one, society for the other--into an autonomous discipline. In fact, each thinker was continually challenged to prove the very existence of the objects of his research: for Freud, that there are unconscious processes sourced in repressed sexual wishes and irreducible to consciousness; for Durkheim, that there are social realities irreducible to the sum of the individuals who participate in them. It is unfortunate that no significant dialogue developed between them in their lifetimes: Durkheim died in 1917 without having taken account of psychoanalysis; Freud did discuss Durkheim in one instance, but without examining his views in any depth. Though one can only speculate as to the extent of Freud's potential sympathy or antipathy for Durkheim's sociology, certain features of their relationship can be plausibly reconstructed.

Freud's perception of Durkheim was no doubt framed by the challenge posed by various forms of social psychology to the premises of psychoanalysis. In 1912 Jung had revealed the germ of his heretical views on the asexual nature of psychic energy and on the collective unconscious. ¹³ His departure from the central tenets of analytic theory may

well have made Freud wary of other appeals to the primacy of the *collective* over the *individual*, even though the similarity between Durkheim's and Jung's "collective" was largely terminological and rhetorical, not substantive.

Social or group psychology, on the other hand, did pose a real challenge to Freud, one analogous to Jung's: a fundamental disagreement about the nature of human instincts or drives. For Freud, the drives, both vital and sexual, have their basis in the individual organism. Their satisfaction or frustration, generally signaled by states of pleasure and pain, are the primary motives for human behavior. In contrast, the proponents of various forms of social or group psychology posited a drive or class of drives ("herd instinct," "gregariousness") peculiar to social groups; when united in a crowd or in a mob, individuals were seen to comprise a new kind of being, a kind of "multi-cellular organism" subject to different laws and displaying different traits than isolated individuals: mental and emotional contagion, increased suggestibility, desire to obey, decreased intelligence. These were understood as archaic impulses distinctive of groups and foreign to individuals on their own or in smaller aggregations. Social psychology thus *contradicted* Freud's tenet that all fundamental drives originate in the individual and that social factors are only the source of their inhibition and repression. For Freud, the motives obtaining between individuals in groups are identical to the motives first developed in relation to parents and siblings: *libidinal* bonds and *identifications*. The group is, in fact, a family writ large: the leader is the father and the members are "sons" united by this common source of love, fear, and respect. ¹⁴

Freud's sole discussion of Durkheim occurs in *Totem and Taboo* and so also concerns both the question of the father and the larger question of the social bond. In the final chapter, he summarily discounts Durkheim's theory of totemism and religion: for Durkheim, "the totem...embodies the community, which is the true object of their worship."¹⁵ For Freud, in contrast, we know that the totem represents the father, the primal Father killed and devoured by his sons and henceforth commemorated by the sanctions and rituals of totemic religion. One can only conclude that, from Freud's perspective, Durkheim has not probed deep enough into the causes of religion: feelings of reverence and respect for *society* are not irreducible facts but only extensions of feelings for the father, outworks of the Oedipus complex.

Of course, from Durkheim's perspective it is *Freud* who has gotten things backwards. The father is an eminent representative of *society* and it is from the latter that the former receives his power and authority, not vice-versa. The problem for Durkheim is that Freud is unable to see the paternal role as an autonomous social reality: one that invests particular individuals with special power and authority. In Durkheim's vocabulary, one may say that paternity is a *collective idea*, a mode of thinking and acting imposed on individuals but not created by them.

This is no doubt beginning to sound familiar. Well before his acquaintance with Saussure or Lévi-Strauss, Lacan had learned that the function of paternity resides in the "symbolic father," not the "real" father--the organic individual responsible for reproduction--an idea gleaned from Bronislaw Malinowski and, indirectly perhaps, from Durkheim. ¹⁶ To understand the itinerary that leads Lacan from a casual acquaintance with sociology and ethnography to a full-blown identification with structural anthropology, Durkheim's sociological perspective should now be briefly outlined.

Durkheim

Durkheim inherits from the Kantian tradition two major philosophical and anthropological premises. First, he accepts the classical assumption that a human being is an entity essentially *divided* between nature and reason, inclination and duty, individual impulse and universal will. As Durkheim writes, "...man is double. There are two beings in him: an individual being which has its foundation in the organism and... a social being which represents the highest reality in the intellectual and moral order...I mean society." ¹⁷ Thus, in place of Kant's view that reason and will are universal human endowments, Durkheim derives them from the empirical and historical fact that humans are *social* beings: reason, religion, and morality develop out of the cumulative intelligence and shared feelings of a particular social group or civilization and they thus may vary over time and place. They do not issue from *a priori* faculties of the individual rational mind or divinely-created soul.

The many problems raised by Durkheim's socio-psychological derivation of mind, morality, and religion may be left aside. What is important is to see the ramifications of his neo-Kantian anthropology, for, filtered through Lévi-Strauss, it is these assumptions that provide the initial impetus of Lacan's symbolic turn. The following passage from *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* brings some of them into relief:

There really is a part of ourselves which is not placed in immediate dependence upon the organic factor: this is everything that represents society in us. The general ideas which religion or science fix in our minds...the beliefs and sentiments which are at the basis of our moral life...these do not follow in the trail of our bodily states, as our sensations and our general bodily consciousness do. As we have already shown, this is because the world of representations in which social life takes place is *superimposed upon* its material substratum, far from arising from it....¹⁸

To begin with, then, there is a radical *discontinuity* between nature and reason, organic sensation and moral sentiment. This discontinuity explains the fact that social realities are experienced by the individual in the mode of what Durkheim calls *exteriority* and *constraint*: that is, they stand outside of the sphere of individual action and thought, and thus they are felt as a normative, delimiting force to which individuals in a given society are compelled to conform. ¹⁹ As Durkheim writes, "the authority to which the individual bows when he acts, thinks or feels socially dominates him to such a degree because it is a product of forces which transcend him and for which he consequently cannot account." ²⁰ Lacan's notion of the unconscious as a kind of "*subjection* to the law of the Other"--to social and familial norms and traditions transcendent to the individual--finds significant echo here. Durkheim also corroborates Lacan's view that the affective power and moral authority of parental figures, what Lacan calls "representatives of the Other," derive less from their personal qualities than from their position in a given social scheme.

