

FREUD AND
PHILOSOPHY

An Essay on Interpretation

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Chapter 1: Language, Symbol, and Interpretation

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND LANGUAGE

This book is a discussion or debate with Freud. Why this interest in psychoanalysis, an interest justified neither by the competence of an analyst nor by the experience of having been analyzed? The purpose of a book is never entirely justified. In any event, no one is required to display his motives or to entangle himself in a confession. To attempt it would be self-delusion. Yet, more than anyone, the philosopher cannot refuse to give his reasons. I will do so by placing my investigation within a wider field of questioning and by relating my particular interest to a common way of posing certain problems.

It seems to me there is an area today where all philosophical investigations cut across one another—the area of language. Language is the common meeting ground of Wittgenstein's investigations, the English linguistic philosophy, the phenomenology that stems from Husserl, Heidegger's investigations, the works of the Bulmannian school and of the other schools of New Testament exegesis, the works of comparative history of religion and of anthropology concerning myth, ritual, and belief—and finally, psychoanalysis.

Today we are in search of a comprehensive philosophy of language to account for the multiple functions of the human act of signifying and for their interrelationships. How can language be put to such diverse uses as mathematics and myth, physics and art? It is no accident that we ask ourselves this question today. We have at our disposal a symbolic logic, an exegetical science, an anthropology, and a psychoanalysis and, perhaps for the first time, we are able to encompass in a single question the problem of the unification of

human discourse. The very progress of the aforementioned disparate disciplines has both revealed and intensified the dismemberment of that discourse. Today the unity of human language poses a problem.

Such is the broad horizon within which our investigation is set. The present study in no way pretends to offer the comprehensive philosophy of language we are waiting for. I doubt moreover that such a philosophy could be elaborated by any one man. A modern Leibniz with the ambition and capacity to achieve it would have to be an accomplished mathematician, a universal exegete, a critic versed in several of the arts, and a good psychoanalyst. While awaiting that philosopher of integral language, perhaps it is possible for us to explore some of the key connections between the disciplines concerned with language. The present essay is an attempt to contribute to that investigation.

I contend that the psychoanalyst is a leading participant in any general discussion about language. To start with, psychoanalysis belongs to our time by virtue of Freud's written work; through this medium psychoanalysis addresses itself to those who are not analysts and who have not been analyzed. I am well aware that without actual practice a reading of Freud is truncated and runs the risk of embracing only a fetish. But if the textual approach to psychoanalysis has limits which practice alone can remove, still it has the advantage of focusing attention upon an entire aspect of Freud's work that may be hidden by practice or overlooked by a science whose sole concern is to account for what goes on in the analytic relationship. A meditation on Freud's work has the advantage of revealing that work's broadest aim: not only the renovation of psychiatry, but a reinterpretation of all psychological productions pertaining to culture, from dreams, through art and morality, to religion. This is how psychoanalysis belongs to modern culture. By interpreting culture it modifies it; by giving it an instrument of reflection it stamps it with a lasting mark.

The fluctuation in Freud's writings between medical investigation and a theory of culture bears witness to the scope of the Freudian project. True, the major texts on culture are to be found

in the last part of Freud's work.¹ However, psychoanalysis should not be regarded as a form of individual psychology, tardily transposed into a sociology of culture. A summary glance at the Freudian bibliography shows that the first texts on art, morality, and religion follow shortly upon *The Interpretation of Dreams*² and are then developed alongside the great doctrinal texts that constitute the "Papers on Metapsychology" (1913-17), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), and *The Ego and the Id* (1923).³ In fact, to grasp how the theory of culture is related to the theory of dreams and the neuroses, it is necessary to go back to *The Interpretation of Dreams* of 1900, for it is here that the connection with mythology and literature was first established. Ever since 1900 the *Traumdeutung* had proposed that dreams are the dreamer's private mythology and myths the waking dreams of peoples, that Sophocles' *Oedipus* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* are to be interpreted in the same way as dreams. We shall see that this proposal presents a problem.

Whatever the outcome of this difficulty, the entrance of psychoanalysis into the general contemporary discussion about language is not due solely to its interpretation of culture. By making dreams not only the first object of his investigation but a model (in what sense we will discuss below) of all the disguised, substitutive, and fictive expressions of human wishing or desire, Freud invites us to look to dreams themselves for the various relations between desire and language. First, it is not the dream as dreamed that can be interpreted, but rather the text of the dream account; analysis attempts to substitute for this text another text that could be called

1. *The Future of an Illusion* was published in 1927, *Civilization and Its Discontents* in 1930, *Moses and Monotheism* in 1937-39.

2. *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* was published in 1905, "Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices" in 1907, *Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's "Grading"* in 1907, the short essay "Creative Writers and Day-dreaming" in 1908, *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* in 1910, and the very important *Totem and Taboo* in 1913.

3. "The Moses of Michelangelo" appeared in 1914, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" in 1915, "A Childhood Recollection from *Dichtung und Wahrheit*" in 1917, "The 'Uncanny'" in 1919, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* in 1921.

the primitive speech of desire. Thus analysis moves from one meaning to another meaning; it is not desires as such that are placed at the center of the analysis, but rather their language. Later we will discuss how this semantics of desire relates to the dynamics expressed in the notions of discharge, repression, cathexis, etc. But it is important to stress from the start that this dynamics—or energetics, or even hydraulics—is articulated only in a semantics: the "vicissitudes of instincts," to use one of Freud's expressions, can be attained only in the vicissitudes of meaning. Therein lies the deep reason for all the analogies between dreams and wit, dreams and myth, dreams and works of art, dreams and religious "illusion," etc. All these "psychical productions" belong to the area of meaning and come under a unified question: How do desires achieve speech? How do desires make speech fail, and why do they themselves fail to speak? This new approach to the whole of human speech, to the meaning of human desire, is what entitles psychoanalysis to its place in the general debate on language.

SYMBOL AND INTERPRETATION

Is it possible to locate more exactly just where psychoanalysis enters this general debate? Having found the origin of the problem in the theme of Freud's first great book, let us also look there for a first indication of the program of psychoanalysis. We are not yet ready to enter into the book itself, but at least the title *Traumdeutung* may serve as a guide. In this composite word we are confronted with the question of dreams and the question of interpretation. Let us take the two paths of the title and follow each in turn. The interpretation is concerned with dreams: the word "dream" is not a word that closes, but a word that opens. It does not close in upon a marginal phenomenon of our psychological life, upon the fantasies of our nights, the oniric. It opens out onto all psychical productions, those of insanity and those of culture, insofar as they are the analogues of dreams, whatever may be the degree and principle of that relationship. Along with dreams is posited what I called above the semantics of desire, a semantics

that centers around a somewhat nuclear theme: as a man of desires I go forth in disguise—*larvatus prodeo*. By the same token language itself is from the outset and for the most part distorted: it means something other than what it says, it has a double meaning, it is equivocal. The dream and its analogues are thus set within a region of language that presents itself as the locus of complex significations where another meaning is both given and hidden in an immediate meaning. Let us call this region of double meaning "symbol," and reserve discussion of the equivalence for later.