The second premise inherited from Kant is closely related to the first. It holds that collective *categories* are required to give form and objective determinacy to individual experiences or sensations. In Durkheim's words, social representations must be

"superimposed upon" their "material substratum" of organic sensations and impulses. In contrast to Kant, collective categories for Durkheim--time and space, as well as concepts of the person, soul, family, or nation--are relative to particular societies. Still, they are the necessary condition for meaningful thought and experience; without them the objects of individual consciousness remain unstable, indeterminate, and incommunicable.

Finally, there are two practical analogues to this epistemological premise. First is the assumption that a degree of social *solidarity* is necessary for the individual's health and well-being. Just as sensations remain indeterminate if not organized by collective categories, individuals become unhappy, alienated, and ultimately inclined to suicide or madness when not properly *integrated* into society, or when bonds of solidarity begin to dissolve across a group. ²¹ Secondly, there is the thesis, set forth in Durkheim's doctoral dissertation on the division of labor and developed throughout his work, that law and social institutions are necessary *mediating* factors for individual intercourse. In *The Division of Labor in Society* Durkheim argues, against Spencer's utilitarian contract theory, that for individuals to enter into contract they must at least tacitly appeal to a system of laws and conventions that were not the product of individual contracts. Without the mediating force of law and social convention, as transcendent to individual motives and desires, society might well be a Hobbesian war of all against all; because utilitarian theory remains individualistic, Durkheim points out, it has no way to account for the fact that relatively harmonious social existence is possible. Lacan's critique of ego psychology rehearses precisely this argument: because they posit only a collection of self-interested, pleasure-seeking, narcissistic individuals (or drive-ridden organisms), ego theorists have no way of explaining how a distasteful, sublimated relation to another person is possible. In Lacan's vocabulary, they remain within a schema of the *imaginary* and ignore the efficacy of *symbolic* relations. But I'm getting ahead of myself; let me fill in the remaining stages in Lacan's itinerary.

Lacan's Symbolic Turn

Even a brief exposition has, I hope, begun to indicate how Durkheim's neo-Kantian anthropology and epistemology anticipate and corroborate Lacan's reading of Freud. The irony of their relationship is that while Lacan draws explicitly on Durkheim in the thirties and forties, by the early fifties the sociologist is promptly forgotten.

It is curious that most of Lacan's writings from the thirties pursue themes dear to the sociologist: the social springs of crime, madness, aggressivity, and family relationships. ²² Moreover, his essay on family complexes includes several references to Durkheim as well as to Malinowski and explicitly adopts a sociological perspective on the Oedipus complex. ²³ Yet this perspective is not developed in other writings of the period.

Rather, from 1932 to about 1950, Lacan's overriding concern is what he calls the *narcissistic structure of the ego*--the fact that the self is formed by internalizing "the image of another." This is the heyday of the Lacanian *imaginary*. So, in 1936 the notion of the identificatory *image* is touted as "the most important concept in psychology," ²⁴ and as late as 1951 the *imago* is still applauded as "the starting point for all genuine scientific psychology." ²⁵ Clearly, the Lacanian *system* does not yet exist. The category of the *imaginary* is all-encompassing and has yet to be opposed to that of the *symbolic* or the *real*.

In fact, it is striking to recall that, far from a systematic distinction of categories,

Lacan in this period understands by "symbol" and "symbolic" largely the *same* thing he understands by "image" and "imaginary." Both terms denote the interactive dynamics of intersubjectivity, as opposed to the mechanistic causality that obtains between inanimate things. ²⁶ Lacan's usage is thus in keeping with the general sense of "symbolic" acts in anthropology: a rain dance or a shaman's spell are *symbolic* in that they are irreducible to their "real"--physical, mechanical, causal--counterparts. The term is also occasionally employed in the traditional sense of "imaginary"--*illusory* or *unreal* ²⁷--and, periodically, in its classical psychoanalytic acceptation, denoting *unconscious* symbolism (trains and tunnels, hats and umbrellas).

What, then, leads Lacan to his mature view of the potency of the symbolic order? Contrary to received opinion, it is not a simultaneous insight into the privileged status of speech and language in psychoanalysis, as the title of his seminal Rome speech suggests.²⁸ For while Lacan had long since recognized the unique role of *speech* in analytic method, he has also been inclined to regard *language* and *social institutions* as abstract and artificial. He had written in 1936 that the latter objectify the "relational," "interactive" "movement" of "affective communication" ²⁹--the imaginary identifications-- on which human subjectivity is founded. This is because Lacan, like Freud, is not quite able to square a sociological perspective with a theory of libidinal (or *imaginary*) dynamics. Sociology posits as primary and irreducible an order of reality that psychoanalysis seem required, due to its own individualistic and biologicistic commitments, to reduce to an epiphenomenal derivative, or an illusion.

For this reason, Lacan's 1951 article, "Intervention on the Transference," ³⁰ marks an important turning point. Here for the first time Lacan argues that subjectivity must be conceived, even in its most intimate and idiosyncratic manifestations, as regulated by *social* norms and conventions. Individuals embody social *positions* and instantiate collective categories which are determinative for subjective experience without necessarily being available to individual understanding. Social positions and categories are no longer villainized as "abstract" and "artificial" and opposed to intersubjective spontaneity. On the contrary, they are determinative features of the individual's most intimate phantasy life. The language Lacan brings to bear on the Dora case heralds this change in attitude. "It is a matter of a scansion of the structures through which truth is transmuted for the subject, and which affects not only her understanding of things, but her very *position* as subject, of which her 'objects' are a function." ³¹