The problem of double meaning is not peculiar to psychoanalysis. It is also known to the phenomenology of religion in its constant encounter with those great cosmic symbols of earth, heaven, water, life, trees, and stones, and with those strange narratives about the origin and end of things which are the myths. However, insofar as this discipline is phenomenology and not psychoanalysis, the myths, rituals, and beliefs it studies are not fables but a particular way in which man places himself in relation to fundamental reality, whatever it may be. The problem dealt with by the phenomenology of religion is not primarily the dissimulation of desire in double meaning; this discipline does not begin by regarding symbols as a distortion of language. For the phenomenology of religion, symbols are the manifestation in the sensible—in imagination, gestures, and feelings—of a further reality, the expression of a depth which both shows and hides itself. What psychoanalysis encounters primarily as the distortion of elementary meanings connected with wishes or desires, the phenomenology of religion encounters primarily as the manifestation of a depth or, to use the word immediately, leaving for later a discussion of its content and validity, the revelation of the sacred.

Within the general discussion of language a limited but important debate immediately arises—limited, certainly, because it does not raise the question of the status of univocal languages, but important, since it covers the totality of double-meaning expressions. At the same time the form of the debate is set and the key question proposed: Is the showing-hiding of double meaning always a dissimulation of what desire means, or can it sometimes be a manifes-

tation, a revelation, of the sacred? And is this alternative itself real or illusory, provisional or definitive? This question runs throughout this book.

Before elaborating in the next chapter the terms of the debate and before sketching the method of its resolution, let us continue to explore the outlines of the problem.

Let us return to the title of the *Traumdeutung* and follow the other path of this great title. The term *Deutung* does not mean science in a general way; it means interpretation in a precise way. The word is chosen by design, and its juxtaposition with the theme of dreams is itself quite meaningful. If dreams designate—*pars pro toto*—the entire region of double-meaning expressions, the problem of interpretation in turn designates all understanding specifically concerned with the meaning of equivocal expressions. To interpret is to understand a double meaning.

In this way the place of psychoanalysis within the total sphere of language is specified: it is the area of symbols or double meanings and the area in which the various manners of interpretation confront one another. From now on we shall call this special area, broader than psychoanalysis but narrower than the theory of language as a whole which is its horizon, the "hermeneutic field." By hermeneutics we shall always understand the theory of the rules that preside over an exegesis—that is, over the interpretation of a particular text, or of a group of signs that may be viewed as a text. (We shall explain later what we mean by the notion of text and by the extension of the concept of exegesis to all signs bearing an analogy to a text.)

If then double-meaning expressions constitute the privileged theme of the hermeneutic field, it is at once clear that the problem of symbolism enters a philosophy of language by the intermediary of the act of interpretation.

But this initial decision to interrelate the problem of symbolism and the problem of interpretation raises a series of critical questions which I wish to pose at the beginning of this book. These questions will not be resolved in this chapter but will remain open to the end. It is precisely this mutual relationship that makes the hermeneutic

problem a unique one; at the same time it is decisive for the definitions of symbol and interpretation. And these are anything but self-evident. The extreme confusion of vocabulary in these matters calls for a decision, for taking a position and sticking to it; and this decision entails a whole philosophy which must be brought into the open. I have decided to define, i.e. limit, the notions of symbol and interpretation through one another. Thus a symbol is a double-meaning linguistic expression that requires an interpretation, and interpretation is a work of understanding that aims at deciphering symbols. The critical discussion will be concerned with the legitimacy of seeking the semantic criterion of symbolism in the intentional structure of double meaning, and with the legitimacy of taking this structure as the privileged object of interpretation. This is what is at stake in my decision to mutually delimit the fields of symbolism and interpretation.

In the semantic discussion to follow I shall bracket the conflict that, at least on a first reading, opposes psychoanalytic interpretation, as well as any interpretation conceived as the unmasking, demystification, or reduction of illusions, to interpretation conceived as the recollection or restoration of meaning. I am interested here merely in recognizing the contours of the hermeneutic field, although a discussion that falls short of the above conflict undoubtedly remains formal and abstract. It is important at first not to dramatize the debate but rather to contain it within the strict limits of a semantic analysis that ignores the opposition between distortion and revelation.

TOWARD A CRITIQUE OF SYMBOL

Let us take up the question on the side of symbolism. Certain widespread uses of the word are totally incompatible with one another and call for a reasoned decision. The definition I propose lies between two other definitions, one too broad, the other too narrow, which we shall proceed to discuss. Moreover, it is completely distinct from the conception of symbol in symbolic logic; we shall be able to account for this third differ-

ence only after we have elaborated the problem of hermeneutics and have located this problem within a wider philosophical perspective.⁴

Too broad a definition is one that makes the "symbolic function" the general function of mediation by which the mind or consciousness constructs all its universes of perception and discourse; this definition, as is known, is the one given by Ernst Cassirer in his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. We should not forget that the explicit aim of Cassirer, inspired by Kant's philosophy, was to break the too narrow framework of the transcendental method confined within the critique of the principles of Newtonian philosophy and to explore all the activities of synthesis and their corresponding realms of objectivization. But is it legitimate to use the term "symbolic" for those various "forms" of synthesis in which objects are ruled by functions, for those "forces" each of which produces and posits a world?

Let us do justice to Cassirer: he was the first to have posed the problem of the reconstruction of language. The notion of symbolic form, prior to constituting an answer, delimits a question, namely, the question of the composition of the "mediating functions" within a single function, which Cassirer calls *das Symbolische*. "The symbolic" designates the common denominator of all the ways of objectivizing, of giving meaning to reality.

But why call this function symbolic? Cassirer chose the term first of all in order to express the universality of the Copernican revolution, which substituted the question of objectivization by the mind's synthetic function for the question of reality as it is in itself. The symbolic is the universal mediation of the mind between ourselves and the real; the symbolic, above all, indicates the nonimmediacy of our apprehension of reality. The use of the term in mathematics, linguistics, and the history of religion seems to confirm that "symbolic" has this species of universality.

Furthermore, the word "symbol" seems well suited to designate the cultural instruments of our apprehension of reality: language, religion, art, science. The task of a philosophy of symbolic forms is to arbitrate the claims of absoluteness of each of these symbolic

4. See below, Ch. 3.

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functions and the many antinomies of the concept of culture that result from those claims.

Finally, the word "symbol" expresses the mutation undergone by a theory of categories—space, time, cause, number, etc.—when it escapes the limits of a mere epistemology and moves from a critique of reason to a critique of culture.

I do not deny the advantages of this choice, still less the legitimacy of Cassirer's problem, although the Kantian transcendentalism which continues to govern the notions of objectivization, synthesis, and reality is prejudicial, in my opinion, to the work of description and classification of the symbolic forms. We mentioned the unique problem that Cassirer denotes by the term "symbolic" from the beginning: the problem of the unity of language and the interrelationship of its multiple functions within a single empire of discourse. But this problem seems to me better characterized by the notion of sign or signifying function.⁵ How man gives meaning by filling a sensory content with meaning—that is the problem Cassirer deals with.

Is this a dispute over words? I do not think so. What is at stake in this terminological discussion is the specificity of the hermeneutic problem. By uniting all the functions of mediation under the title of "the symbolic," Cassirer makes this concept equally as broad as the concepts of reality and culture. Thus a fundamental distinction is wiped out, which constitutes, as I see it, a true dividing line: the distinction between univocal and plurivocal expressions. It is this distinction that creates the hermeneutic problem. Moreover, Anglo-Saxon linguistic philosophy will see to it that we are mindful of this signifying function of the semantic field. If we use the term symbolic for the signifying function in its entirety, we no longer have a word to designate the group of signs whose intentional texture calls for a read-

5. As Cassirer himself says, the concept of symbol is meant to "encompass the totality of those phenomena in which the sensuous is in any way filled with meaning [*Sinnerfüllung im Sinnlichen*], in which a sensuous content, while preserving the mode of its existence and facticity [*in der Art seines Da-Seins und So-Seins*], represents a particularization and embodiment, a manifestation and incarnation of meaning." *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, tr. R. Manheim (3 vols. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1957), 3, 93. Cited in C. Hamburg, *Symbol and Reality* (The Hague, Nijhoff, 1956), p. 59.

ing of another meaning in the first, literal, and immediate meaning. As I see it the problem of the unity of language cannot validly be posed until a fixed status has been assigned to a group of expressions that share the peculiarity of designating an indirect meaning in and through a direct meaning and thus call for something like a deciphering, i.e. an interpretation, in the precise sense of the word. To mean something other than what is said—this is the symbolic function.