Lacan is thus in the process of taking a momentous step beyond his earlier position that "all subjectivity" has a "*bipolar* structure" (of self and other, master and slave). ³² He is beginning to see that, behind the bipolar *tête-à-tête* of analyst and analysand, there is an entire system of normative social relations, which orders and makes possible their interaction. Numerous references to "mana," "elementary social exchanges" and the "circulation of precious gifts" in "Intervention on the Transference" ³³ confirm that Lacan's nascent appreciation of the effects of the *socius* on the individual stems from the French sociological tradition, absorbed through the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss. ³⁴

The Collective Recast as the Symbolic: Lévi-Strauss

If, prior to 1950, Lacan's allusions and references to sociology and anthropology attest to a certain knowledge of Durkheim, Malinowski, Frazer, and Mauss, ³⁵ at the same

time a passing reference to Lévi-Strauss in 1949 remains ornamental. ³⁶ It is thus fair to conclude that, though familiar with *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* and two important articles that had appeared in 1949, it is not until Lévi-Strauss's programmatic *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss* (1950) that Lacan is able to appreciate--and begin to appropriate--the full scope and ambitions of the anthropologist's approach. ³⁷ His passage from an "imaginary" to a "symbolic" conception of psychoanalytic action thus involves less any clinical or technical discovery than a gradual but momentous shift in perspective in regard to already established material: rather than any precise doctrine, Lévi-Strauss provides Lacan with a *sociological framework* which, we shall see, recasts Durkheim in a language more attractive to Lacan. It is initially this framework that frees the concepts of a talking cure, repression, and the unconscious from the psychological and biological reductionism latent in classical Freudian theory.

Certainly, Lacan had recognized early on the fundamental status of spoken dialogue in psychoanalysis, ³⁸ had speculated about the linguistic-rhetorical nature of mental disorders, ³⁹ and had perhaps even begun to sense the limitations of his theory of the imaginary. Yet he still lacks a framework to make sense of analytic method--to account for the efficacy of speech. What, he must ask, needs to be assumed about the nature of human subjectivity and language to account for the possibility of a talking cure? How, moreover, might one ground a non-organic view of the unconscious--a non-biological conception of the drives and repression? As I hope I have made clear, Durkheim's sociology already suggests a framework for response. But it is Lévi-Strauss's polemical *Introduction to Mauss* that makes a lasting impression on Lacan.

In the first place, the anthropologist is explicit and categorical about the *social* conditions of normal subjectivity. "The saneness of the individual mind," he writes, "implies participation in social life, just as the refusal to enter into it...corresponds to the onset of mental disturbance." ⁴⁰ The intuition that analytic efficacy involves some form of social *integration* of the individual, though already suggested by Durkheim and Mauss, is now seen to confirm from an anthropological angle the Kojève-Hegel doctrine, increasingly dear to Lacan, that human "Desire is the desire for recognition." ⁴¹

Secondly, beyond the position of Durkheim and Mauss that the mental is coextensive with the social, Lévi-Strauss stresses that the social is tantamount to the *linguistic*, and that language must be conceived as a system of relations functioning *independently* from the biological or psychological "reality" it renders meaningful. "Like language," writes the anthropologist, "the social *is* an autonomous reality (the same one, for that matter)." This translates Durkheim's thesis about the *exteriority* of social facts-- that they constitute a "reality *sui generis*," as he is fond of repeating. Lévi-Strauss continues: "symbols are more real than what they symbolize, the signifier precedes and determines the signified." ⁴² Now, the last phrase would seem to introduce a new idea, foreign to Durkheim: Saussure's distinction of signifier and signified. If this is the case, it gives credence to the assumption I set out to criticize: that Lacan's reevaluation of Freud is rooted in a Saussurean theory of the sign. I will return to the question momentarily.

Finally, Lévi-Strauss reminds Lacan that social phenomena are governed by a form of "symbolic thinking" which consists in the imposition of "unconscious" "laws" and categories on unorganized or contradictory elements of experience. Yet, as I noted, this is less a revolutionary insight than a conscious elaboration of Durkheim's notion of *collective*

representation and *classification*. Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss are here both drawing on a common Kantian heritage, which the anthropologist clearly avows when he concedes that his unconscious is "a Kantian rather than a Freudian unconscious, a combinative, categorizing unconscious"--a kind of "Kantianism without a transcendental subject" 43.

It should be recalled that, prior to Lévi-Strauss's seminal comparison of shamanistic healing and psychoanalysis, 44 Marcel Mauss, Durkheim's preeminent disciple and heir, had identified the social springs of the "magical efficacy" pervasive in the lives of primitive peoples. "The poorly coordinated and impotent gestures," Mauss wrote, "through which individuals' need is expressed, are given form by magic; because magic turns them into rites it makes them efficacious." In other words, he continues, "magic brings collective forces and ideas to the service of individual imagination."⁴⁵ What, however, makes *collective* forces particularly efficacious, where merely individual ones fail?

As I noted, the answer predominant in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries was that the collective is *intrinsically* primitive and powerful. For psychologists and anthropologists like Le Bon, MacDougal, Frazer, or Boas, collective ideas, or the *group mind*, necessarily hold sway over the individual, for the latter's representations are both quantitatively weaker and lacking in the depth and cogency provided by cumulative phylogenetic inheritance. (This is the view Freud takes to task in his essay on group psychology.) Though at times Durkheim and Mauss give credence to this view, we saw that they generally understand the efficacy of the collective in another sense, one more satisfying for Lévi-Strauss and Lacan's rationalist proclivities.

Mauss reasons in the same 1903 essay that collective ideas are kinds of "*a priori* judgments" or *unconscious categories* that give form to, and are presupposed by, individual's experience. 46 The shaman's cure is efficacious not because his patient has a particular psychological experience (fear, amazement, awe) but because it is supported by the whole society's *belief* in magical efficacy, a belief that is so deep, that so intimately structures their world, that it is not subject to criticism or even conscious awareness. Collective beliefs are thus not, strictly speaking, mental or psychological *experiences* of any kind; they are the *a priori* categories that allow for their possibility.

In two lines from "The Sorcerer and His Magic," Lévi-Strauss sums up the collective or, in his vocabulary, "symbolic" mainspring of shamanistic and psychoanalytic healing:

These experiences...remain intellectually diffuse and emotionally intolerable unless they incorporate one or another of the patterns present in the group's culture. The assimilation of such patterns is the only means of objectivizing subjective states, of formulating inexpressible feelings, and of integrating inarticulated experiences into a system. 47

Objectivizing the subjective, formulating the inexpressible, integrating the individual's fragmented past into a coherent story: Doesn't psychoanalysis exhibit the same social efficacy? The force of Lévi-Strauss's reminder that analytic dialogue is a kind of linguistic transaction is not that it obeys hidden laws or rules but that it must be situated on a *social* plane. Like the shaman, the analyst inhabits a position of authority, representative of the social group as a whole. The dialogue with the patient is thus an eminently social activity: it

allows the "abnormal" individual to give expression to him or herself in the "language" of the group, to find or, for Lacan in this period, to construct, an "individual myth"--a story that somehow brings the idiosyncracies of one's history into accordance with collective stories. It is a small step to the realization that the unconscious itself has a *transindividual* or social status: it is "the discourse of the Other," as Lacan begins to write in this period. 48

Far from simply abreacting a quantum of suppressed affect or bringing repressed memories to consciousness, then, for Lévi-Strauss spoken dialogue is efficacious because it lends *collective* existence to what would otherwise be irreducibly "incommunicable," and thus "intolerable," experience. "The problem here," writes Lévi-Strauss, "is not to attribute confused or disorganized states, emotions, or representations to an objective cause, but rather to articulate them into a whole or system. The system is valid precisely to the extent it allows the coalescence or precipitation of these diffuse states, whose discontinuity also makes them painful." 49

One is entitled to ask, however, *why* this "discontinuity" should be felt as painful. It seems that Lévi-Strauss is drawing on several supplementary assumptions that should be made explicit.

(i) First, following Durkheim's notion of *classificatory systems*, the anthropologist assumes that what is meaningful for a human being is co-extensive with what has been comprehended in a social *system* whose basic rules and categories are unconscious (in a descriptive and not dynamic sense). As Durkheim had argued, human culture distinguishes itself from the organized societies of other animals by its dependence on a complex classificatory system of the natural and social worlds: a systematic grid of relations and oppositions that identifies and coordinates all meaningful objects of experience. In addition to connecting human beings of a given class or clan with sets of other beings, these systems also specify classes of human beings and determines rules for their interaction (kinship and marriage laws, for example). Here Lévi-Strauss's contribution is to emphasize that such systems may operate independently of individual awareness.

(ii) On this basis, Lévi-Strauss supposes that what falls outside of such a system, what cannot be expressed in a group's language, is intrinsically "painful" or "intolerable" for the individual or group. There thus appear to be two sides to this "pain." On the one hand, indeterminacy in itself--for Durkheim, a failure to organize individual experience into collective categories--would appear to be *anxiety* provoking; this is Lévi-Strauss's theory that negative emotion may be produced by a kind of cognitive dissonance. On the other hand, positive emotion or, simply, psychic normalcy is produced by successful integration into the classificatory schemes of the group. For example, the function of myth for Lévi-Strauss is to produce a coherent story that reconciles otherwise contradictory ideas: the Oedipus myth balances the belief in autochthony with the fact of human procreation, allows them to coexist in a single story instead of breaking up into two contradictory statements.

At the same time, the fact that an experience cannot be *expressed* to another in the language of the group--for Durkheim, a deficiency of social solidarity--may also be also *inherently* painful. Because of his structuralist--rationalist--commitment, this idea is not developed by Lévi-Strauss. It is, however, crucial for Lacan and points to an important but generally overlooked *affective* dimension to his anthropology: the idea that the need to express or address oneself to another, to demand love or receive recognition from others, is fundamental and organizes much of our behavior, conscious and unconscious. In

Durkheim's terms this fundamental *allocutory* trend distinctive of human behavior would depend on the *externality* of the social in regard to the individual: the fact that certain figures in the social scheme--the mother, the father, the teacher--readily take on a kind of ideal and absolute status, representative of the power and authority of the group as a whole. For this reason, Lacan sometimes refers to these figures as "representatives of the Other," that is of social institutions and traditions as they stand over against the individual.

(iii) Finally, Lévi-Strauss assumes that the ultimate goal of human culture is, in a broad sense, both *intellectual*--accommodating contradiction, organizing chaos, reconciling opposition--and *communicative*--bringing otherwise opposed or unrelated individuals and groups into peaceful contact. In other words, at the same time that symbolic activity organizes extra-linguistic reality in a meaningful manner, it produces rules and distinctions that allow for exchange and communication that are the essence of human society. Once again, this valorization of communication should be placed in the Kantian or, broadly, the Enlightenment, tradition so vital to Durkheim: "It is impossible for me," Durkheim writes, "to make a sensation pass from my consciousness into that of another.... all communication between men is an exchange of concepts." 50

In sum, then, by linking together subjectivity, social existence, language, and unconscious thought, Lévi-Strauss has reformulated and elaborated upon Durkheim. Yet he has done so in a seductive idiom, attractive to Lacan: one that promises a revolutionary science of unconscious structures. Its allure may be measured by the epidemic of ideas it sets off in Lacan: "combinatory logic" of the unconscious, "symbolic exchange," the "Law" of castration, the "subject who receives his message back in an inverted form from the Other." By the mid-1950s, a profusion of such imported terms, graphs, and formulas has given Lacan's writing, too, the appearance of a strange and unique intellectual idiom. Yet it is a language clearly haunted by a longing for the scientific status of structural anthropology and linguistics, a kind of *science envy* of which Lévi-Strauss at least was well aware: "All of a sudden...the linguists are doing things...with the same sort of rigorous approach...as the exact and natural sciences. So, as far as the anthropologist is concerned, there is some, let us say, melancholy, and a great deal of envy." 51

The primary effect of the framework inherited from Lévi-Strauss, then, is not the birth of a new science of the unconscious. Rather it is to shift the frame of intelligibility of basic Freudian concepts like repression, recollection, and the talking cure from an individualistic to a sociological setting. From out of this setting, too, emerges Lacan's trademark conceptual triad: an order of the *real* (natural, organic) heterogenous to that level of *symbolic* (collective) reality on which all human transactions depend; and a level of *imaginary* experience (fleeting and insubstantial *individual consciousness* for Durkheim, *confused* and *chaotic* feelings for Levi-Strauss) dependent for its determinacy and intelligibility on symbolic categories.