Let us proceed a bit further in the semantic analysis of sign and symbol. In every sign a sensory vehicle is the bearer of a signifying function that makes it stand for something else. But I will not say that I interpret the sensory sign when I understand what it says. Interpretation has to do with a more complicated intentional structure: a first meaning is set up which intends something, but this object in turn refers to something else which is intended only through the first object.

What may lead to confusion here is the fact that in a sign there is a duality, or rather two pairs of factors, which in each case go together to form the unity of the signification. First there is the structural duality of the sensory sign and the signification it carries (the signifier and the signified, in the terminology of Ferdinand de Saussure); second there is the intentional duality of the sign (both sensory and meaningful, signifier and signified) and the thing or object designated. This double duality, structural and intentional, is most clearly seen in linguistic signs of conventional institution. On the one hand, words, phonetically different according to various languages, carry identical significations or meanings; on the other hand, these significations make the sensory signs stand for something that the signs designate. We say that words, by their sensible quality, express significations and that, thanks to their signification, they designate something. The term "to signify" covers the twofold duality of expression and designation.

But this is not the duality that specifies a symbol. The duality of symbolism is of a higher degree. It is neither the duality of sensory sign and signification nor that of signification and thing, the latter duality moreover being inseparable from the former. In a symbol the duality is added to and superimposed upon the duality of sen-

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sory sign and signification as a relation of meaning to meaning; it presupposes signs that already have a primary, literal, manifest meaning. Hence I deliberately restrict the notion of symbol to double- or multiple-meaning expressions whose semantic texture is correlative to the work of interpretation that explicates their second or multiple meanings.

Though this delimitation may appear at first to break the unity seen by Cassirer between all the signifying functions, it helps to disclose an underlying unity, thus affording a starting point for a new approach to Cassirer's problem.

Let us try to give a panoramic view of the zones of emergence of symbolism thus conceived.

For my part, I encountered the problem of symbolism in the semantic study I made of the avowal of evil. I noticed that there exists no direct discourse of avowal. Evil—whether the evil one suffers or the evil one commits—is always confessed by means of indirect expressions that are taken from the sphere of everyday experience and which have the remarkable character of analogously designating another experience. I will provisionally call it the experience of the sacred. Thus in the archaic form of avowal, the image of a spot—the spot that one removes, washes, wipes away— analogously designates stain as the sinner's situation in the dimension of the sacred. That this is a symbolic expression is amply confirmed both by the expressions and by the corresponding actions of purification. None of these modes of conduct reduces itself to a mere physical cleansing; each refers to the others without exhausting its meaning in a material gesture; burning, spitting, burying, washing, expelling, each act is an equivalent of or substitute for the others, while at the same time designating something else, namely, the restoration of integrity, of purity. Thus, all the various stages of the feeling and experience of evil can be marked off by semantic stages; I have shown how one moves to the experience of sin and guilt through a series of symbolic progressions, marked off by the images of deviation, the crooked path, wandering, and rebellion; next, by the images of weight, burden, and fault; and last, by the image of slavery, which encompasses them all.

This cycle of examples concerns only one of the zones of the

emergence of symbolism, the one closest to ethical reflection, constituting what might be called the symbolism of the servile will. Upon this symbolism is easily grafted a whole process of reflection that leads to St. Augustine and Luther, as well as to Pelagius or Spinoza. Elsewhere I will show the fruitfulness such reflection may have for philosophy. The concern in the present work is not the richness of a particular symbolism but the texture or structure of symbolism revealed in it. In other words, the issue here is not the problem of evil, but the epistemology of symbolism.

To carry this epistemology through successfully we must broaden our starting point and enumerate some other areas where symbols make their appearance. This inductive approach is the only possible way to begin our investigation, for we are searching for the common structure of the various manifestations of symbolic thought. The symbols we have consulted have already attained a high level of literary elaboration; they are already on the path of reflection; they already contain the seeds of a moral or tragic vision, a wisdom or a theology. Going back to less elaborated forms of symbol I discern three different modalities of symbolism, the unity of which is not immediately apparent.

I have already alluded to the conception of symbolism in the phenomenology of religion, as developed, for example, in Van der Leeuw, Maurice Leenhardt, and Mircea Eliade. Bound to rituals and myths, these symbols constitute the language of the sacred, the *verbum* of the "hierophanies." Whether it be the symbolism of the heavens, as a figure of the most high and the immense, the powerful and the immutable, the sovereign and the wise; or the symbolism of vegetation, which comes to birth, dies, and is reborn; or of water, which threatens, cleanses, or vivifies, these innumerable theophanies or hierophanies are an inexhaustible source of symbolization. But we should be careful to note that these symbols do not stand apart from language as values of immediate expression, as directly perceptible physiognomies; only in the universe of discourse do these realities take on the symbolic dimension. Even when the elements of the universe are what carry the symbol (Heaven, Earth, Water, Life, etc.), it is a word—the word of consecration, of invocation, the mythic commentary—that declares the cosmic expres-

siveness, thanks to the double meaning of the words earth, heaven, water, life, etc. The world's expressiveness achieves language through symbol as double meaning.

The situation is no different in the second zone of the emergence of symbolism, that of the oneiric, if one designates by this word the dreams of our days and our nights. It is well known that dreams are the royal road to psychoanalysis. All question of schools aside, dreams attest that we constantly mean something other than what we say; in dreams the manifest meaning endlessly refers to hidden meaning; that is what makes every dreamer a poet. From this point of view, dreams express the private archeology of the dreamer, which at times coincides with that of entire peoples; that is why Freud often limits the notion of symbol to those oneiric themes which repeat mythology.⁶ But even when they do not coincide, the mythical and the oneiric have in common this structure of double meaning. The dream as a nocturnal spectacle is unknown to us; it is accessible only through the account of the waking hours. The analyst interprets this account, substituting for it another text which is, in his eyes, the thought-content of desire, i.e. what desire would say could it speak without restraint. It must be assumed, and this problem will occupy us at length, that dreams in themselves border on language, since they can be told, analyzed, interpreted.

The third zone of emergence is that of poetic imagination. I might have started here were it not for the fact that without the detour through the cosmic and oneiric, poetic imagination is the least understood of the three. Too often it has been said that imagination is the power of forming images. This is not true if by image one means the representation of an absent or unreal thing, a process of rendering present—of presentifying—the thing over there, elsewhere, or nowhere. In no way does poetic imagination reduce itself to the power of forming a mental picture of the unreal; the imagery of sensory origin merely serves as a vehicle and as material for the verbal power whose true dimension is given to us by the oneiric and the cosmic. As Bachelard says, the poetic image "places us at the origin of articulate being"; the poetic image "becomes a

6. See below, "Analytic," Part II, Ch. 3, for the discussion of the Freudian concept of symbolic dreams.

new being in our language, it expresses us by making us what it expresses."⁷ This word-image, which runs through the representation-image, is symbolism.