Signifier and Signified

To conclude, let me return to Lévi-Strauss's ostensibly Saussurean claim that "the signifier precedes and determines the signified." How precisely is this claim to be understood? And how precisely is it appropriated by Lacan?

Many critics have assumed Lacan's "theory of the signifier" to be an original and

independent doctrine. Yet it is clear that, initially, its main difference from the concepts of *the symbolic* and *symbolic order* are terminological, not substantive: for the most part, the signifier/signified dichotomy *replicates* in the vocabulary of Saussurean linguistics the oppositions of symbolic and real and symbolic and imaginary orders already established under Lévi-Strauss's tutelage.

It is important to recall that Lacan's initial references to structural linguistics--his first appeals to *signifier* and *signified*--are derived from Lévi-Strauss' discussions of Saussure. This is a compelling reason to approach Lacan's understanding of the signifier/signified distinction in light of the anthropologist's appropriation of structural linguistics, not in light of structural linguistics proper.

First, one should recall the *context* of the anthropologist's oft-cited claim, "the signifier precedes and determines the signified." The phrase is proffered as the conclusion to a critique of Carl Jung's view of symbolism, a position summarily dismissed because it makes unjustified appeal to *extra-linguistic* reality, that is, to the "symbolized things" (archaic instincts, feelings, experiences) held to "form a kind of substratum" underlying the archetypes that represent them.⁵² This marks a first important difference from Saussure's usage. For while signifier and signified are both intra-linguistic (at least intra-mental) facts in Saussure's theory,⁵³ Lévi-Strauss employs them to designate, respectively, the relation of linguistic to *extra-linguistic* reality. "It is not," the anthropologist writes *contra* Jung, "a matter of translating an extrinsic given into symbols, but of reducing to their nature as symbolic system things which *never fall outside that system* except to fall straight into incommunicability. Like language, the social *is* an autonomous reality (the same one, moreover); symbols are more real than what they symbolize, the signifier precedes and determines the signified."⁵⁴ That "symbol" and "signifier" are *synonyms* in Lévi-Strauss' usage is evident from this passage. His appeal to linguistic terminology simply restates in a new register the *sociological* thesis of the primacy of the *symbolic* over the *real*: classificatory systems "precede and determine" material and organic reality in the sense that, prior to this classification, nothing can be *known* of that reality. Unorganized, it is mute and meaningless. This might be labelled the *epistemological* view of the signifier's primacy. It is precisely the thought behind Lacan's formula, "the signifier structures the signified"; the signified here refers to pre-verbal states about which, without some linguistic representation, "we can know nothing."

Under an alternate reading, the thesis of the signifier's primacy can be seen to contain what might be called a *cosmological* or cosmogenic principle. Namely, that prior to the distinctions introduced by language and collective ideas, nothing, no minimally organized world, no cosmos, can be said to *exist*. The signifier in this sense can be said to *create* the signified. Yet once again, this is not a tenet of structural linguistics, but a recasting of an idea derived from Lévi-Strauss: that the symbol "introduces presence and absence into the real" and creates the possibility of an objective world. Once again, we must recall that Lévi-Strauss's "signifier" is synonymous with Lacan's "symbolic order," not Saussure's sound-image. In turn, Lévi-Strauss's "signified" is here synonymous with (one of) Lacan's views of the category of the *real*: the organic or physical world unmediated by human interpretive schemas.⁵⁵

Finally, the notion of the primacy of the signifier over the signified also admits of a *psychological* interpretation. As I noted, a precondition of psychic intelligibility and normalcy for the anthropologist is that the individual's unorganized sensory and "affective"

experience be submitted to the unconscious categories of the group's language and social order. "The assimilation of such patterns," he writes in a passage cited earlier, "is the only means of objectivizing subjective states, of formulating inexpressible feelings, and of integrating inarticulated experiences into a system." ⁵⁶ In a psychological context, the signifier *gives form* to the signified in the same way that Lacan's symbolic order *structures* ambivalent or chaotic *imaginary* experience, and Durkheim's collective ideas organize individual consciousness.

The ambiguities of Lévi-Strauss' usage are, unfortunately, not clarified but multiplied by Lacan. For not only does Lacan freely conflate epistemological, cosmological and psychological contexts. At the same time, he baffles his interlocutors by insisting that, in *all* its acceptations, the signifier must be understood as a strictly *linguistic* concept. While, true to his word, Lacan does go on to offer quasi-linguistic definitions of both signifier and signified, the problem is that these are not at all equivalent to his other uses of the terms, and that the former do not illuminate the latter in any obvious way. ⁵⁷ Moreover, as we noted, Lacan imputes diverse properties of the symbolic to the new term as well (including, as we shall see, the idea of symbolic function or position).

In its principal features, then, the *thought* underlying the distinction of signifier and signified is already present in the earliest stages of Lacan's symbolic turn. For one thing, the psychological acceptance of the distinction is, at bottom, a reformulation of Lacan's earlier assumption that a situation, in order to be repressed, "must at some time have been verbalized." ⁵⁸ This equivalence is evident in Lacan's assertion (in 1956) that "there is nothing in the *signified*--lived flux, wants, drives--that doesn't seem to be marked with the stamp of the *signifier*, with all the resultant slippages of meaning which constitute symbolism." ⁵⁹ In other words, as Lacan is wont to repeat, if symbolic language is our only purchase on subjective experience it is because it informs that experience even in its pre-verbal stages. The imaginary and real are always at least *organized* by the symbolic. "Anyone who's observed a child, " Lacan reasons, "has seen that the same blow, the same knock, the same slap, isn't received in the same fashion, depending on whether it is punitive or accidental. The symbolic relation is constituted as early as possible...." ⁶⁰ The quasi-linguistic formula "the signified is marked by the signifier" expresses precisely the same idea in a different idiom.