Three times, then, the problem of symbolism has turned out to be coextensive with the problem of language itself. There is no symbolism prior to man who speaks, even though the power of symbols is rooted more deeply, in the expressiveness of the cosmos, in what desire wants to say, in the varied image-contents that men have. But in each case it is in language that the cosmos, desire, and the imaginary achieve speech. To be sure, the Psalm says: "The heavens tell the glory of God." But the heavens do not speak; or rather they speak through the prophets, they speak through hymns, they speak through liturgy. There must always be a word to take up the world and turn it into hierophany. Likewise the dreamer, in his private dream, is closed to all; he begins to instruct us only when he recounts his dream. This narrative is what presents the problem, just like the hymn of the psalmist. Thus it is the poet who shows us the birth of the word, in its hidden form in the enigmas of the cosmos and of the psyche. The power of the poet is to show forth symbols at the moment when "poetry places language in a state of emergence," to quote Bachelard again,⁸ whereas ritual and myth fix symbols in their hieratic stability, and dreams close them in upon the labyrinth of desires where the dreamer loses the thread of his forbidden and mutilated discourse.

In order to give consistency and unity to these scattered manifestations of symbol, I define it by a semantic structure that these manifestations have in common, the structure of multiple meaning. Symbols occur when language produces signs of composite degree in which the meaning, not satisfied with designating some one thing, designates another meaning attainable only in and through the first intentionality.

It is here that we are tempted by another definition which this time risks being too narrow. The definition is suggested to us by some of our examples. It consists in characterizing the bond of

⁷ Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique de l'espace* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1957), p. 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

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meaning to meaning in a symbol as analogy. To revert to the examples of the symbolism of evil, is there not an analogy between spot and stain, deviation and sin, burden and fault, which would be, in a way, the analogy of the physical and the existential? Is there not also an analogy between the immensity of the heavens and the infinity of being, whatever that signifies? Is not analogy at the root of the "correspondences" of which the poet sings? Does not this definition have the authority of Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the philosophies of the analogy of being?

There is no doubt that the analogy constituting the meaning and force of many symbols is in no way reducible to a type of argument such as reasoning by analogy, in the strict sense of reasoning by proportionality: *A* is to *B* as *C* is to *D*. The analogy that may exist between the second meaning and the first meaning is not a relation I can place before me and inspect from the outside. It is not an argument; far from lending itself to formalization, it is a relation adhering to its terms. I am carried by the first meaning, directed by it, toward the second meaning; the symbolic meaning is constituted in and through the literal meaning which achieves the analogy by giving the analogue. In contrast to a likeness that we could look at from the outside, a symbol is the very movement of the primary meaning intentionally assimilating us to the symbolized, without our being able to intellectually dominate the likeness.

This correction of the notion of analogy does not suffice, however, to cover the whole field of hermeneutics. I would consider rather that analogy is but one of the relations involved between manifest and latent meaning. Psychoanalysis, as we shall see, has uncovered a variety of processes of elaboration that are operative between the apparent and the latent meaning. The dream work is singularly more complex than the classical way of analogy; so too Nietzsche and Marx have denounced a multitude of ruses and falsifications of meaning. Our entire hermeneutic problem, as we shall state in the next chapter, proceeds from this twofold possibility of an "innocent" analogical relationship or a "cunning" distortion. In discussing the psychoanalytic notion of interpretation we will be occupied with this polarity in symbols. To have once caught sight of it is enough to prompt a search for a definition of symbol that

would be narrower than Cassirer's symbolic function and at the same time wider than the analogy of the Platonic tradition and literary symbolism.

In order to arbitrate the discordance between a definition that is too "long" and a definition that is too "short," I propose to delimit the field of application of the concept of symbol by reference to the act of interpretation. A symbol exists, I shall say, where linguistic expression lends itself by its double or multiple meanings to a work of interpretation. What gives rise to this work is an intentional structure which consists not in the relation of meaning to thing but in an architecture of meaning, in a relation of meaning to meaning, of second meaning to first meaning, regardless of whether that relation be one of analogy or not, or whether the first meaning disguises or reveals the second meaning. This texture is what makes interpretation possible, although the texture itself is made evident only through the actual movement of interpretation.

This double approach to symbol through a definition that is too long and a definition that is too short leads us to the question that will be the object of the next study: What is interpretation? We have already glimpsed the disharmony intrinsic to the question. In any event, the reference of symbols to a hermeneutic understanding has a philosophic significance I would like to bring out at the end of this first investigation.

It is through interpretation, we said above, that the problem of symbols enters into the wider problem of language. However, the link with interpretation is not external to symbols, it is not super-added to them as a chance thought. No doubt a symbol is, in the Greek sense of the word, an "enigma," but as Heraclitus says, "the Master whose oracle is at Delphi does not speak, does not dissimulate; he signifies" (*ὄντι λέγειν ὄντι κρύπτει ἀλλὰ σημαίνει*).⁹ Enigma does not block understanding but provokes it; there is something to unfold, to "dis-implicate" in symbols. That which arouses understanding is precisely the double meaning; the intending of the second meaning in and through the first. In the figurative expressions of the servile will that constitute the symbolism of avowal I was

9. Diels-Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, Vol. 1, *Heraclitus*, B 93.

able to show that it is the very excess of meaning in comparison to the literal expression that puts the interpretation in motion; thus, in the most archaic symbolism, the pentient spontaneously intends the meaning of living in that of spot. In order to characterize this manner of living in and through analogy without the latter being recognized as a distinct semantic structure, one can speak of symbolic naïveté; but this naïveté is from the start moving toward interpretation by virtue of that transgression of meaning by meaning at the heart of the symbolic structure. In general terms, every *mythos* involves a latent *logos* which demands to be exhibited. That is why there are no symbols without the beginning of interpretation; where one man dreams, prophesies, or poetizes, another rises up to interpret. Interpretation organically belongs to symbolic thought and its double meaning.

This appeal to an interpretation that proceeds from symbols assures us that a reflection upon symbols falls within a philosophy of language and even within a philosophy of reason, as we shall try to show when we confront the meaning of symbol in hermeneutics with its meaning in symbolic logic. In hermeneutics symbols have their own semantics; they stimulate an intellectual activity of deciphering, of finding a hidden meaning. Far from falling outside the bounds of language, they raise feeling to meaningful articulation. Thus "avowal" has seemed to me a word that tears feeling from its mute opacity; all the stages of feeling can thus be marked off by semantic stages. Symbols are not a nonlanguage; the split between univocal and plurivocal language extends across the empire of language. That which reveals the richness or overdetermination of meaning and demonstrates that symbols belong to integral discourse is the work, perhaps interminable, of interpretation.

The time has come to say what interpretation is and how psychoanalytic interpretation enters into the conflict between interpretations. It is only at the end of this first sketch of hermeneutic understanding that we will be able to come back to the unsettled problem of the double nature, univocal and equivocal, of discourse, and also to confront the notion of symbol in hermeneutics with the notion of symbol in symbolic logic.

Chapter 2: The Conflict of Interpretations

At the end of the preceding study we asked, What is interpretation? This question governs the following one: How does psychoanalysis become involved in the conflict of interpretations? The question of interpretation, however, is no less perplexing than that of symbol. We thought we could arbitrate the differences concerning the definition of symbol by appealing to an intentional structure, the structure of double meaning, which in turn is brought to light only in the work of interpretation. But the concept of interpretation itself poses a problem.

THE CONCEPT OF INTERPRETATION

Let us first settle a difficulty which is still merely verbal and which has been implicitly resolved by our intermediate definition of symbol.