Another principal source of confusion is that Lacan's use of the *signifier* in its linguistic guise also recuperates the normative, regulative and authoritarian attributes of the concept of symbolic function in social anthropology. The following passage from a 1957 colloquium brings out this alarming equivocation:

...The incidence of the signifier over the signified is something quite tangible in the A,B,Cs of the analyst's experience. Take the function of the father. It's absolutely unthinkable unless you discern the signifier which is its term (the "name of the father," as we say in religious invocations), unless, that is, the name of the father has that signifying value which condenses, orients, polarizes towards itself a whole series of significations....

And to understand a set of phenomena like those constituted by a psychosis, this reference to the signifier as such, to the assumption of the signifier by the subject, seems to me to be the only point of reference....

To conclude, the notion of the signifier *must be taken in the linguistic*

Indeed. The problem, however, remains that the active, transformative powers of the signifier described above have little to do with any of concepts of modern linguistics. That the paternal "signifier" condenses, orients, and polarizes experience is simply a new, and convoluted, way of saying that in patriarchal societies a certain *symbolic position* in the family is accorded special value and power by the social group. Once again, the potency of the signifier is explained by a theory of the social, not by a theory of the sign.

This brings my reconstruction to a close. The similarities between Durkheim and Lacan that have been brought to light are meant not only to reduce Lacan's *revolutionary* reputation. By the same token they are intended to strengthen the case for Lacan as a kind of bridge figure between Freud and the sociological tradition. Though viewing Lacan in this light does not account for all aspects of his thought, it does provide a coherent framework for understanding the major shift in perspective that inaugurated his mature thinking. We saw that Durkheim, like Lacan after him, insists on the *primacy* of social forces and ideas over those of the individual: the collective is cumulative, transhistorical, and transindividual, the source of all higher human accomplishments. The theme of the external and transcendent character of social facts, the major leitmotif of Durkheim's writings, is transformed in Lacan into the thesis of the primacy and autonomy of the *symbolic order*. On the basis of their advocacy of the transcendence of the social, Durkheim and Lacan are allied in their critiques of various forms of psychological and biological reductionism which deny the existence and efficacy of facts of this order.

Furthermore, we saw how the collective for Durkheim is manifest in the mode of *exteriority* and *constraint*. These ideas find their echo in Lacan's stress on the *eccentricity* of language in relation to the individual, on the binding force of all genuinely *symbolic* transactions, as well as in his insistence that the individual is inevitably "subjected to the law of the Other." The Durkheimian theme of the externality of the social in fact suffuses Lacan's writings. At times, it appears in striking form, as in the following definition of the unconscious: "The exteriority of the symbolic in relation to man is the very notion of the unconscious." 62

The overestimation of the role of structural linguistics in the development of Lacan's thinking has led to considerable confusion. I hope my excursus into Durkheim and Lévi-Strauss, however fragmentary, has outlined a more compelling and coherent picture of the emergence of certain of his mature ideas from the soil of sociology and anthropology.

NOTES

1. Marcia Cavell, *The Psychoanalytic Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 113-117.

2. While recent commentaries have begun to situate Lacan's ideas in appropriate historical and intellectual contexts, it is wrong to assume that a *single* context or story can account for all aspects of his thinking. For example, the sociological picture I will propose does not account for his conception of *desire*: they are related but distinct contributions, not elements in a single *system*.

Thus, one can accept Lacan's doctrine of desire without accepting that of the symbolic, and vice-versa, and the story that explains the one does not necessarily explain the other. Lacan's notion of desire makes better sense within the tradition of negativity that radiates (for Lacan) from Kojève's Hegel through Heidegger, Sartre, Blanchot, and Bataille. Borch-Jakobsen has made the most thorough and convincing case for this view in *Lacan: The Absolute Master*, trans. Douglas Brick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

3. A more extreme example of this historical forgetting is Luce Irigaray's testimony that student's at the University of Paris-Vincennes department of psychoanalysis in the early 1970s had believed the Master-Slave dialectic to be Lacan's own invention. Cited by David Macey, *Lacan in Contexts* (London: Verso, 1988), 4. Macey's chapter, "The Final State," is a detailed and edifying account of the myth of the *timeless system* that has accompanied Lacan's reception in analytic and non-analytic circles.

4. *L'Arc*, special issue on Lacan (1976): 57, n.4. In fact, as we shall see, Lacan's category of the symbolic or symbolic order only surfaces around 1951 or 1952, inaugurating the conceptual triad of *symbolic*, *imaginary* and *real* which, prior to this time, cannot be said to exist.

5. Lacan has often been accused not simply of being wrong, mistaken, or confused, but of not saying anything at all. François George devoted an entire book to proving that, beneath the crudely sewn patchwork of doctrines and dicta passed off by disciples as the *Lacanian system*, the emperor is in fact quite naked. *L'Effet 'yau de poêle* (Paris: Hachette, 1969).

6. Jacques Derrida, "Le Facteur de la vérité," *Poétique*, 21 (1975). Though he assumes the metaphysical properties of the Lacanian system to be self-evident (a clear case of phono-phallo-logocentrism), Derrida never undertakes a reading of texts beyond the case of "The Purloined Letter" that would, by his own admission, be necessary to substantiate such a claim.

7. Cathérine Clément, *The Life and Legends of Jacques Lacan*; Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan and Co. A History of Psychoanalysis in France*; David Macey, *Lacan in Contexts*; Mikkel Borch-Jacobsen, *Lacan: The Absolute Master*.

8. The phrase, which aptly describes a union that is never quite tangibly explained, is Macey's, *Lacan in Contexts*, 5.

9. From the mid-1950s through the late-1960s, Lacan returns repeatedly to the idea that psychoanalysis is grounded scientifically in structural linguistics: "...Linguistics is seen to occupy the key position in this domain [of scientific investigation], and the reclassification of the sciences and a regrouping of them around it signals...a revolution in knowledge...." "The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious," *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York, Norton, 1977), 149. (Henceforth cited as ES.) "...The unconscious is structured like a language...a material operates in it according to certain laws, which are the same laws as those discovered in the study of actual languages...." "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of its Power," ES, 234. "...The mechanisms described by Freud as those of the 'primary process', in which the unconscious assumes its rule, correspond exactly to the functions that this [structuralist] school believes determine the most radical aspects of the effects of language, namely metaphor and metonymy...." "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," ES, 298.

10. Benveniste, next to Jakobson Lacan's most eminent ally in the field, offered the first substantive criticism of Lacan's use of linguistics: "...the syntax in which these unconscious symbols [in dreams]

are strung together does not obey any logical necessity (...) For it is style rather than language that we would take as term of comparison with the properties Freud has disclosed as indicative of oneiric 'language'. "Remarks on the Function of Language in Freudian Theory," *La Psychanalyse I* (1956), 15, 16; reprinted in *Problems in General Linguistics* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971), 74, 75. Language understood as a system of rules and laws governing the exchange of meaningful messages--Saussure's concept of *langue*, developed by Lévi-Strauss--is not then, contrary to Lacan's claims, what is at issue in the Freudian unconscious. In 1969 a less tolerant French linguist, Olivier Mounin, accused Lacan of "skim-reading" Saussure and of completely bastardizing his concept of the signifier. See "Quelques traits du style de Jacques Lacan," *Nouvelle Revue Française*, 193 (January 1969), 89, 92. A year earlier Anthony Wilden had won Lacan's opprobrium and the ban of his book in France by expressing his doubts about the precision and consistency of Lacan's use of Saussurean terms. See Wilden's essay at the end of *The Language of the Self: The Function of Language in Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968). Good critical accounts of Lacan's relation to linguistics can be found in: Eugen Bär, "Understanding Lacan," in *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Science*, eds. Goldberg and Rosen, vol. 3 (1974), espec. 473-481; David Macey, *Lacan in Contexts* (London: Verso, 1988), chapter five, "Linguistics or Linguisterie?" and Mikkel Borch-Jakobsen, *Lacan: The Absolute Master*, trans. Douglas Brick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), chapter six, "Linguisteries."

11. *Feminine Sexuality*, eds. J. Mitchell and J. Rose, trans. J. Rose (New York: Norton, 1985), 1.

12. Lacan continues: "In order to leave Jakobson his proper domain, we will have to coin some other word. I will call it *linguisterie*." *Le Seminaire XX: Encore* (Paris: Seuil, 1975), 20.

13. Carl Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976; originally translated as *The Psychology of the Unconscious*).

14. Freud's argument with social psychology is developed in *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego* (1921), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 18, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1953-1972). Henceforth cited as SE.

15. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, SE 13, 113. Freud's footnotes attest to his familiarity with several articles by Durkheim on totemism as well as his seminal *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, which appeared in 1912, when Freud was still writing and researching the final chapter of the book.

16. See, e.g., *Complexes familiaux*, 16, 66.

17. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* trans. Joseph Ward Swain (New York: Free Press, 1965), 29.

18. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, 307.

19. Durkheim's first and best-known definition of "a social fact" is given in *The Rules of Sociological Method* (Glencoe, New Jersey: Free Press, 1950), 59. Externality, constraint, generality, and independence from individual manifestations are the four criteria that can be discerned.

20. Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method and Selected Texts on Sociology and Its Method*, ed. Steven Lukes, trans. W.D. Halls (New York: Free Press, 1982), 128.

21. These themes are developed in Durkheim's seminal study, *Suicide* (1897), trans. John Spaulding and George Simpson (New York, Free Press, 1951).
22. Lacan's thesis is reprinted in *De la Psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité, suivi de Premiers écrits sur la paranoïa* (Paris: Seuil, 1975). "Motif du crime paranoïaque: le crime des soeurs Papin," is found in the same volume. His article on the family, first published in the 1938 edition of the *Encyclopédie française*, is republished as *Les complexes familiaux dans la formation de l'individu* (Paris: Navarin, 1984).
23. See *Complexes familiaux*, 65-73. Lacan is following Malinowski's theses about the cultural relativity of the Oedipus complex, published in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922); *Sex and Repression in Savage Societies* (1927), and *The Sexual Life of Savages in Northwestern Melanesia*, 2 vols. (1929).
24. Lacan (1936), "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," *Ecrits* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), 77. (Henceforth cited as E.)
25. Lacan, "Some Reflections on the Ego," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 34 (1953):12.
26. See, for example, Lacan (1948), "Agressivity in Psychoanalysis," E, 10; ES, 14: The imago "has remained permanent at the level of *symbolic* overdetermination we call the subject's unconscious...." Italics added.
27. See, for example, Lacan (1951), "Theoretical Introduction to the Functions of Psychoanalysis in Criminology," E, 131.
28. "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," ES, 30-113.
29. Lacan (1936), "Beyond the Reality Principle," E, 87.
30. In all likelihood a summary of Lacan's first seminar, conducted in private, on the case of Dora.
31. Lacan (1951), "Intervention on Transference," E, 218.
32. Lacan (1948), "Agressivity in Psychoanalysis," ES, 10.
33. Lacan, "Intervention on Transference," E, 225, 222, and 219, respectively.
34. Crucial texts for Lacan in this formative period are *Les structures élémentaires de la parenté* (Paris: 1949), *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. J.H.Bell, J. R. von Sturmer and R. Needham (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1969); "Le Sorcier et sa magie," in *Les Temps modernes* 41 (1949): 3-24; "L'Efficacité symbolique," in *Revue d'histoire et des religions* cxxxv, 1 (1949): 5-27, which are translated as "The Sorcerer and his Magic" and "The Effectiveness of Symbols" in *Structural Anthropology*, chapters ix and x, respectively (henceforth cited as SA); and, of special importance, "Introduction à l'oeuvre de Marcel Mauss," in Marcel Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1950), ix-lii; *Introduction to the Work of Marcel Mauss*, trans. Felicity Baker (London: Routledge, 1987). Henceforth cited as *Introduction to Mauss*.
35. See *Les Complexes familiaux dans la formation de l'individu* (Paris: Navarin, 1984), 14-17 and

passim for references to Durkheim and Malinowski; 54, for a reference to Frazer; and "Theoretical Introduction to the Function of Psychoanalysis in Criminology," (1950) in E, 132, for a reference to Mauss.