If we consult the tradition we meet with two usages; the one proposes to us a concept of interpretation that is too short, the other a concept that is too long. These two variations in the extension of the concept of interpretation reflect fairly closely the ones we considered in the definition of symbol. If we recall here the two historical roots of these discordant traditions, the *Peri Hermêneias* of Aristotle and biblical exegesis, it is because they give a rather good indication of what corrections are to be made if one is to arrive at our intermediate concept of hermeneutics.

Start with Aristotle. As is well known, the second treatise of the *Organon* is called the *Peri Hermêneias*. *On Interpretation*. From it stems what I call the overly "long" concept of interpretation, a concept somewhat reminiscent of symbol in the sense of the symbolic

THE PLACING OF FREUD

function of Cassirer and many of the moderns.¹ It is legitimate to look for the origin of our own problem in the Aristotelian notion of interpretation, even though the connection with the Aristotelian "interpretation" seems purely verbal: the word itself figures only in the title; what is more, it designates not a science dealing with significations but signification itself, that of nouns, verbs, propositions, and discourse in general. Interpretation is any voiced sound endowed with significance—every *phônê sêmantikê*, every *vox significativa*.² In this sense nouns, and verbs also,³ are of themselves already interpretations, since in them we utter something. But the simple utterance or *phasis* is only a part taken from the total meaning of the *logos*; the complete meaning of *hermêneia* appears only in the complex enunciation, the sentence, which Aristotle calls *logos* and which covers commands, wishes, and questions as well as declarative discourse or *apophansis*. *Hermêneia*, in the complete sense, is the signification of the sentence. But in the strong sense of the logician it is the sentence susceptible of truth or falsity, that is, the declarative proposition.⁴ The logician leaves the other

1. In Aristotle, moreover, *symbolon* designates the expressive power of voiced sounds with respect to the states of the soul (*ta pathêmatâ*). A symbol is a conventional sign for the states of the soul, whereas the latter are the images (*homoioimata*) of things. Interpretation has therefore the same extension as symbol; the two words cover the totality of conventional signs, either in their expressive value or in their significative value. The treatise *On Interpretation* does not again speak of symbols (except in 16^a 28), seeing that the theory of expression does not come under this treatise but under the treatise *On the Soul*. The present treatise deals exclusively with signification. Pierre Aubenque, in his *Le Problème de l'Être chez Aristote* (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), p. 107, remarks that Aristotle sometimes takes the word "symbol" in the sense of signification. The dominant idea remains that of conventional sign; a symbol is the intermediary instituted between thought and being. Thus we are set on the path of Cassirer—through Kant, it is true!

2. "A noun is a voiced sound having a meaning by convention with no reference to time, while no part of it has any meaning when taken separately" (*On Interpretation*, Ch. 2, 16^a 19).

3. "A verb is that which, in addition to its particular meaning, has a reference to time; no part of it has meaning by itself, and it is always a sign of something said of something else" (*ibid.*, Ch. 3, 16^b 5).

4. "An affirmation is a statement asserting something of something; a negation is a statement separating something from something" (*ibid.*, Ch. 6, 17^a 25).

types of discourse to rhetoric and poetics and retains only declarative discourse, the first form of which is the affirmation that "says something of something."

Let us stop with these definitions: they suffice to clarify in what sense the "semantic voice"—the signifying word—is interpretation. It is interpretation in the sense that, for Cassirer, the symbol is universal mediation; we say the real by signifying it; in this sense we interpret it. The break between signification and the thing has already occurred with nouns, and this intervening distance marks the locus of interpretation. Not all discourse is necessarily within the true; it does not adhere to being. In this regard, nouns that designate fictitious things—the "goat-stag" of Ch. 1 of the Aristotelian treatise—clearly show that there can be signification without the positing of existence. But we would not have thought of calling nouns "interpretation" if we did not see their signifying import in the light of that of verbs and that of verbs in the context of discourse, and if, in its turn, the signifying import of discourse were not concentrated in declarative discourse that says something of something. To say something of something is, in the complete and strong sense of the term, to interpret.⁵

How does this "interpretation," proper to the declarative proposition, orient us toward the modern concept of hermeneutics? The connection is not immediately evident. The "to say something of something" interests Aristotle only insofar as it is the locus of the true and the false. Hence the problem of the opposition between affirmation and negation becomes the central theme of the treatise; the semantics of the declarative proposition serves merely as an introduction to the logic of propositions which is essentially a logic of opposition, and the latter in turn leads to the *Analytics*, i.e. the logic of arguments. This logical aim prevents the development of

5. The notion of interpretation comes to the fore in the verb. On the one hand the verb looks to the noun, since it "adds to the meaning of the noun the meaning of present existence." On the other hand "it is always a sign of something said of something else"; Aristotle explains this formula thus: "Moreover, a verb is always a sign of something said of something else, i.e. of something predicated of a subject or contained in a subject" (*Ibid.*, Ch. 3, 16^a 10). Thus a verb looks toward the sentence or declarative discourse; in this sense it is as it were an instrument of the attribution which it "interprets," i.e. "signifies."

semantics for its own sake. Further, the way to a hermeneutics of double-meaning significations appears blocked from another side. The notion of signification requires univocity of meaning: the definition of the principle of identity, in its logical and ontological sense, demands it. Univocity of meaning is ultimately grounded in essence, one and self-identical; the entire refutation of the sophistical arguments is based upon this recourse to essence: "Not to have one meaning is to have no meaning."⁶ Thus communication between men is possible only if words have a meaning, i.e. *one* meaning.

A reflection that extends the properly semantic analysis of the "to say something of something" leads us back to the area of our own problem. If man interprets reality by saying something of something, it is because real meanings are indirect; I attain things only by attributing a meaning to a meaning. Predication, in the logical sense of the term, puts into canonical form a relation of signification that forces us to reexamine the theory of univocity. The study of sophistical reasoning poses not one problem but two: the problem of the univocity of meanings without which dialogue is impossible, and the problem of their "communication"—to use the expression of Plato's *Sophist*—without which attribution is impossible. Without this counterpart univocity condemns one to a logical atomism, according to which a meaning simply is what it is. It is not enough to struggle against sophistic equivocity; a second front must be opened against Eleatic univocity. Nor is this second struggle without an echo in the philosophy of Aristotle. It breaks out even at the heart of the *Metaphysics*: the notion of being cannot be univocally defined: "being is said in several ways"; being means substance, quality, time, place, and so on. The famous distinction of the many meanings of being is not an anomaly in discourse, an exception in the theory of signification. The many meanings of being are the categories—or figures—of predication; hence this multiplicity cuts across the whole of discourse. Nor can it be overcome. Although it does not constitute a pure disorder of words, seeing that the different meanings of the word "being" are all ordered by reference to a first, original meaning, still this unity of reference—

6. *Metaphysics* T(IV), 1006^a 7.

pros hen legomenon—does not make *one* signification; the notion of being, it has recently been said, is but “the problematic unity of an irreducible plurality of meanings.”⁷

I do not mean to draw from the general semantics of the *Peri Hermeneias* and from the particular semantics of the word “being” more than is allowed; I do not say that Aristotle raised the problem of plurivocal meanings in the way we shall elaborate it here. I merely suggest that his definition of interpretation as “to say something of something” leads to a semantics distinct from logic and that his discussion of the multiple meanings of being opens a breach in the purely logical and ontological theory of univocity. The task of founding a theory of interpretation, conceived as the understanding of plurivocal meanings, has not yet been accomplished. The second tradition will bring us closer to the goal.

The second tradition comes to us from biblical exegesis. Hermeneutics in this sense is the science of the rules of exegesis, the latter being understood as the particular interpretation of a text. There is no question that the problem of hermeneutics has to a great extent been constituted within the boundaries of the interpretation of Holy Scripture. The core of this hermeneutics lies in what has traditionally been called the “four senses of Scripture.” It cannot be emphasized too strongly that philosophers should be more attentive to those exegetical discussions in which a general theory of interpretation was operative.⁸ There in particular the notions of analogy, allegory, and symbolic meaning were elaborated—*notions* to which we shall frequently have to return. This second tradition, then, relates hermeneutics to the definition of symbol by analogy, although it does not entirely reduce hermeneutics to this definition.

What limits the definition of exegetical hermeneutics is, first, its reference to an authority, whether monarchical, collegial, or ecclesiastic, the latter being the case of biblical hermeneutics as practiced within the Christian communities. Most of all, however, it is limited by being applied to a literary text: exegesis is a science of writings.

Still, the exegetical tradition affords a good starting point for our

7. Aubenque, p. 204.

8. Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale* (4 vols. Paris, Aubier, 1959–64).

enterprise, for the notion of text can be taken in an analogous sense. Thanks to the metaphor of “the book of nature” the Middle Ages was able to speak of an *interpretatio naturae*. This metaphor brings to light a possible extension of the notion of exegesis, inasmuch as the notion of “text” is wider than that of “scripture.” With the Renaissance the interpretatio naturae was completely freed from its properly scriptural references, with the result that Spinoza could use it to inaugurate a new conception of biblical exegesis. The interpretation of nature, he says in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, is to inspire a new hermeneutics ruled by the principle of the interpretation of Scripture by itself. This step of Spinoza’s, which does not interest us here from the strictly biblical point of view, marks a curious rebound of the interpretatio naturae upon the interpretation of Scripture: the former scriptural model is now called into question, and the new model is henceforward the interpretatio naturae.

This notion of text—thus freed from the notion of scripture or writing—is of considerable interest. Freud often makes use of it, particularly when he compares the work of analysis to translating from one language to another; the dream account is an unintelligible text for which the analyst substitutes a more intelligible text. To understand is to make this substitution. The title *Traumdeutung*, which we have briefly considered, alludes to this analogy between analysis and exegesis.

At this point we may draw an initial comparison between Freud and Nietzsche. Nietzsche borrowed the concept of *Deutung* or *Auslegung* from the discipline of philology and introduced it into philosophy. It is true that Nietzsche remains a philologist when he interprets Greek tragedy or the pre-Socratics, but with him the whole of philosophy becomes interpretation. Interpretation of what? We shall answer that question later, when we enter into the conflict of interpretation. For the present this point can be made: the new career opened up for the concept of interpretation is linked to a new problematic of representation, of *Vorstellung*. It is no longer the Kantian question of how a subjective representation or idea can have objective validity; this question, central to a critical philosophy, gives way to a more radical one. The problem of objec-

tive validity still remained in the orbit of the Platonic philosophy of truth and science, of which error and opinion are the contraries. The problem of interpretation refers to a new possibility which is no longer either error in the epistemological sense or lying in the moral sense, but illusion, the status of which we will discuss further on. Let us leave aside for the moment the problem we shall turn to shortly, namely, the use of interpretation as a tactic of suspicion and as a battle against masks; this use calls for a very specific philosophy which subordinates the entire problem of truth and error to the expression of the will to power. The important point here, from the standpoint of method, is the new extension given to the exegetical concept of interpretation.

Freud's position lies at one of the ends of this extension. For him, interpretation is concerned not only with a scripture or writing but with any set of signs that may be taken as a text to decipher, hence a dream or neurotic symptom, as well as a ritual, myth, work of art, or a belief. Thus we return to our notion of symbol as double meaning, with the question still undecided whether double meaning is dissimulation or revelation, necessary lying or access to the sacred. We had in mind an enlarged concept of exegesis when we defined hermeneutics as the science of exegetical rules and exegesis as the interpretation of a particular text or of a set of signs considered as a text.

As may be seen, this intermediate definition, which goes beyond a mere scriptural science without being dissolved in a general theory of meaning, receives its authority from both sources. The exegetical source seems the closer, but the problem of univocity and equivocity to which interpretation in the Aristotelian sense leads us is perhaps still more radical than the problem of analogy in exegesis. We return to this in the next chapter. On the other hand, the problem of illusion, central to the Nietzschean *Auslegung*, brings us to the threshold of the key difficulty that governs the fate of modern hermeneutics. This difficulty, which we shall now consider, is not a mere duplicate of the one involved in the definition of symbol; it is a difficulty peculiar to the act of interpreting as such.

The difficulty—it initiated my research in the first place—is this: there is no general hermeneutics, no universal canon for exegesis,

but only disparate and opposed theories concerning the rules of interpretation. The hermeneutic field, whose outer contours we have traced, is internally at variance with itself.

I have neither the intention nor the means to attempt a complete enumeration of hermeneutic styles. The more enlightening course, it seems to me, is to start with the polarized opposition that creates the greatest tension at the outset of our investigation. According to the one pole, hermeneutics is understood as the manifestation and restoration of a meaning addressed to me in the manner of a message, a proclamation, or as is sometimes said, a *keyrigma*; according to the other pole, it is understood as a demystification, as a reduction of illusion. Psychoanalysis, at least on a first reading, aligns itself with the second understanding of hermeneutics.

From the beginning we must consider this double possibility: this tension, this extreme polarity, is the truest expression of our "modernity." The situation in which language today finds itself comprises this double possibility, this double solicitation and urgency: on the one hand, purity discourse of its excrescences, liquidate the idols, go from drunkenness to sobriety, realize our state of poverty once and for all; on the other hand, use the most "nihilistic," destructive, iconoclastic movement so as to *let speak* what once, what each time, was said, when meaning appeared anew, when meaning was at its fullest. Hermeneutics seems to me to be animated by this double motivation: willingness to suspect, willingness to listen; vow of rigor, vow of obedience. In our time we have not finished doing away with *idols* and we have barely begun to listen to *symbols*. It may be that this situation, in its apparent distress, is instructive: it may be that extreme iconoclasm belongs to the restoration of meaning.

The underlying reason for initially posing the problem in the above way is to bring into the open the crisis of language that today makes us oscillate between demystification and restoration of meaning. To my mind, an introduction to the psychoanalysis of culture has had to proceed in this roundabout way. In the next chapter we will try to probe deeper into these prolegomena and relate the crisis of language to an access of reflection whose first movement is to let itself be dispossessed of the origin of meaning.

To finish locating psychoanalysis within the general discussion of language, the terms of the conflict need to be sketched.

INTERPRETATION AS
RECOLLECTION
OF MEANING

This section is concerned with hermeneutics as the restoration of meaning. The point at issue in the psychoanalysis of culture and the school of suspicion is better understood if we first contrast what is radically opposed to them.

The contrary of suspicion, I will say bluntly, is faith. What faith? No longer, to be sure, the first faith of the simple soul, but rather the second faith of one who has engaged in hermeneutics, faith that has undergone criticism, postcritical faith. Let us look for it in the series of philosophic decisions that secretly animate a phenomenology of religion and lie hidden even within its apparent neutrality. It is a rational faith, for it interprets, but it is a faith because it seeks, through interpretation, a second naïveté. Phenomenology is its instrument of hearing, of recollection, of restoration of meaning. "Believe in order to understand, understand in order to believe"—such is its maxim; and its maxim is the "hermeneutic circle" itself of believing and understanding.