36. Lacan (1949), "The Mirror Stage," ES,3; E, 95: "*imagos...it is our privilege to see...in the penumbra of symbolic efficacy....*"

37. Private discussions with Lévi-Strauss no doubt played some role in Lacan's understanding of the anthropologist's views as well as those of Jakobson and Saussure, but it is impossible to say to what extent the latter depend on the former. Lévi-Strauss remarks that their conversations in the fifties centered on art and literature and not on their respective professional work or philosophy. The anthropologist testifies: "We were very friendly for a few years. We would stop by the Merleau-Ponty's to have lunch at Guitrancourt, where he [Lacan] had a house." Claude Lévi-Strauss, *De Près et de loin* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1988), 107. Of course, for Lacan the anthropologist is always "my friend, Lévi-Strauss." References to structural anthropology are always favorable and are usually intended to bolster the scientific status of his own work by association. Nonetheless, Lévi-Strauss remarks several times that he understands little of Lacan's work. See, e.g., *De près et de loin*, 26-27.

38. See, e.g., "Beyond the Reality Principle," (1936) E, 82-83; "Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis" (1948) E, 106; and "Remarks on Psychic Causality" (1946;1950), E, 167-168.

39. In one of his earliest articles Lacan refers already to the "original syntax" and "style" specific to paranoia. "Le problème du style et la conception psychiatrique des formes paranoïaques de l'expérience," *Minotaure* 1 (June 1933): 11-12.

40. Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to Mauss*, 18.

41. See, e.g., Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), 13. It would seem that Lacan came to fully appreciate and appropriate Kojève's ideas only after they were edited and published in written form, in 1947.

42. Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to Mauss*, 50.

43. The remark is by Paul Ricoeur, "Structure and Hermeneutics," in *The Conflict of Interpretation* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974). Lévi-Strauss accepts the characterization in *The Raw and the Cooked*, London, 1970, 11, note 3.

44. "The Sorcerer and his Magic," in SA. The analogy to psychoanalysis is also drawn in "The Effectiveness of Symbols [Symbolic Efficacy]" in SA.

45. Mauss (1902-1903), "Esquisse d'une théorie générale de la magie" *Sociologie et anthropologie*, 135.

46. Mauss, *Sociologie et anthropologie*, 115-117.

47. "The Sorcerer and his Magic," SA, 171-172.

48. Unfortunately, it is only a slightly more audacious leap to the conclusion that the unconscious, like systems of kinship and potlatch, must be conceived a "closed system" governed by "symbolic

laws," relationships "perhaps definable by a transformational formula." Lacan (1953), "The Neurotic's Individual Myth," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 48 (1970): 410. Where the formula "The unconscious is the discourse of the Other" recalls Durkheimian sociology, Lacan's more infamous dictum, that "the unconscious is structured like a language," attests to his ongoing fascination with structuralism as a scientific model.

49. Lévi-Strauss, "The Sorcerer and his Magic," SA, 182.

50. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 482.

51. Lévi-Strauss, "Linguistics and Anthropology," SA, 69.

52. Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to Mauss*, 36.

53. For Saussure, they represent two aspects of any linguistic sign and are only separable in thought, not in experience. The signifier is the acoustic image and the signified is the concept or meaning. At times the text of the *Course* does lead the reader to believe that the signified is the thing or the referent; this ambiguity is raised, for example, by the diagram of the sign for tree that depicts the word "arbor" over a picture of a tree. But this diagram was possibly added by Saussure's editors, and the text itself is fairly unambiguous: the signified designates the concept or mental image associated with the sound image and not an extrinsic referent.

54. Lévi-Strauss, *Introduction to Mauss*, 37, italics added.

55. Cf. Lévi-Strauss (1949), "The Sorcerer and his Magic," SA, 184, where *signifier* and *signified* are similarly defined in epistemological terms, as mental and extra-mental reality.

56. Lévi-Strauss, "The Sorcerer and His Magic," SA, 171-172.

57. Lacan's various quasi-linguistic definitions of the signifier are not all mutually consistent: it is a diacritical element of a closed linguistic system; it is material, not mental or spiritual. "Actes du Congrès de Rome," *La Psychanalyse*, 1 (1956), 243; it is meaningless in itself, bearing no representative or expressive relationship to anything else; its paradigm is the phoneme in that it operates only by opposition. "The Freudian Thing," ES, 126; but it also operates by substitution and association (this is Lacan's conflation of phonemic and semantic levels); finally, the "definition" of the signifier as "that which represents a subject for another signifier" is hard to take seriously as it employs the *definendam* in the definition itself. For a detailed discussion of the linguistic and quasi-linguistic acceptations of these terms in Lacan, see Wilden, *The Language of the Self*, 223-237.

58. Lacan "Intervention at the First World Congress of Psychiatry," (1950) *Ornicar?*, 30 (Autumn 1984): 9.

59. "La Relation d'objet et les structures freudiennes," authorized summary of seminar IV by J.-B. Pontalis, *Bulletin de psychologie*, vol.x (1956-57), no.7, 427.

60. Lacan, *The Seminar, Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954-55*, trans. Sylvan Tomaselli (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 257.

61. Lacan, "Dialogue avec les philosophes français," *Ornicar?* (Spring 1985): 15, italics added.

62. "La psychanalyse et son enseignement," E, 454.