We will take our examples from the phenomenology of religion in the wide sense, embracing here the work of Leenhardt, Van der Leeuw, and Eliade, to which I add my own research in *The Symbolism of Evil*.

It will be our task to disengage and display the rational faith that runs through the purely intentional analysis of religious symbolism and "converts" this listening analysis from within.

The first imprint of this faith in a revelation through the word is to be seen in the care or concern for the *object*, a characteristic of all phenomenological analysis. That concern, as we know, presents itself as a "neutral" wish to describe and not to reduce. One reduces by explaining through causes (psychological, social, etc.), through genesis (individual, historical, etc.), through function (affective, ideological, etc.). One describes by disengaging the (noetic) inten-

tion and its (noematic) correlate—the *something* intended, the implicit object in ritual, myth, and belief. Thus, in the case of the symbolism of the pure and the impure alluded to in Chapter I, the task is to understand what is signified, what quality of the sacred is intended, what shade of threat is implied in the analogy between spot and stain, between physical contamination and the loss of existential integrity. In my own research, concern for the object consisted in surrender to the movement of meaning which, starting from the literal sense—the spot or contamination—points to something grasped in the region of the sacred. To generalize from this, we shall say that the theme of the phenomenology of religion is the *something* intended in ritual actions, in mythical speech, in belief or mystical feeling; its task is to dis-implicate that object from the various intentions of behavior, discourse, and emotion. Let us call this intended object the "sacred," without determining its nature, whether it be the *tremendum numinosum*, according to Rudolf Otto; "the powerful," according to Van der Leeuw; or "fundamental Time," according to Eliade. In this general sense, and with a view to underlining the concern for the intentional object, we may say that every phenomenology of religion is a phenomenology of the sacred. However, is it possible for a phenomenology of the sacred to stay within the limits of a neutral attitude governed by the *epoché*, by the bracketing of absolute reality and of every question concerning the absolute? The *epoché* requires that I participate in the belief in the reality of the religious object, but in a neutralized mode; that I believe with the believer, but without positing absolutely the object of his belief.

But while the scientist as such can and must practice this method of bracketing, the philosopher as such cannot and must not avoid the question of the absolute validity of his object. For would I be interested in the object, could I stress concern for the object, through the consideration of cause, genesis, or function, if I did not expect, from within understanding, this something to "address" itself to me? Is not the expectation of being spoken to what motivates the concern for the object? Implied in this expectation is a confidence in language: the belief that language, which bears symbols, is not so much spoken by men as spoken to men, that men are

born into language, into the light of the logos "who enlightens every man who comes into the world." It is this expectation, this confidence, this belief, that confers on the study of symbols its particular seriousness. To be truthful, I must say it is what animates all my research. But it is also what today is contested by the whole stream of hermeneutics that we shall soon place under the heading of "suspicion." This latter theory of interpretation begins by doubting whether there is such an object and whether this object could be the place of the transformation of intentionality into kerygma, manifestation, proclamation. This hermeneutics is not an explication of the object, but a tearing off of masks, an interpretation that reduces disguises.

Second, according to the phenomenology of religion, there is a "truth" of symbols; this truth, in the neutral attitude of the Husserlian epoché, means merely the fulfillment—*die Erfüllung*—of the signifying intention. For a phenomenology of religion to be possible, it is necessary and sufficient that there be not only one but several ways of fulfilling various intentions of meaning according to various regions of objects. Verification, in the sense of logical positivism, is one type of fulfillment among others and not the canonical mode of fulfillment; it is a type required by the corresponding type of object, namely, the physical object and, in another sense, the historical object—but not by the concept of truth as such, or, in other words, by the requirement of fulfillment in general. It is in virtue of this multiplicity of types of fulfillment that phenomenology, in a reduced, neutralized mode, speaks of religious experience, not by analogy, but according to the specific type of object and the specific mode of fulfillment in that field.

We encountered this problem of fulfillment in the order of symbolic meanings in our investigation of the analogical bond between the primary or literal "signifier" and the secondary "signified"—for example, the bond between spot and stain, between deviation (or wandering) and sin, between weight (or burden) and fault. Here we run up against a primordial, unfailling relationship, which never has the conventional and arbitrary character of "technical" signs that mean only what is posited in them.

In this relationship of meaning to meaning resides what I have called the *fullness* of language. The fullness consists in the fact that

the second meaning somehow dwells in the first meaning. In his *Traité d'histoire générale des religions*, Mircea Eliade clearly shows that the force of the cosmic symbolism resides in the non-arbitrary bond between the visible heavens and the order they manifest: thanks to the analogical power that binds meaning to meaning, the heavens *speak* of the wise and the just, the immense and the ordered. Symbols are bound in a double sense: bound *to* and bound *by*. On the one hand, the sacred is *bound to* its primary, literal, sensible meanings; this is what constitutes the opacity of symbols. On the other hand, the literal meaning is *bound by* the symbolic meaning that resides in it; this is what I have called the revealing power of symbols, which gives them their force in spite of their opacity. The revealing power of symbols opposes symbols to technical signs, which merely signify what is posited in them and which, therefore, can be emptied, formalized, and reduced to mere objects of a calculus. Symbols alone *give* what they say.

But in saying this have we not already broken the phenomenological neutrality? I admit it. I admit that what deeply motivates the interest in full language, in bound language, is this inversion of the movement of thought which now addresses itself to me and makes me a subject that is spoken to. And this inversion is produced in analogy. How? How does that which binds meaning to meaning bind me? The movement that draws me toward the second meaning assimilates me to what is said, makes me participate in what is announced to me. The similitude in which the force of symbols resides and from which they draw their revealing power is not an objective likeness, which I may look upon like a relation laid out before me; it is an existential assimilation, according to the movement of analogy, of my being to being.

This allusion to the ancient theme of participation helps us make a third step along the path of explication, which is also the path of intellectual honesty: the fully declared philosophical decision animating the intentional analysis would be a modern version of the ancient theme of reminiscence. After the silence and forgetfulness made widespread by the manipulation of empty signs and the construction of formalized languages, the modern concern for symbols expresses a new desire to be addressed.

This expectancy of a new Word, of a new tidings of the Word, is

the implicit intention of every phenomenology of symbols, which first puts the accent on the object, then underscores the fullness of symbol, to finally greet the revealing power of the primal word.

INTERPRETATION AS EXERCISE
OF SUSPICION

We shall complete our assigning of a place to Freud by giving him not just one interlocutor but a whole company. Over against interpretation as restoration of meaning we shall oppose interpretation according to what I collectively call the school of suspicion.

A general theory of interpretation would thus have to account not only for the opposition between two interpretations of interpretation, the one as recollection of meaning, the other as reduction of the illusions and lies of consciousness; but also for the division and scattering of each of these two great "schools" of interpretation into "theories" that differ from one another and are even foreign to one another. This is no doubt truer of the school of suspicion than of the school of reminiscence. Three masters, seemingly mutually exclusive, dominate the school of suspicion: Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. It is easier to show their common opposition to a phenomenology of the sacred, understood as a propaedeutic to the "revelation" of meaning, than their interrelationship within a single method of demystification. It is relatively easy to note that these three figures all contest the primacy of the object in our representation of the sacred, as well as the fulfilling of the intention of the sacred by a type of analogy of being that would engraft us onto being through the power of an assimilating intention. It is also easy to recognize that this contesting is an exercise of suspicion in three different ways; "truth as lying" would be the negative hearing under which one might place these three exercises of suspicion. But we are still far from having assimilated the positive meaning of the enterprises of these three thinkers. We are still too attentive to their differences and to the limitations that the prejudices of their times impose upon their successors even more than upon themselves. Thus Marx is relegated to economics and the absurd theory of the

reflex consciousness; Nietzsche is drawn toward biologism and a perspectivism incapable of expressing itself without contradiction; Freud is restricted to psychiatry and decked out with a simplistic pansexualism.

If we go back to the intention they had in common, we find in it the decision to look upon the whole of consciousness primarily as "false" consciousness. They thereby take up again, each in a different manner, the problem of the Cartesian doubt, to carry it to the very heart of the Cartesian stronghold. The philosopher trained in the school of Descartes knows that things are doubtful, that they are not such as they appear; but he does not doubt that consciousness is such as it appears to itself; in consciousness, meaning and consciousness of meaning coincide. Since Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, this too has become doubtful. After the doubt about things, we have started to doubt consciousness.

These three masters of suspicion are not to be misunderstood, however, as three masters of skepticism. They are, assuredly, three great "destroyers." But that of itself should not mislead us; destruction, Heidegger says in *Sein und Zeit*, is a moment of every new foundation, including the destruction of religion, insofar as religion is, in Nietzsche's phrase, a "Platonism for the people." It is beyond destruction that the question is posed as to what thought, reason, and even faith still signify.

All three clear the horizon for a more authentic word, for a new reign of Truth, not only by means of a "destructive" critique, but by the invention of an art of *interpreting*. Descartes triumphed over the doubt as to things by the evidence of consciousness; they triumph over the doubt as to consciousness by an exegesis of meaning. Beginning with them, understanding is hermeneutics: henceforward, to seek meaning is no longer to spell out the consciousness of meaning, but to *decipher its expressions*. What must be faced, therefore, is not only a threefold suspicion, but a threefold guile. If consciousness is not what it thinks it is, a new relation must be instituted between the patent and the latent; this new relation would correspond to the one that consciousness had instituted between appearances and the reality of things. For Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, the fundamental category of consciousness is the relation

hidden-shown or, if you prefer, simulated-manifested. That the Marxists are stubbornly insistent on the "reflex" theory, that Nietzsche contradicts himself in dogmatizing about the "perspectivism" of the will to power, that Freud mythologizes with his "censorship," "watchman," and "disguises"—still, what is essential does not lie in these encumbrances and impasses. What is essential is that all three create with the means at hand, with and against the prejudices of their times, a mediate *science* of meaning, irreducible to the immediate *consciousness* of meaning. What all three attempted, in different ways, was to make their "conscious" methods of deciphering coincide with the "unconscious" work of ciphering which they attributed to the will to power, to social being, to the unconscious psychism. *Guile will be met by double guile.*

Thus the distinguishing characteristic of Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche is the general hypothesis concerning both the process of false consciousness and the method of deciphering. The two go together, since the man of suspicion carries out in reverse the work of falsification of the man of guile. Freud entered the problem of false consciousness via the double road of dreams and neurotic symptoms; his working hypothesis has the same limits as his angle of attack, which was, as we shall state fully in the sequel, an economics of instincts. Marx attacks the problem of ideologies from within the limits of economic alienation, now in the sense of political economy, Nietzsche, focusing on the problem of "value"—of evaluation and transvaluation—looks for the key to lying and masks on the side of the "force" and "weakness" of the will to power.

Fundamentally, the *Genealogy of Morals* in Nietzsche's sense, the theory of ideologies in the Marxist sense, and the theory of ideals and illusions in Freud's sense represent three convergent procedures of demystification.

Yet there is perhaps something they have even more in common, an underlying relationship that goes even deeper. All three begin with suspicion concerning the illusions of consciousness, and then proceed to employ the stratagem of deciphering; all three, however, far from being detractors of "consciousness," aim at extending it. What Marx wants is to liberate *praxis* by the understanding of necessity; but this liberation is inseparable from a "conscious in-

sight" which victoriously counterattacks the mystification of false consciousness. What Nietzsche wants is the increase of man's power, the restoration of his force; but the meaning of the will to power must be recaptured by meditating on the ciphers "superman," "eternal return," and "Dionysus," without which the power in question would be but worldly violence. What Freud desires is that the one who is analyzed, by making his own the meaning that was foreign to him, enlarge his field of consciousness, live better, and finally be a little freer and, if possible, a little happier. One of the earliest homages paid to psychoanalysis speaks of "healing through consciousness." The phrase is exact—if one means thereby that analysis wishes to substitute for an immediate and dissimulating consciousness a mediate consciousness taught by the reality principle. Thus the same doubter who depicts the ego as a "poor creature" in subjection to three masters, the id, the superego, and reality or necessity, is also the exegete who rediscovers the logic of the illogical kingdom and who dares, with unparalleled modesty and discretion, to terminate his essay on *The Future of an Illusion* by invoking the god Logos, soft of voice but indefatigable, in no wise omnipotent, but efficacious in the long run.

This last reference to Freud's "reality principle" and to its equivalents in Nietzsche and Marx—eternal return in the former, understood necessity in the latter—brings out the positive benefit of the asceticism required by a reductive and destructive interpretation: confrontation with bare reality, the discipline of Ananke, of necessity.

While finding their positive convergence, our three masters of suspicion also present the most radically contrary stance to the phenomenology of the sacred and to any hermeneutics understood as the recollection of meaning and as the reminiscence of being.

At issue in this controversy is the fate of what I shall call, for the sake of brevity, the mytho-poetic core of imagination. Over against illusion and the fable-making function, demystifying hermeneutics sets up the rude discipline of necessity. It is the lesson of Spinoza: one first finds himself a slave, he understands his slavery, he rediscovers himself free within understood necessity. The *Ethics* is the first model of the asceticism that must be undergone by the

libido, the will to power, the imperialism of the dominant class. But, in return, does not this discipline of the real, this ascetic of the necessary lack the grace of imagination, the upsurge of the possible? And does not this grace of imagination have something to do with the Word as Revelation?

This is what is at issue in the debate. Our question now is to determine to what extent such a debate can still be arbitrated within the limits of a philosophy of reflection.

Chapter 3: Hermeneutic Method and Reflective Philosophy

We assigned ourselves the task, in these beginning chapters, of placing Freud within the movement of contemporary thought. Before becoming involved with its technical language and specific problem we wanted to reconstruct the context in which psychoanalysis is set. We first fixed its hermenutics of culture upon the background of the problematic of language. From the outset we have looked upon psychoanalysis as throwing light upon and contesting human speech; Freud belongs to our time just as much as Wittgenstein and Bultmann. The place of psychoanalysis within the general debate on language might be more precisely described as an episode in the war between the various hermenutics, though this does not tell us whether psychoanalysis is but one hermenutic sect among others or whether, in a manner we shall have to discover, it encroaches upon all the others. In this chapter we would like to go further and discern in psychoanalysis, in the hermenutic war itself, and in the problematic of language as a whole, a *crisis of reflection*—that is to say, in the strong and philosophic sense of the term, an adventure of the Cogito and of the reflective philosophy that proceeds therefrom.

THE RECOURSE OF SYMBOLS TO REFLECTION

I will begin by retracing the path of my own inquiry. It was as a requirement of lucidity, of veracity, of rigor, that I encountered what I called, at the end of *The Symbolism of Evil*, "the passage to reflection." Is it possible, I asked, to co-